

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON 19 JULY 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 10.30 PM**

**Members Present**

Councillors: John Kaiser (Mayor), Bill Soane (Deputy Mayor), Keith Baker, Parry Batth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Jenny Cheng, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Carl Doran, Lindsay Ferris, Guy Grandison, Mike Haines, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, David Hare, Emma Hobbs, Tim Holton, Graham Howe, John Jarvis, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Barrie Patman, Anthony Pollock, Helen Power, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Daniel Sargeant, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Simon Weeks, Oliver Whittle and Shahid Younis

**16. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Alistair Auty, David Chopping, UllaKarin Clark, Kate Haines, Pauline Helliard Symons, Philip Houldsworth, Clive Jones and Charles Margetts.

**17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 May 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Shahid Younis declared a Personal Interest in Item 26 RE Revised Syllabus on the grounds that he was one of the faith representatives on SACRE. Councillor Younis remained in the Chamber during discussions and voted on the matter.

**19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

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

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

**19.1 Trevor Sleet asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question which was asked by Keith Malvern in his absence:**

I would like to ask a question regarding the loss of the lollipop lady in Murray Road.

Has a full risk assessment been carried out regarding the removal of this person at this specific location as the roads around these schools are used by commuters parking for the station and by drivers, often speeding and driving dangerously, using the Barkham and Finchampstead Roads to cut through to the Reading Road and visa versa?

**Answer:**

Thank you for your question.

The provision of controlled crossings will mean that crossing this road at all times of the

day will be safer for pedestrians who currently only receive assistance twice a day for about an hour maximum.

The provision and design of controlled pedestrian crossings at all locations has been subject to an independent road safety audit undertaken by qualified auditors to reduce any risks associated with the installation of these crossings. We have at your request already provided you with a copy of the Safety Audit.

**19.2 Chris Wallace asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:**

At the Executive meeting on 31st May, the 21cc report shows that the implementation of changes to the Housing Service began in June with over 60% of roles changing. Could the Executive Member for Housing give a summary of the changes occurring such as the actual number, how many staff promotions and redundancies and explain how those changes will benefit the tenants?

**Answer:**

The Housing Service is still in the process of recruiting to the new structure and we do not have final figures. The 60% figure you mention equates to 43 staff. I can confirm that interviews are ongoing for posts within the new structure and we will have further detail on promotions and redundancies when the process is complete.

I can also confirm that as of 10<sup>th</sup> July, 24 staff have been assimilated into the new structure, with 19 at risk but there are currently 21 vacancies being recruited to by the Team as well so this is not a process of reducing the amount of vacancies.

Whilst 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council aims to make services available 24/7 via the website so people can raise requests and queries when they want to and when it is convenient to them, we really recognise that not everyone wants to use the website, not everyone wants to use a phone, and we will still commit to retaining the ability to handle requests face to face and over the phone.

**Supplementary Question:**

Last September the Executive Member apologised to tenants for breaking the law. 10 months later that same law has been broken again. You have failed to consult all of your tenants. Has Grenfell been forgotten so soon? How can anyone trust a Council that allows this?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Obviously I was not in this post then. We certainly have no intention of breaking the law and we will do everything we can to uphold it. As far as this particular example is concerned I am going to have to go and investigate a bit further. If you could possibly provide me with a bit more detail that would be very helpful.

**19.3 Peter Humphreys asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Last year you appointed two Executive Member posts with "highways" in the title. With Councillor Lee's defeat at the recent election in May his position was not replaced. Does this mean strategic highways are no longer regarded as important or was this a post with no substance created to reward a loyal party member with an Executive title, what is colloquially known as a "job for the boys"?

**Answer**

Following the local elections in May I reshaped the Executive and transferred Strategic Highways matters to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport, which I am sure you will agree is the appropriate place for these responsibilities. You will find a list of the Executive Members' responsibilities in Section 5 of the Constitution for this Council.

**Supplementary Question:**

I am fully aware of that, but the point was that for a year you had two posts. Why was it that we never had two posts before and now suddenly you have one post again? What was so different last year and why did David's defeat make this difference?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I thought that I would set up last year, at the beginning of the year, when we were doing the Local Plan, two separate posts and put strategic in with the Local Plan. The beginning of this year I thought that I would put more of highways into one portfolio.

**19.4 Richard Gregory asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:**

With less than 2 years of its contract with Ocaso for buildings insurance for the Council's part share properties left. How far along are the Council in finding a way to reduce the extortionate cost being incurred by its part share tenants for buildings insurance? For our 2 bed house we are being charged £508 (five hundred and eight pounds) for buildings insurance alone this year through the Council. We could buy on the open market a policy for one million pounds worth of buildings insurance for less than £100 (one hundred pounds).

**Answer**

Quite a similar question. I understand the concerns expressed by tenants and we have been looking at how this matter can be resolved to reduce costs to shared owners.

We are unfortunately in a contract until March 2020.

In terms of the market rates for insurance, this is actually quite complicated in that the risks and the history of claims affects the premium rates. We do monitor the history of claims very, very, closely. It has also got a complex history and I can assure you that a range of actions are taking place to solve the matter.

In answer to this question I cannot really do justice to explaining this detail, so as I offered your colleague, I would very much like to meet you and actually talk about it to get the situation resolved, if that would be ok, or indeed your other colleagues as well.

**Supplementary Question:**

Do you consider £508 for buildings insurance alone exceptional when you can go out and buy hundreds of millions of pounds of buildings insurance for £60 on the open market?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I think the issue is that we have got a shared policy here and some people and some areas that claim in this policy probably would not be able to get insurance at all and other people would be able to get it cheaper depending on their claims history. The problem at the moment is that we have got a shared contract. The reason we have got a shared

contract is because we need to be assured that everyone is insured because it is shared property and we have an interest in it as well. So it is quite a complicated position. I understand what you are saying. I understand that I would not like to pay £500 insurance for a house if I have a good claims history either, but the problem is with the whole claims history, it is taking into account the whole group before the premium. I think the issue is that it is quite a difficult problem to solve in the circumstances but let us have a conversation about it separately.

**19.5 Diane Heyes asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:**

In January of 2018 I had a meeting at my house with Mr Simon Price of the Council, where he said that he would ask the Council to ask of its legal advisers two questions? 1. Would it be possible for the Council to incorporate the part share properties into its buildings insurance that it has for its council house tenants, therefore reducing the cost of buildings insurance for its part share tenants? 2. Would it be possible to allow part share tenants to purchase their own buildings insurance for their properties and then provide proof to the council by the 1st April each year, thus reducing the cost of buildings insurance? It is now mid-July and I am surprised that I have not received an answer to either question. Could the Executive Member for Housing please tell me if the Council has asked the 2 questions of its legal advisers and if they have what the answers were?

**Answer**

I can confirm that the Assistant Director Housing Income and Assessments has met with Legal and Insurance colleagues a number of times regarding the questions you have raised, but has not formally requested legal advice yet. This is due to the Council still analysing a report regarding our lease arrangements with all our shared owners in Blackwater and Larchside Close. When we fully understand our rights and responsibilities regarding the shared ownership leases we will be in a position to formally request legal advice when we have completed this review.

This piece of work is ongoing and is still to be completed by the end of the calendar year 2018.

**Supplementary Question:**

Simon Price said he was going to come back by the beginning of July with an answer about these contracts and as yet I still have had no answer to this.

**Supplementary Answer:**

I have had a couple of conversations with Simon since I received your question and I would be very happy to meet and discuss it further if that would help, and to make sure that you get the answer that you need.

**19.6 Sue Chapman asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

I work at Meadow Nursery School on Murray Road and one of the roles our school crossing patrollers fulfils is teaching the children at our nursery school about road safety. After the removal of our SCP will Wokingham Borough Council arrange for a road safety officer to visit our school to talk to the children about road safety?

**Answer**

The Council's Road Safety and My Journey teams undertake training at our schools

throughout the Borough in both road safety and the promotion of sustainable travel.

We would be delighted to arrange a visit to your school.

**19.7 Alexa Stott asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

At my school, parents dropping off their children frequently try to park on the “zig-zag” markings directly outside school. Our lollipop lady enforces traffic restrictions by telling drivers to park elsewhere. In her absence I am concerned that parents will park there and this will block the visibility of children trying to cross the road at the zebra crossing. Will the Council deploy traffic wardens on a regular basis to ensure traffic restrictions are enforced at all times?

**Answer**

School Crossing Patrollers are employed to provide assistance to those requiring it to cross the road. They are not there to enforce traffic infringements such as parking issues. We recognise that over the many years School Crossing Patrollers have operated and their passion for the job has meant they have extended their role beyond the tasks they have actually been employed to do.

Issues such as those you mention are not unique to locations near school crossing patrol sites and ultimately it is drivers’ responsibility to drive safely and legally and any concerns relating to poor driving should be reported to the Police on the non-emergency number 101.

Parking issues can now be dealt with directly by Wokingham Borough Council following the transfer of enforcement powers from the Police last October (2017) through Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). Parking adjacent to schools is a known concern and since the introduction of CPE, the Council has prioritised visits by the Enforcement Officers at schools. The Team is relatively small in number and it is therefore not possible to be at every school every day therefore any specific problems relating to parking can be reported to the Council’s Parking Enforcement Team. The Team will then work with the schools to address these issues and target areas of concern in their patrols. Contact details for the Parking Enforcement Team can be found on our website, but if you need to contact me I am happy to link you up with them.

**19.8 Annette Medhurst asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Traffic and pedestrians counts at our school have shown that having a school crossing patroller is justified because this is a very busy time, with lots of conflict between drivers and pedestrians. Meanwhile, Government guidance indicates that a fixed crossing may not be an appropriate solution if the road is quiet at other times, not least since drivers may become accustomed to not having to stop for the crossing, and may begin to ignore its existence, with dangerous consequences. Have traffic and pedestrian counts also met standards for installing a zebra crossing?

**Answer**

At each of the School Crossing Patrol sites an assessment of the location was first undertaken in accordance with the processes described for establishing school crossing patrol sites in the Road Safety GB document entitled ‘School Crossing Patrol Service

Guidelines'. The assessment considers the number of pedestrians and vehicles during the morning peak period and indicates whether a patroller would or would not be justified (should the Council provide this discretionary service) or whether additional facilities such as pedestrian crossings may be justified. The assessment for the majority of sites indicated that a patroller would be justified; since the Council's proposal was not to provide a patroller the sites were identified for pedestrian crossings.

The provision of the proposed crossings have been thoroughly reviewed by an independent qualified road safety professional to ensure they are safe before implementation. However, as part of the review process additional Road Safety Audits and assessments will be carried out following the introduction of the crossings and any identified issues raised in these will be actioned accordingly.

**Supplementary Question:**

I do not know all the ins and outs and the numbers that are required for the installation of these permanent crossings but clearly the flow of traffic along Murray Road is very heavy and you deem it necessary to put this crossing in. Would the Council be prepared to investigate the possibility of Murray Road becoming one way because we have the situation where we have single file traffic basically at peak times and I wonder if that would be one possible solution for the amount of traffic that goes along there?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Higher traffic flow make it more likely that it is appropriate for us to put in a fixed crossing. I had thought of turning my road into a one way system. I am happy to meet with you and talk to you about it. I am happy to talk to Officers but given that there are a lot of issues with traffic and getting traffic around the town at the moment, I would not like to say that it is inevitable but I am happy to talk to you about it and see whether it is appropriate.

**19.9 Helen Edwards asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Enabling children to walk, cycle or scoot safely to school is important for a fit and healthy community, and I've notice many year 6 children walk to school by themselves, which means they learn important road safety skills before having to make the longer (more dangerous) journeys to secondary school. I feel that parents are going to be less inclined to allow their children to walk if the journey is considered unsafe. How will the local authority ensure that the additional functions that our SCP performs are maintained (for example enforcing parking restrictions) to reassure me that my child it safe.

**Answer**

School Crossing Patrollers are employed to provide assistance to those requiring it to cross the road. They are not there to enforce traffic infringements such as parking issues or provide any additional functions. We recognise that over the many years School Crossing Patrollers have operated and their passion for the job has meant they have extended their role beyond the tasks they have been employed to do.

General road safety issues such as dangerous driving, speeding vehicles and poor parking such as those you mention are not unique to locations near school crossing patrol sites and ultimately it is drivers' responsibility to drive safely and legally and any concerns relating to poor driving should be reported to the police on the non-emergency number 101.

Parking issues can now be dealt with directly by Wokingham Borough Council following the transfer of enforcement powers from the police last October (2017) through Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). Parking adjacent to schools is a known concern and since the introduction of CPE, the Council has prioritised visits by the Enforcement Officers at schools. The Ream is relatively small in number and it is therefore not possible to be at every school every day therefore any specific problems relating to parking can be reported to the Council's Parking Enforcement Team. The Team will then work with the schools to address these issues and target areas of concern in their patrols.

It is the responsibility of parents or carers to ensure their child is safe on the highway. Parents and carers play a vital part in teaching children general road safety and also how to cross the road safely.

However, the Council's Road Safety and My Journey Teams do undertake training at our schools throughout the Borough in both road safety and the promotion of sustainable travel. These will continue after the patrollers have been removed. Should your school wish to arrange bespoke training on the use of pedestrian crossings or any other related road safety area please ask them to contact the Council using the contact details available on our website.

**19.10 Sally Cairns asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

The salary of a school crossing patroller is presumably considerably less than the cost of installing a crossing. How long will it take for this transition to be a cost effective decision for the Council – and what will the Council do if it is unsuccessful – i.e. suppose there is an increase in accidents, or local roads jam up, or you get lots of complaints from parents or residents – and many years of budget have been spent – what will you do?

**Answer**

The cost of the new permanent crossing facilities and removal of School Crossing Patrollers will be cost neutral within about 8 years of implementation. The provision of the proposed crossing has been thoroughly reviewed by an independent qualified road safety professional to ensure it is safe before implementation. However as part of the review process additional Road Safety Audits and assessments will be carried out following the introduction of the crossings and any identified issues raised in these will be actioned accordingly. I would like to add that these new crossings will be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, not just at the times when children go to school, and they will be available to all residents all of the time so I do think that it is a safer choice.

**Supplementary Question:**

So as a user of that road I do not think that it is a 24 hour problem. I think it is a beginning and end of the school day problem, and I wonder if you could say a bit more about what these people are meant to do if these crossings are inadequate?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I think that I would have to come back to you on that one. I will give you a written response.

**19.11 Annabel Yoxall asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

In the afternoon, one of the functions the school crossing patroller performs is to stop people crossing to enable traffic to pass, given that there is a steady stream of people out of the schools. Without this, there could be substantial blocking back of traffic, leading to frustration and less safe driving – how will the authority ensure this does not happen?

**Answer**

The proposed crossings will be manually controlled, either by pedestrian flow at zebra crossings or by the push button unit at signal crossings. Whilst the flow of pedestrians will fluctuate and this may have some impact on traffic, it is the drivers' responsibility, by law, to stop at a zebra crossing if a pedestrian wishes to cross or at the changing of the signals if it is a toucan crossing. Pedestrians should also wait until the vehicle has stopped at either the stop or give way line before proceeding to cross.

**Supplementary Question:**

Overcrowding and a backlog of people by the crossing has meant that one of the schools has constructed a safe zone on their school site to allow children to go in. Has the Council reviewed the suitability and taken into account the cost of any potential structural changes needed to fence off safe zones once the SCP has gone, in order to keep the children safe?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I think the answer to that is no, but we will do that work anyway.

**19.12 Diane Burch asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

We recently carried out our own survey at the Murray Road Crossing. This showed nearly twice the number of pedestrians.

If the data used is incorrect, using these figures to make any decision can only produce skewed results. Would the council consider redoing these surveys to make sure the figures truly represent the current usage of the crossings?

Time	(Using the Crossing)			(Using the Road)					Passenger Car Units PCU	
	Pedestrians (All)	Pushchairs	Bikes/Scooters	Cycles 1/3	Motorcycles :	Car	LGV 1	MGV 2		HGV 3
8.30 - 8.35	23					17		1		19
8.35 - 8.40	62	3	3			17		1		19
8.40 - 8.45	111	9	13			36		0		36
8.45 - 8.50	78	5	6	3		31	2	0		33
8.50 - 8.55	17	1	2			21	2	2		27
8.55 - 9.00	4	3	1	1		26		1		28
<b>Sub-total</b>	295	21	25	4	0	148	4	5	0	
<b>Totals</b>	295	21	25	1	0	148	4	10	0	162

268 Middle 20 minutes

Middle 20 minutes 115

School Name St Pauls Primary &amp; Walter Infants School

Time	Peds	Cycles [1/3]	Motorcycles [1/2]	Car [1]	LGV [1]	Bus [2]	MGV [2]	HGV [3]	Passenger car units PCU
08.15- 08:20	4	0	1	38	3	0	2	2	51
08.20 - 08:25	3	2	0	22	2	0	1	0	28
08.25 - 08:30	22	0	0	32	1	0	0	0	33
08.30 - 08:35	17	1	0	16	0	0	1	0	18
08.35 - 08:40	42	0	0	20	2	0	0	0	22
08.40 - 08:45	63	0	0	19	3	0	0	0	22
08.45 - 08:50	20	1	0	25	1	0	1	0	28
08.50 - 08:55	7	0	0	24	3	0	0	0	27
08.55 - 09:00	0	0	0	8	2	0	0	0	10
09.00 - 09:05	0	1	0	19	3	0	0	0	22
09.05 - 09:10									0
09.15 - 09:20									0
09.25 - 09:30									0

= Busiest consecutive 30 minute period

PV<sup>2</sup> = 151 30,276 = 4,571,676

This value exceeds the criteria threshold value (4,000,000) and therefore would justify the establishment of a School Crossing Patrol site. Hence further assessment is not required.

## Answer

The data previously collected shows that a School Crossing Patroller would be justified at this site (should the Council choose to provide this service). As part of the process it was decided if the School Crossing Patroller was justified then a permanent pedestrian crossing would be provided. Therefore the doubling the amount of pedestrians would also mean that a School Crossing Patroller would be justified and would have the same outcome. i.e. a fixed crossing would be more sensible than otherwise. We will not carry out further surveys as the initial survey met the justification and the new data would also seem to confirm that this is still the case.

## 20. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

## 21. PETITION DEBATE

A petition containing in excess of 1,500 signatures, the threshold to trigger a debate at Council, had been submitted relating to the removal of the school crossing patrol service:

*"We the undersigned petition Wokingham Borough Council to abandon its proposal to remove school crossing patrol services at seven locations across the Borough at the end of this academic year (July 2018)"*

### 21.1 Petition submitted by Annette Medhurst

Annette Medhurst, the petition organiser and Diane Burch, addressed the meeting and set out the background to the petition. Annette Medhurst commented that she was the Chairman of the Management Committee at Meadow Nursery School on Murray Road. They had set up the petition after hearing of the proposal to remove seven school crossing patrollers across the Borough and to replace them with permanent pedestrian crossings. It was felt that this would have a significant negative impact on children's safety. She went on to state that the role of the School Crossing Patroller was to provide a safe place for children, parents and carers to cross and broadly this was also the function of permanent

pedestrian crossings. However, data from the Department of Transport suggested that there were less accidents if a School Crossing Patroller was in place at school crossings as opposed to a permanent crossing feature. Whilst ultimately it was the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child travelled to and from school safely and drivers to drive responsibly, School Crossing Patrollers also helped to maintain traffic flow, helped to enforce parking restrictions and taught children about road safety. Permanent pedestrian crossings could not do this. Annette Medhurst stated that pedestrian crossings were an inferior solution to School Crossing Patrollers. She suggested that Members and Officers visit Murray Road over a week to see some of the challenges experienced, first hand.

Diane Burch stated that she had been a School Crossing Patroller on Murray Road for eight years. The crossing could be busy particularly if weather was poor or if there were delays in surrounding roads. She disputed the assertion that School Crossing Patrollers often put their lives at risk by stepping into the road to stop traffic. She felt that pedestrians using a zebra crossing would be stepping out into the road, with no guarantee that traffic would stop for them. In 2015 the Council had made the decision to remove School Crossing Patrollers where there was a safe, viable mechanism for crossing the road. The petitioners disputed that the permanent crossings provided this safe mechanism. Diane Burch went on to refer to a consultation held in March 2017 of which only 9 of 393 respondents had supported the proposal to remove the school crossing patrol service.

Members discussed the petition. Several Members commented that School Crossing Patrollers had no legal basis for enforcing traffic restrictions and that zebra crossings and other permanent crossings provided safe traffic management mechanisms all day, every day and not just term time. Some Members stated that there had not been an increase in accidents following the removal of School Crossing Patrollers in their wards. Others referred to crossing points in their ward and commented that they felt that permanent pedestrian crossings were the safer solution. It was drivers' responsibility to obey stop signs and other highway regulations.

A number of Members suggested that the financial saving that the removal of the School Crossing Patrollers represented did not outweigh the value to the community that they provided. School Crossing Patrollers helped to teach children road safety awareness and were well respected members of the school community. A Member referred to additional costs that permanent pedestrian crossings would bring such as ongoing maintenance costs. Several Members were of the view that the installation of permanent pedestrian crossings represented an investment in the safety of the Borough's children.

The consultation process was questioned and a Member questioned whether 20mph speed limits outside schools at school start and finish times could be considered in addition, where appropriate.

It was confirmed that copies of the safety audits undertaken had been circulated to the relevant ward members.

The following Motion was proposed by Andy Croy and seconded by Rachel Burgess.

'This Council will abandon its proposal to remove school crossing patrol services at seven locations across the Borough at the end of this academic year (July 2018).'

Prior to a vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.5, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed Motion.

The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Prue Bray	Keith Baker	John Kaiser
Rachel Burgess	Parry Batth	Bill Soane
Gary Cowan	Laura Blumenthal	
Andy Croy	Chris Bowering	
Carl Doran	Jenny Cheng	
Lindsay Ferris	Richard Dolinski	
David Hare	Guy Grandison	
Helen Power	Mike Haines	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Charlotte Haitham Taylor	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Emma Hobbs	
	Tim Holton	
	Graham Howe	
	John Jarvis	
	Norman Jorgensen	
	Pauline Jorgensen	
	Dianne King	
	Abdul Loyes	
	Julian McGhee-Sumner	
	Ken Miall	
	Philip Mirfin	
	Stuart Munro	
	Barrie Patman	
	Anthony Pollock	
	Malcolm Richards	
	Angus Ross	
	Daniel Sargeant	
	David Sleight	
	Chris Smith	
	Wayne Smith	
	Simon Weeks	
	Oliver Whittle	
	Shahid Younis	

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to have been lost.

The following Motion was proposed by Anthony Pollock and seconded by Ken Miall.

“The Council recognises the importance of safe routes to school. The Council implemented a policy between 2003-08 using grants provided by the previous Labour Government to remove school crossing patrollers and replace them, with various schemes including zebra, toucan and pelican crossings.

These types of crossings are inherently safe, since they provide pedestrian/car

management systems which are recognised by both pedestrians and motorists 24 hours a day, and not just when children are being walked to and from school. Therefore this Council will continue with its capital programme to improve road safety in the vicinity of schools by building new zebra, toucan or pelican crossings, as appropriate, in accordance with the safety audits undertaken by independent Road Safety Experts.

These new crossings will replace the School Crossing Patrollers when they are completed and provide a safer environment as demonstrated by independent safety audits for children walking to and from school.

We recognise the fantastic contribution made by our School Crossing Patrollers, who have given their time to this role over the years and extend our heartfelt thanks for their sterling service to our community. However, we cannot support the action that the petition requests, and we ask the Executive to take Council's view into account when making their decision.'

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The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Keith Baker	Prue Bray	John Kaiser
Parry Batth	Rachel Burgess	Bill Soane
Laura Blumenthal	Gary Cowan	
Chris Bowring	Andy Croy	
Jenny Cheng	Carl Doran	
Richard Dolinski	Lindsay Ferris	
Guy Grandison	David Hare	
Mike Haines	Helen Power	
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	
Emma Hobbs	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	
Tim Holton		
Graham Howe		
John Jarvis		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Julian McGhee-Sumner		
Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
David Sleight		

Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Simon Weeks		
Oliver Whittle		
Shahid Younis		

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Council recognises the importance of safe routes to school. The Council implemented a policy between 2003-08 using grants provided by the previous Labour Government to remove school crossing patrollers and replace them, with various schemes including zebra, toucan and pelican crossings.

These types of crossings are inherently safe, since they provide pedestrian/car management systems which are recognised by both pedestrians and motorists 24 hours a day, and not just when children are being walked to and from school. Therefore this Council will continue with its capital programme to improve road safety in the vicinity of schools by building new zebra, toucan or pelican crossings, as appropriate, in accordance with the safety audits undertaken by independent Road Safety Experts.

These new crossings will replace the School Crossing Patrollers when they are completed and provide a safer environment as demonstrated by independent safety audits for children walking to and from school.

We recognise the fantastic contribution made by our School Crossing Patrollers, who have given their time to this role over the years and extend our heartfelt thanks for their sterling service to our community. However, we cannot support the action that the petition requests, and we ask the Executive to take Council's view into account when making their decision.

## **22. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members that he had launched a Roll of Honour Awards to recognise residents who made an outstanding contribution to their community. There would be awards for both adults and children. Members, Officers and the community were encouraged to nominate individuals by emailing the Mayoral email address. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor would select winners. Each winner would receive a lapel badge and scroll to mark their achievements. The awards would be given out on a monthly basis and the first awards would be presented at the September Council meeting.

## **23. SHARED DASS WITH ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD**

The Council considered a report regarding a proposal to appoint a shared Director of Adult Services with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, set out at Agenda pages 33 to 36.

It was proposed by Laura Blumenthal and seconded by Richard Dolinski that the recommendation be agreed.

Laura Blumenthal commented that splitting the Director of People Services role into separate Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Services roles made sense, as both covered very important areas to residents and brought very different challenges. Having a committed, focused individual for each directorate would bring the opportunity for an expert in each area, driving up standards for residents. A shared Director of Adult

Services was a new and innovative approach. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had a similar demographic and challenges to Wokingham Borough. Laura Blumenthal went on to emphasise that the trial period was 9 months in order to gauge what impact the arrangement had had, after which the arrangement would be reviewed.

Lindsay Ferris commented that he supported the proposal and had been part of the Personnel Board that had met with the proposed candidate. He emphasised that a review of arrangements following the trial was important and that Wokingham needed to be sure that the arrangements were fair and equal.

In response to a question from Gary Cowan, Julian McGhee Sumner clarified that financial figures had been included for Years 2 and 3 to highlight the possible picture going forward should the arrangement be continued after the 9 month trial.

Richard Dolinski commented that maintaining the status quo was not an option and that the proposal provided an opportunity for good practice and service growth.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council appoint jointly with RBWM a Director to discharge the statutory duties of the Director of Adult Social Services under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 conditional on a similar approval by RBWM passed at Employment Panel on the 16 July 2018 and subject to the approval of a supplementary estimate by Executive on 26 July, effective from 1 August 2018.

#### **24. STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH FOR BERKSHIRE**

The Council considered a report requesting the noting of the appointment of Tessa Lindfield as the Strategic Director for Public Health Berkshire, set out at Agenda pages 37 to 40.

It was proposed by Richard Dolinski and seconded by Laura Blumenthal that the recommendation be agreed.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That it be noted that Tessa Lindfield has been appointed to the role of Strategic Director of Public Health and as this was a statutory post for the Council it be agreed that the formal statutory appointment letter from Public Health England be signed by Wokingham Borough Council.

#### **25. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

The Council considered the Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2017-18, set out at Agenda pages 41 to 52.

It was proposed by Richard Dolinski and seconded by Laura Blumenthal that the recommendation be agreed.

Richard Dolinski referred to the Board's responsibility to reduce health inequalities and the four main priorities within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Laura Blumenthal highlighted the work of the Community Engagement Team.

Barrie Patman commented on a number of organisations involved in the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, including the Community Safety Partnership.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the annual report from the Health and Wellbeing Board 2017-18 be noted.

## **26. RE REVISED SYLLABUS**

The Council considered a report outlining the proposed revised RE syllabus, set out at Agenda pages 53 to 66.

It was proposed by Shahid Younis and seconded by David Hare that the recommendation be agreed.

The current syllabus for RE for Berkshire ran from 2012 to 2017. It had been reviewed and a revised syllabus produced for use from September 2018.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the revised RE Syllabus be adopted.

## **27. LOCALISM ACT PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2018/2019**

The Council considered a report regarding the Localism Act Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19.

It was proposed by Stuart Munro and seconded by Julian McGhee-Sumner that the recommendation be agreed.

Stuart Munro indicated that the Council was required annually to produce a Pay Policy Statement. The Personnel Board had reviewed the Policy and had noted that whilst there had been a slight increase to Senior Management pay the gap was narrowing due to the higher increases at the bottom end of the pay-scales as a result of National Minimum Wage increases.

Julian McGhee Sumner commented that the Directors' pay had not been included in the document but that this information was available.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Policy Pay Statement for 2018 be approved for publication on the Council's website in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

## **28. 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 87 to 108.

It was proposed by Chris Bowring and seconded by Chris Smith that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

During Councillor Bowring's proposal speech he requested Council consider an additional recommendation, as set out below, which whilst referred to in the report had not been included in the recommendations in error,

- 7) that Rule 8.1.1 l) i) be amended as follows
- l) *Applications where the Ward Member(s), or consultations where the affected Ward Member(s), wish(es) the item to be 'listed'. This is conditional in that the listing must: -*
    - i) *Be in writing and within 28 21 days of the notification letter;*

Some Members expressed concern regarding the proposal to reduce the number of days that Ward Members had to list a planning application. It was clarified that the Town and Parish Councils had been informed of the proposals and could request an extension if required. In addition the new system, which was due to go live in mid August, would facilitate the process.

The additional recommendation 7) was agreed by Council.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

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

- 1) that Rule 4.2.10.8 Length of [Member] Question Time be amended as follows:  
*'The time allotted to questions submitted under Notice, including those relating to urgent issues, shall not exceed ~~twenty~~ 30 minutes for **Full Council meetings and 20 minutes for all other committees**. Any questions not answered within the allotted time shall be the subject of a written reply within seven working days to the questioner and the reply shall be recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting.'*
- 2) that Rule 4.4.44 Health and Wellbeing Board Partnership Groups be amended as follows:
  - d) **Wokingham Integrated Partnership**
- 3) that Rule 5.5.1 List of items delegated to Individual Executive Members be amended as follows:
  - d) *Writing off of irrecoverable amounts above ~~£20,000~~ **£25,000**'*
- 4) that Rule 5.2.12.24 Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Resources be amended as follows:  
*'To act as the primary press spokesman on all matters relating to the whole of the Finance, ~~21<sup>st</sup> Century Council, Internal Services and Human and Corporate Resources portfolio (including aspects that are delegated to the Deputy Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Resources).~~'*

- 5) that Rule 11.2 Responsibility for Local Choice Functions be amended to reflect the appointment of the Assistant Director Governance as the Council's Data Protection Officer.
- 6) that Sections 11.4 Officers' Code of Conduct, 11.5 Officer Employment Procedure Rules and 11.6 Delegated Powers Relating to Staffing Matters be amended as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 7) that Rule 8.1.1 l) i) be amended as follows
  - l) *Applications where the Ward Member(s), or consultations where the affected Ward Member(s), wish(es) the item to be 'listed'. This is conditional in that the listing must: -*
    - i) *Be in writing and within 28 21 days of the notification letter;*

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

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

I would like to start by thanking you very much indeed for setting up a new awards scheme for the Borough to recognise the contribution of the many members of our community in terms of adults and children who make a tremendous contribution throughout the Borough. Before I move on to the main theme of my speech tonight, I need to inform the Council that I have appointed Councillor Anthony Pollock as the Executive Member for Highways and Transport which is probably already fairly obvious, and also Councillor David Chopping as his Deputy. Both Members bring a wealth of experience to their roles and I am looking forward to working with them over this coming year.

I have stood before you many times as have previous Leaders and Executive Members to tell you that the climate for local government means that we cannot continue to do the things that we always have. We have spoken frequently of the need to change how we do things, in order to maintain a Council that is sustainable and fit for the future. Talk is very easy though. At the last meeting I spoke about the Council Plan, a document that will set out our priorities, our values and a roadmap as an organisation for the coming years. The Plan engagement document was meant to go to the Executive this month but I have insisted that time is set aside to allow the Opposition Members to feed into it before it goes out to a wider audience, so time has been allowed for you to contribute to it over the next coming months. In September we will begin a consultation with the public and it will be a draft plan before engaging with stakeholders and partners later in the year. This is everyone's opportunity to help shape the future direction of travel. We will be asking the community and stakeholders to say whether they agree with the priorities and values that we have set out for the Authority, for there is another and more vital point, we will be seeking to have a dialogue about a broader agenda, one about a holistic approach to the community and the public sector, voluntary sector and business, can come together to achieve a joint vision.

Local government no longer holds all of the cards. Where there is a problem, the Council may not necessarily be the best one and the best person to be able to produce a solution. Where before we were providers we now need to make the transition to being enablers too, enabling residents to provide solutions where they want to and where they can, encouraging residents to do more to look after each other and with a wealth of other and normally better suited resources, closer to home. To expect the State to solve all of society's problems is to abdicate our moral responsibility to our neighbours and our

community. Part of this is about changing our culture and places barriers in front of residents who want to do more and to take on additional responsibility. But we must keep people safe and ensure a decent audit trail too, but too often has bureaucracy and health and safety been used in the wrong place and the wrong time to prevent someone doing something. Other public sector organisations, businesses, charities, the voluntary sector, community groups and individuals, can build the society that we aspire to see, and want to be part of. The Council Plan engagement will work with residents, organisations and voluntary sector to begin a conversation about what more we can do to enable them to do, so that the buck is not always simply passed back to the Council. The Council will refocus on being the direct provider of statutory services and act as a support for those who really need it. We will use a commercial and entrepreneurial approach to the priorities that our community identifies and residents and other organisations will be enabled where possible to take on more responsibility to provide those things that we as a Council are no longer able to do alone. Democracy is not passive. It is not simply casting a vote at an election and then complaining about what politicians do. We have to create an active society where people do and do not simply have it done to them, where residents both shape the decisions and play a role in delivering the outcomes that our community wants, where local people play a leading and active role in services and shape the direction. All this will not be achieved in the next year. It may not even be achieved in the next 5 years. It is a work of years, engaging and working differently with our full community. We believe in one community, conservatism that empowers our residents and places them at the centre of decision making. It is time for us to show that we trust our local people to look after our local community, look after each other and set the way forward for our whole Borough.

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

The main issue that I would like to discuss is a surprise appeal decision, received about 10 days ago. I think you are all aware that late last year we were able on the strength of an increased level of build rate across the Borough, to have a review of our 5 year land supply, which at that point was a weakness. That 5 year land supply was reassessed as 6.7 years. That particular issue was also reviewed by leading counsel. Parallel with this, or if we can go back a little way, a couple of years ago, we refused a planning application to build houses on Sonning Golf Course and the applicant took that to appeal and much to our surprise the appeal was successful. Clearly the appeal was very flawed so we mounted a Judicial Review of that and we were granted by the Judge that the appeal should be redetermined by a fresh Planning Inspector. That was concluded 2 weeks ago and the Inspector much to everybody's surprise, I think including the applicant, determined that we did not have a 5 year land supply in his opinion. We were very shocked to see this, particularly as he had not recalled any of the available evidence and seemed to question that our assessment of our 6.7 year land supply was something that we had plucked out of thin air, rather than something which was clearly backed up by written statements from the many large developers across the Borough who are delivering at agreed rates. So according to that, this clearly drives a serious coach and horses through our current planning strong position, so we have consulted with our colleagues and we will be mounting a further Judicial Review of this decision. We are grateful in one sense that this decision was made at an informal or written hearing as they are known. Those do not require the highest standard of evidence. Meanwhile we do have a couple of undetermined appeals that are being heard at Public Inquiry and these of course require the highest level of evidence and cross examination usually by QCs, and obviously we are hopeful that the outcomes of those undetermined appeals may resurrect this short term hiatus that we have suffered as a result of this rogue inspector decision.

**Philip Mirfin, Executive Member for Regeneration:**

I would like to give a brief update on the highways related works in Wokingham Market Place and the adjoining roads and an overview re some press comments.

My first subject, is works in the coming week. The lower end of Denmark Street and Langborough Road should reopen for 2 way traffic as promised on the evening of 27 July. The upper section of Denmark Street is planned to be reopened over the weekend of 18-19 August, to through traffic. This is in conjunction with the completion of the major part of the Market Place works. There is likely to be some minor snagging works during the following week and a final deep acid clean and sealing process that will take place over the five nights from 20 August. I have every hope that the Market Place will be fully available for use from Saturday 25 August, cleaned and sealed.

Peach Place is very much on target for opening late November and we have considerable interest in all our units. Elms Field is also progressing at a pace with foundations going into place and access points for the new road and car park constructed.

Some recent press comments have on a number of occasions tried to link the closure of businesses in the town with the Market Place highways works and Town Centre regeneration. Recent examples, the Gig House, only this week Café Rouge's planned closure as well. Both of these businesses have had problems nationally and they have confirmed that those have affected their decisions to close. What is gratifying is the fact that the Gig House ownership changed so rapidly and Café Rouge have also confirmed that they have sold their Wokingham premises to a solid regional chain who will very much benefit from the works in the Town Centre as we have always said. Wokingham's new market town centre is beating the national trend with many of the companies wanting to move here. I look very much forward to the buoyant end to the year for retailers.

**Julian McGhee-Sumner, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Resources:**

I would just like to share three good news stories with Members. I am pleased to report, and as you will have seen in the national and local press, that we collected 99.5% of council tax in year, which makes us the number one performing Council for the fourth year in succession. This is despite increasing our minimum council tax payments to 20%, which is our hardest debt to collect. Every percentage equates to just under £1million so it makes a huge difference to the money available for our vital council services.

We also delivered £89million worth of investment across the Borough on transport, infrastructure, regeneration, education, affordable homes and many other assets for the benefit of our community. This level of capital programme investment is almost five times higher than it was 4 or 5 years ago and it was delivered in the overall budget, a testament to our strong financial controls across the Capital Programme.

Our innovative and ambitious 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council programme delivered on a very stretching savings target of £2million, which was achieved across the Council support services and senior management posts. This cost reduction makes our services even more efficient. It was achieved with minimal impact on the Council's day to day business and it provides us with a strong technological IT platform going forward. It is a reflection of the commitment and capability of our staff and shows that we have a well-managed, credible change management programme in place.

**Pauline Jorgensen, Executive Member for Housing:**

I have several bits of good news to update the Council with. Firstly, Fosters Extra Care in Woodley, a development by the Council's wholly owned subsidiary Loddon Homes, was opened by the Mayor in the middle of June. This is a lovely building, provides 30 spacious 1 bedroom apartments for older people, with on-site care provided by Optalis, Council Care Company. I was at the opening and was delighted to talk to so many residents who were delighted with their new homes. So that is the first bit of news.

Secondly, we are progressing our plans for development of Gorse Ride in Finchampstead. Officers have held one to one meetings with affected council tenants and home owners on the estate. We are looking to submit the planning application for the redevelopment which we expect to cost more than £30million, shortly. Having met some of the residents at the recent Steering Group I am very keen to work with them to ensure that we maintain what is a great community whilst providing them with new, high quality homes.

Thirdly, I have received a letter from the Chair of the Tenants and Landlord Improvement Panel, Steve Bowers. This bears testament to the close working between the Council and tenants and he specifically asked me to read it out at Council. He said 'on behalf of the involved tenants I would like to pass my utmost thanks to Manjeet Gill, Councillor Haitham Taylor, Councillor Dolinski and the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel Members and other Wokingham Borough Council managers who have taken the time to speak with us and listen to our views on the 21<sup>st</sup> century council programme to date. In particular I would like to thank you all for responding and acting on our thoughts regarding having an Assistant Director post which acknowledges the importance of housing. As involved tenants we are very proud of the involvement and strong partnership working we have with Wokingham Borough Council, and look forward to maintaining and enhancing this in the future, under the new structures.' I would like to add my thanks to Steve's, in particular to my predecessor, Councillor Richard Dolinski who has worked really hard since taking on the role to deliver high quality council and affordable housing, needed by our communities, and I hope that I can do him justice now.

**Richard Dolinski, Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing:**

Looking at the agenda and the time, I doubt that the Motion 406 will be debated. If so I want to take the opportunity now to thank the support I have received from Members. I have had some very constructive conversations with our Liberal colleagues and with Councillor Cowan and also with Councillor Croy as well, so thank you for that. As such I will still be inviting Members to join me in a cross party working group to challenge the funding inconsistencies and to lobby and work with central government for a realistic, workable, funding solution for Adult Social Care, particularly here in Wokingham. As said in my support of the joint DAS appointment, we must provide opportunities to implement new ways of working. A good example of funding inconsistencies is our DTOC and remember what I said DTOC was, I should test you guys out, but it is delayed transfer of care, better known as bed blocking. If we were to benchmark our delayed days by 100,000 population for 2017/18 with say our closest neighbours, Wokingham does score well with 54 days delay in comparison to Bracknell Forest of 105 days, Reading 114 days and Windsor and Maidenhead 88 days. Yet at the same time Bracknell Forest receive £1.1million, Reading £1.6million and Windsor and Maidenhead £1.35million whilst Wokingham only receives £112,000 in additional funding. This figure is down from £160,000 from the previous year whilst our neighbours' funding has on a whole remained the same. We are a high performing local authority and as such our Better Care Fund was shortlisted for the first wave of graduate status alongside only 6 other local authorities in

England. If I were to be critical, I do not think we highlight enough of the good practice that Adult Social Care achieves in Wokingham in helping our communities.

**Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Highways and Transport:**

I wanted to bring to Members' attention the fact that the M4 is going to be subject to a Smart motorway conversion and it has to be completed by 2022, because I expect 2022 is when they are going to start work on Heathrow. I have seen and I would recommend you find a copy, download it and have a look at it, at the technical engineering document that sits behind this, and particularly to look at the traffic data, because without a Smart motorway the M4 eastbound is at 100% at 2022. Even with a Smart motorway it is still 90 something percent, and to give my colleague Stuart Munro some comfort, I suspect if we build too many houses it will get to overload even with a Smart motorway. I will be doing some work on this connection, particularly using some of the data from assessment because they emailed me because I asked them about a particular site in my ward which you will all know about. I said 'have you taken this site into account?' they said 'we have only taken into account sites that have planning permissions up to 2014.' They have put some general growth figures in but they have not taken into account any large sites that we might have in our Local Plan refresh, so I think that there is some quite serious problems associated with the M4 and my colleagues and I will be doing work in connection with that.

The other piece that I just want to bring to your attention is that I was attending the Berkshire Local Transport Body that met in Slough this evening and I am pleased to confirm and report back that; funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership for Winnersh Relief Road second phase, which I know is of interest to a number of Liberal Democrats as well as colleagues on this side; the Arborfield Relief Road which I know Gary's particularly interested in; various cycle routes which I think go through Wokingham; the Thames Valley Park and Ride; and the Winnersh Triangle Parkway station, all these projects are slated to have funding through the Local Enterprise Partnership, and so far they are on track.

**Norman Jorgensen, Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries:**

I just want to bring to your attention to a few things. Firstly, at the start of May we began selling compost from recycled garden waste including waste from Re3 at the household recycling centres. We were not sure how well that would go and started with a stock of 2,000 bags. It proved to be very popular and was sold out by the first week in June so next year we plan to make the link between the waste from Re3 to the compost stronger than it was this year. It will be our waste definitely in the compost and we will get a larger stock, as it has proved very popular.

The Re3 partnership was awarded the Best Use of Design and Technology in a Waste Management Facility at the prestigious Let's Recycle 2018 Awards for Excellence and Recycling and Waste Management Event. The Panel of judges recognised Re3 for its efforts to increase the amount of waste that was reused, recycled and composted, especially noticing the recent investment by Wokingham, Reading and Bracknell Councils and FCC Environment in the material recycling facility at Smallmead, enhancing the recycling capability to take pots, tubs and trays.

The Willow House Hospital School was inspected by Ofsted and the report afterwards was very complimentary about the quality of education provided there. The reason I mention this is they included comments about the use of the library service, so I am going to read a small part of the letter from Ofsted to the school Headmaster. *"Teachers promote reading very effectively by making the most of the award winning local library service. The*

*school's own library was skilfully changed to engage pupils especially those who had read poorly prior to admittance to the unit, so as a result more pupils read much more widely and more effectively."* So it is good to see such comments about the work of our library service.

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

#### **Anthony Pollock, Non Executive Director Optalis Limited:**

I enjoyed working with Stuart Rowbotham who was the last person to hold the sole DAS role. I think to some extent we have slightly missed having someone specialising in that role, and I see Julian nodding, who had the role as Executive Member, and I think he and I both worked well with Stuart. I welcome the opportunity to work closely with the new DAS who as Prue said earlier, I do know, and I think that she will be a very good appointment. I look forward to working with her to ensure that the services that Optalis provide to Wokingham Borough Council are the best that they can be and that they improve year on year.

### **31. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

#### **31.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question:**

Can the Executive Member for the new local plan update me on its current progress especially in relation to how many houses are being planned for and where might those houses possibly go?

#### **Answer**

As you are probably fully aware the Council is assembling the necessary evidence to support the Local Plan. I have spent a couple of months looking at that and we are still looking at all of the 270 sites that we have had submitted and most months another few get added to that list. This includes looking at all the land promoted into the local plan process. At this stage, we have not chosen or committed any particular approach or sites to managing future development. All options remain 'on the table,' looking at all the things we can do.

In the context of housing numbers, we expect the Government to introduce a standardised methodology for calculating housing need across England shortly. This has been sadly missing for a long time. We start with the objectively assessed need then some formula is applied and there are lots of interpretation of those formulas. They have promised us that this will be sorted shortly. This intent was first indicated in the housing white paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' in February 2017, with a draft methodology proposed as part of the consultation 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' in September 2017, which obviously did not work.

Ministers have indicated that the standardised methodology and we have had it confirmed in a couple of cases, as late as this afternoon to one of our Officers, alongside updates to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) before the summer parliamentary recess in July i.e. by the end of next week. So I think until such time as that is, then we are not going to commit to any form of numbers and before we go out to the consultation process.

**Supplementary Question:**

I attended an IMD last week which you signed off. In that the document says Berkshire authorities will use their best endeavours to meet the full OAN numbers and that is the existing numbers. There was an appendix to that document from Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils using words I have never, ever heard a council say to another council and that is an “*unsound approach to plan making that is preventing at worse and hindering at best an essential duty to cooperate discussions across east and western SHMAs.*” It goes on to say that this is considered to amount to a failure across Berkshire in meeting its duty to cooperate for key, strategic planning matters. In light of what the Leader said in this welcome and all of 3,000 residents have signed petitions designed to protect our green fields, what action are we actually taking in this authority to fight our corner instead of just acquiescing the Government’s point of view?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I totally agree with you. The reason for South Bucks withdrawing from the Housing Market Assessment area as you know was that they did not really want to participate in the process and take all the houses that were required for Slough. They prefer to align themselves with Buckinghamshire. The wording that they used in their notes is unfortunate and I assure you that we will not be doing nothing to tell anybody what we are supposed to do.

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

Residents are upset by the supposed wild areas in parks and verges being kept for supposed wildlife habitats. They seem messy and they are unable to use them for recreation with their families. Can the Member for the Environment please tell me what the exact species of animals or insects are present (other than rats, mice, rabbits, ticks and fleas) there and when they were last checked?

**Answer**

That is fairly easy to answer. I had wondered where they had gone. During 2014 and 2015 the Council undertook reviews of grass cutting. There was a public consultation and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on five occasions at least considered evidence and made recommendations during contract re-tendering. The policy of allowing certain areas to grow longer while others were cut shorter was established during these consultations. I do not remember any real dissent at that time

Since establishing the long grass areas in 2016 we have aimed to strike a balance between improving biodiversity and maintaining open spaces for residents to use for recreational purposes. Therefore, the Council undertakes grass cutting in locations and areas important for recreation use to ensure that there is sufficient land available for this purpose.

You asked what species we are encouraging so here we go. Longer grass is good for invertebrates such as grasshoppers, bees, butterflies and moths – particularly where it facilitates safe overwintering. Other invertebrates such as ants, leatherjackets and beetles are often in greater abundance in areas not subject to intensive mowing. These in turn feed birds such as starlings and green woodpeckers; mammals such as shrews, voles, hedgehogs and bats. In turn small mammals are prey for species of birds such as kestrels and barn owls.

Where we leave the grass to grow long in our parks and open spaces, this also helps provide space for ground nesting birds. Flowers that are allowed to set seed provide an important food source for farmland birds for which there is great concern over declining numbers.

We have had a number of compliments for this approach.

If there are specific areas where you feel the grass cutting regime is not correct then send me details and we will have a look at it.

**Supplementary Question:**

Some of our residents would also like to return some of the rats and mice and a few other things that they have acquired from these areas as well. Where would you like them sent?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Back where they came from I guess really.

**31.3 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

Vast areas of Wokingham Borough have been left uncut this year and where grass has been cut, it has only been done so when it had grown long. This has caused our area to look tatty and unkept. There was some improvement in 2017, but this year feels like 2016 again when implementation issues were given as the reason for the problems that occurred. Now that similar problems are again occurring in 2018, implementation of the contract cannot now be the problem.

Does the Executive Member agree that it is time for a thorough review of this contract, to see how the performance in this area can be improved?

**Answer**

I agree that grass cutting has not come up to the standards laid out in the contract, mainly due to a late start, due to a very cold March, and then a very wet April. However, whilst the weather did play a part, the main reason was that the first cut took far too long with some areas having to wait up to seven weeks, which did lead to many areas looking unkempt. Areas that were cut first looked better than in previous years.

We are currently reviewing the resources on this Contract to see if they are appropriate to deliver the required standard and can confirm that Officers have been putting pressure on Tivoli Group Ltd (who took over this year from ISS Facilities Services) to see how we can improve matters. There has been an improvement due to extra resources being brought in at no extra cost.

In addition, as I highlighted to you previously at the time you put the question in, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will carry out a review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract, which will start on 1 August.

**Supplementary Question:**

I am pleased that Overview and Scrutiny are looking at this. I think that people's inboxes have been pretty full, certainly in May and June. It has been a lot less because of the hot weather, but when we have a review, will this review include completely looking at the contract with the potential of stopping it if we are not happy with it?

**Supplementary Answer:**

It is up to Overview and Scrutiny what the scope of their review is, so on 1 August I will certainly be there and Officers so we can answer any initial questions. It is then up to Overview and Scrutiny to decide how to proceed from there.

**31.4 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Resources the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Regeneration:**

Please can you advise exactly how much the Wokingham Town Council Market Place has cost so far, and could there be more cost to come?

**Answer**

In terms of cost to the local taxpayer, the answer is zero, because this investment in the future of the town is funded entirely by developer contributions, including S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy. The overall budget is £3.8million (plus contingency) which is split 50/50 between Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham Town Council. We will not know what the final cost is until we have concluded the contract because there will remain elements to resolve, which is normal for a contract of this type.

**Supplementary Question:**

I read in last week's Wokingham Paper that Wokingham Borough Council were commissioning a review of the project once it is complete. My question is why are we waiting for the project to be completed for this review and where is the funding for this review coming from?

**Supplementary Answer:**

What an excellent question. It gives me the opportunity to confirm that I have asked for an independent audit of the entire project from the concept to the conclusion. I have also asked that it starts before the project finishes so that we can talk to everybody who is around the site. I understand that there is sufficient budget within Highways to pay for that.

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

Workers at Wokingham town centre businesses are struggling to find available spaces in affordable, conveniently located parking in the town centre. This is having a detrimental impact on the local businesses.

A very affordable and flexible local town centre staff parking scheme at for example, the Carnival Pool Multi Storey that you are promoting people use, could help to address this issue.

Will you create an affordable and flexible town centre worker parking rate scheme for the duration of all the Regeneration Programme works and beyond?

**Answer**

Town centre regeneration I understand is well on its way to completion with the Market Place being completed shortly and Peach Street being completed probably by Christmas. However, I have some sympathy with Town Centre lower paid workers, who I assume is

the group that you are concerned about, and I will therefore review the situation.

**31.6 Philip Mirfin asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

With the opening of another section of the NDR and the assurance from Council Officers that the NDR and SDR will effectively be clearways with no parking on them, is this an opportunity to make them 40mph zones?

**Answer**

I was Executive Member when this road was first mooted and put it into the Local Transport Plan I think somewhere around 2006, and at the time had an idea that it would be a distributor road, i.e. that it would have a reasonable speed limit to it, not necessarily 60mph but certainly a reasonable speed limit. If it is possible to keep it at 40mph then I will do so.

**Supplementary Question:**

I hope that is very much the case. The indication I have had from Officers is that they are looking more at 30mph than 40mph and I would hope that that can be carried through because I think it is important that we keep the flow of traffic up at a reasonable pace and we also ensure that those clearways are unrestricted.

**Supplementary Answer:**

I think if this road is to fulfil its function as a distributor road which I intend it to be a route that traffic, particularly from the Winnersh Relief Road, would choose to use rather than come through the Town Centre, then I think the speed limit has to be reasonable otherwise people will not use it and the Town Centre will clog up even more.

**31.7 Carl Doran asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement:**

Has the Council had any contact from Reading Borough Council on the subject of the East Reading "Mass Rapid Transit" scheme which was refused by the Planning Committee on 25th June?

**Answer:**

I will be answering the question since it relates to Planning. Yes, I can confirm that we have had contact from Reading Borough Council and hopefully by means of your supplementary I will be able to elaborate.

**Supplementary Question:**

I know that they have been intending to resubmit the application. The capital costs of the Reading MTR has been set at £24million in 2016 prices, £19million of that comes from the Local Enterprise Partnership, leaving a shortfall of around £5million. How much of that £5million will be paid by this Council?

**Supplementary Answer:**

At this point in time there is no valid planning application so until a new application is made we do not know the details of that application. Reading has made it very clear that they recognise Wokingham Members, including yourself on the Planning Committee, had valid criticisms of the scheme and they are proposing to try and address those criticisms and

come back with a new scheme. Until we see that new scheme I do not think that it would be wise to speculate about what the likely costs or budgets will be.

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

### **32.1 Shahid Younis asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

According to the Wokingham Paper, Labour have stated that Wokingham Borough Council axed the previous 19A bus. However, Reading Buses are controlled by Labour Reading Council and therefore that it is outside the control of Wokingham Borough Council. So can I ask the Executive Member to clarify what the real facts are?

#### **Answer:**

Reading Buses have a habit of under bidding for bus contracts and then about 18 months' later they turn up and threaten to withdraw them unless we pay them more money, which is what happened in this case. We have instead put in a slightly different service which covers Earley and Woodley following consultations with the public, which I think will end up being a better service than the service that was there before. But as I said the reason for the previous service ceasing was because Reading Buses under quoted and then demanded money with menaces.

### **32.2 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

On Monday next week SGN will be starting to dig up the Winnersh crossroads as part of the gas mains replacement and as a consequence of that SGN have sent the local Members, emails, explaining that if you are coming out of King Street Lane or Robin Hood Lane, so on the B3030, you will only be able to turn left out of those roads. However, signs that the Council have put up to warn of this work say 'no right turn', they do not explain that there is no straight on either. I have mentioned this to Highways. The signs were still there when I came in this evening. Please can you make sure that before Monday people will be warned that they will not be able to go straight on either?

#### **Answer:**

I am very happy to take that up on your behalf.

### **32.3 Keith Baker asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

Members may well have seen the announcement that Woodford Park in Woodley has been given a Green Flag Award. The Green Flag Award for those of you that do not know, is an international award which has been running for 30 years. It is a sign to the public that the space has achieved the highest possible environmental standards maintained and has excellent facilities. Can I ask the Leader of this Council to write to Woodley Town Council and Friends of Woodford on achieving this excellent award?

#### **Answer:**

I did admire the picture in the paper this week of many members of the community holding the flag, including Councillor Richard Dolinski. I am very happy to write to those members of the community who have got involved in order to shape the park to what it is today. So I congratulate them and I have recently visited the Park and it is a wonderful place. Congratulations to all of those people involved in that particular project.

**32.4 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

As Simon Weeks made reference to the Sonning appeal I address this question to him. I read the paper and there were three issues that I found that concerned me. One was that the Council made reference to a 5% buffer where the historic figure that we used in most of our Planning documents was 20%. They referred to 450 houses on Cutbush Lane and they did not bring any legal representation to the appeal. Does he not think that weakened our case and put us in this less than 5 year land supply predicament that we are now in, which is very disappointing?

**Answer:**

Firstly in terms of the 5% versus the 20% buffer our calculations show that we are substantially exceeding either of those so it would not have made any difference whether it was the 5% or 20% buffer that was being used. The second point regarding legal representation is that, as I explained in my earlier statement, the appeal was by means of a hearing and these are held in an informal sense and it is very unusual to have any legal representation on either side. The relevant part is sitting around a table trying to thrash out the issues. It is only when you get to the Public Inquiry level of Inquiry, that there is legal representation, as a minimum barristers and sometimes QCs on both sides. I also alluded in my answer to the fact that we are awaiting an undetermined appeal which is being held by Public Inquiry and we are hoping that Inspector may come to a more appropriate decision.

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

Regarding the travellers that recently went on to Laurel Park today, has notice been served to them or not, to leave the park?

**Answer:**

It happened not so long ago and I believe a notice has been served on them to depart the site.

**32.6 Imogen Shepherd DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

Within my ward on the Reading Road and within Winnersh, we have had problems with trucks putting aggregate and concrete on to the roads. It has caused at least one accident that we know of and we have got witnesses who have traced the trucks back to the Toutley Depot where the cement batching plant that we have been trying to get rid of, exists. Please can I have an update of when that cement batching plant is going to be moving?

**Answer:**

Again we are arranging that through the lease arrangements with Property Services which is a more effective way of addressing the issue than the planning system. Inevitably whilst it may be more effective I am afraid it is somewhat more long winded and I will arrange to get you an update on how that is developing.

**32.7 Chris Smith asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:**

Reading the Lib Dem manifesto it was stated that Wokingham Borough Council is to provide more of its own land for housing. Have the Lib Dems proposed any sites either in Hillside, which I understand will also be of interest to you as well, or across the Borough, and as Executive Member for Housing have you tried engaging with the Lib Dems on this issue?

**Answer:**

I was actually interested and heartened to hear from the Lib Dem Leader Councillor Ferris at the last Council meeting, that they had a Housing Strategy to include the supply of affordable housing. I believed that this was an opportunity for real cross party working to deliver much needed affordable housing. Straight after the meeting I emailed Councillor Ferris to ask for a copy. He kindly responded a couple of days later referring me a website and an A4 paper entitled 'Homes for local People' which he said they had been working on for several months. Imagine my disappointment to find that this document said nothing more about affordable housing provision than we need to provide more council land for development and WBC should build more houses ourselves through its housing companies. I agree with you that but I could have done with a bit more detail. Undaunted I emailed him back asking what sites they had in mind for the Council to develop and what numbers they were thinking about. I was unable to get any specifics other than they would support some sites and not others. I tried again to no avail for specific proposals that we could work together on. I would like to stop the provision of affordable housing from being a political football where campaigns are whipped up for political advantage, but I fear that this is not where the Lib Dems are heading, and no, I have not managed to get any constructive proposals from them but I will keep trying.

I would like to put on record that I would welcome any suggestions from the Labour, Liberal or indeed Independents, as to specific sites they would like to progress. This really needs to be taken out of the political arena so we can provide needed, affordable housing. Perhaps the remaining Labour Member would like to pass this request back to his Leader who seems to have gone.

**32.8 Helen Power asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:**

My question is regarding anti-social behaviour problems in and around the Woosehill area. The Wokingham Borough Council Community Safety booklet states that Wokingham Borough Council will support projects to improve your community. So will you commit to enabling a Youth Centre, youth Outreach workers and a Woosehill Community Development Worker to be put into this area as soon as possible in order to tackle underlying problems that are creating the anti-social behaviour?

**Answer:**

Clearly it is unlikely that I can give commitments like that on the hoof. You have been in discussion with WBC Officers about this issue and I am hoping that there is constructive work going on to address this. Anti-social behaviour is not to be tolerated and where it is happening it needs to be dealt with very firmly, and there needs to be enough activities for people of all ages, especially during the summer holidays when lots of people are looking for things to do. I am hoping that the discussions that you have had with our Officers are fruitful in that sense.

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

It took about 2.5 years for the Winnersh crossroads to be fixed. How long is it going to take you to fix the traffic signals on King Street Lane and the Relief Road, because right now they are causing terrific tail backs? Hopefully less than 2.5 years.

**Answer:**

Hopefully you are correct.

**32.10 Philip Mirfin asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Can the Executive Member for Highways once again please update me on the outcome of the recent consultation on reducing the speed limit on Old Forest Road, Emmbrook, and the development of a chicane? If the consensus is that the residents want this, when will this work commence, particularly as the section of the NDR from Twyford Road to Toutley has now been opened and this can seriously affect Old Forest Road.

**Answer:**

I do not have the details to hand of the response from the consultation but obviously if there is a significant majority in favour of the proposal then I am happy to deliver and I will deliver it as soon as we can.

**33. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING**

At this point in the meeting 10.09pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 10.30pm for a maximum of 30 minutes to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. This was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Lindsay Ferris.

Upon being put to the meeting, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be lost.

**34. MOTIONS**

**34.1 Motion 404 submitted by Lindsay Ferris**

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

‘This Council will use its discretionary powers to grant hardship relief from business rates for independent businesses whose income has been adversely affected by the ongoing works in Wokingham town centre related to the town centre regeneration or the Market Place project, and will take steps to advertise the existence of hardship relief to those businesses.’

Following debate of the Motion a vote was proposed.

**34.2 Adjournment of the meeting**

At this point, 10.20pm, the meeting adjourned for a short period as requested by Julian McGhee Sumner to allow consideration of whether to propose amending the Motion.

### 34.3 Recommencement of the meeting

At 10.26pm the meeting recommenced.

### 34.4 Motion 404 continued

Prior to a vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.5, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed Motion.

The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Keith Baker		John Kaiser
Parry Batth		Bill Soane
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Prue Bray		
Jenny Cheng		
Gary Cowan		
Richard Dolinski		
Lindsay Ferris		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
David Hare		
Graham Howe		
John Jarvis		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Julian McGhee-Sumner		
Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Anthony Pollock		
Helen Power		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey		
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Simon Weeks		
Oliver Whittle		
Shahid Younis		

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

**RESOLVED:** That this Council will use its discretionary powers to grant hardship relief from business rates for independent businesses whose income has been adversely affected by the ongoing works in Wokingham town centre related to the town centre regeneration or the Market Place project, and will take steps to advertise the existence of hardship relief to those businesses.

**34.5 Motion 405 submitted by Gary Cowan**

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

**34.6 Motion 406 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.