

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 7.50 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Jorgensen (Chairman), Pauline Helliard-Symons, Norman Jorgensen, Anthony Pollock and Simon Weeks

Other Councillors Present

Rachel Burgess
David Hare
Malcolm Richards

70. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Philip Mirfin and Stuart Munro.

71. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 25 October 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader.

72. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Norman Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 73 Shareholders' Report by virtue of the fact that his wife was a paid Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillor Jorgensen remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 73 Shareholders' Report by virtue of the fact that she was a paid Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillor Jorgensen remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 73 Shareholders' Report by virtue of the fact that he was a paid Non-Executive Director of Optalis Holdings Ltd. Councillor Pollock remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

73. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

73.1 Tamzin Morphy had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question. Due to her inability to attend the meeting the following written reply was provided:

Question

Would the Member for Planning and Enforcement confirm that the Council will continue to protect the Reading East riverside for the foreseeable future in accordance with national and local policies including, CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy

Answer

A planning application (182892) has recently been received by WBC for the construction of a segregated fast track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge, and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced cycle embankment, together with new footway links and existing footway alterations, junction improvements and landscaping on land between Thames Valley Business Park and Napier Road Reading. Consultation and publicity for this application has recently been undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements. I can confirm National and Local Development Plan policies, including Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, will be taken into account as part of the scheme's evaluation, as will Core Strategy Policy CP10 and point 10 which relates to "High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors". WBC Planning Officers will make a recommendation, taking all relevant policies and all other material considerations and representation into account, in their recommendation to the Planning Committee, who will make a final decision.

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

Question

I would like to ask whoever is Leader of the Council a question about the income derived from car parking in the Borough. The Carnival car park received a loan of £1.5 million from the Government (via the LEP), so can you tell me, a tax and Council tax payer, how much income has been received this year from this car park?

Answer

Income generated this year is £61,312.80. That is this financial year.

Supplementary Question

A shock first of all about how little money has been raised by it. I was going to go on to say as we all know regeneration is going on rapidly, perhaps with the exception of the road works here which were due to finish in October and we now have an unpublished date I believe of 17th December; but it would be good if it were published.

So before long we should be seeing Aldi, which will be up and running on Elms Field, offering free parking for customers and the Premier Inn will be taking guests. What plans have you got to ensure that the car park will produce significantly more income, and I will emphasise significantly now I know how little has been raised, for council tax payers in the future?

Supplementary Answer

I think the answer to your question is that the successful regeneration of Wokingham Town will increase the patronage of Wokingham Town and will increase the demand for car parking in Wokingham Town which will increase the revenue for Wokingham Town.

The other piece I think I would say is a lot of the free car parks are 2 hours only and you cannot really shop seriously in Wokingham in less than 4 hours so I am expecting more people to need to use the multi-storey car park, either because they work in the town or because they wish to have an extended stay in the town. They may wish to go to the cinema or go to a restaurant, therefore I would expect the income from the car park to rise once the town centre redevelopment is completed.

74. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

74.1 Gary Cowan had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question. Due to his inability to attend the meeting the following written reply was provided:

Question

In planning terms what is the normal determination period in Wokingham Borough Council for minor and major planning applications?

Answer

The statutory time period for the determination of planning applications is 8 weeks for minor applications and householder applications, and 13 weeks for major applications. If accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment, the assessment period for major applications is extended to 16 weeks.

However, despite the statutory timescales, it is common practice for application timescales to be extended in agreement with the applicant. This is especially when a scheme is major in nature and the issues raised are complex. Many major schemes this Council has determined have taken months if not years to determine. This is more likely where there is negotiation with the applicant or further information needs to be requested.

The Council is in a much stronger position to be able to determine an application and negotiate appropriate controls in the form of legal agreements and conditions, when in possession of all relevant information. This helps to ensure that the assessment process is as robust as possible and enables the Council to mount a stronger case to successfully defend its position, in the event a decision is challenged through the appeal process. Our experience is that premature refusal and subsequent appeal before all the relevant facts are known leaves the conditions and agreements in the hands of the developer or Inspector at appeal. A negotiated outcome is normally much better for those who may be affected by major planning proposals.

74.2 Rachelle Shepherd DuBey had asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to her inability to attend the meeting the following written reply was provided:

Question

Have we not learned from the chaos of all the town works at the same time? Could we please finish the Winnersh Relief Road including its roundabout before starting the roadworks for the NWDR Winnersh Roundabout?

Answer

In line with the approved planning application, determined at Planning Committee in October 2018, the two roundabouts (Winnersh Relief Road with the A321 and the A321 with the NWDR spur) are to be constructed together. This decision was made, as it would reduce multiple schemes being undertaken upon the A321 Reading Road, one after another.

This method will allow for the two roundabouts to be built at the same time, utilising one set of traffic management, the same construction team, and preventing the need to

remove all machinery and materials away from site, to only bring them back again, to do the second roundabout at a later stage. This approach is also more cost effective and will result in minimal future impacts upon the A321 whilst the section of the NDR along the west of Old Forest Road is being delivered.

75. SHAREHOLDERS' REPORT

(Councillors Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen and Anthony Pollock declared personal interests in this item)

The Executive considered a report which provided an update on the performance and progress on those subsidiary companies that the Council has a controlling shareholder interest in.

The Deputy Leader of Council outlined the key points of the report which were that Wokingham Housing Ltd had built 123 new homes last year and were also starting to pay off the operational loans back to the Council which she was particularly pleased to announce.

Councillor Pollock reported that Optalis continued to deliver high quality adult social care services and highlighted the fact that recent CQC inspections of the services provided had resulted in a 'good' rating rather than a 'requires improvement' rating which had been achieved in the past. This was due to the significant improvement made by the current Chief Executive and his team. It was also noted that the turnover of staff had recently halved which was due mainly to the efficiencies in working and the career opportunities for staff which had come about as a result of the recent merger with The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

In addition Councillor Pollock advised the meeting that Optalis continued to make a profit and highlighted the private work that was being undertaken which included the service provided through Reading College where an employment service for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities was provided to enable them to gain employment.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the budget monitoring position for the month ending 30th September 2018 be noted;
- 2) the operational update for the period to 30th September 2018 be noted.

76. WORKINGHAM INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The Executive considered a report related to a proposed Internship Programme managed and run by Addington School which would provide a framework to enable children with special educational needs and disabilities to secure paid employment. The intention was that the Council's directorates would provide the placement for the young people.

When introducing the report the Executive Member for Children's Services advised that nationally 94% of people with learning difficulties remained unemployed. However locally Addington already did a tremendous job in helping young people to gain employment and Councillor Helliar-Symons was therefore very happy to support the proposal. In addition to the main benefits of the proposal it would also help to support many of the Council's own policies eg: contribute towards the successful transition from childhood to adulthood; help young people develop their skills and learn tasks that may help them hold down a job of

work and; gain proper employment as they grow up. It would also provide support to their parents and carers.

Councillor Helliar-Symons highlighted that helping these young people into employment wherever possible was part of the Council's Special Needs Strategy and provided other examples of where Addington had assisted it's pupils gain employment experience eg running Shutters Café in the Council Offices and working with other local employers. It was noted that many of these young people do go on to gain paid employment at a later stage.

The School was asking the Council to support the initiative by providing a number internships at the Council in areas eg the parks department and leisure centres. It was noted that the programme would be co-ordinated by Addington School and there was a grant available that would cover the set-up and first year's costs and after that it was envisaged that it would become self-funding.

Councillor Pollock queried whether discussions had taken place with Optalis in relation to the programme they were running at Reading College? It was confirmed that if the proposal was agreed discussions would then be held with all Council departments, including Optalis.

Councillor Weeks felt that if the internship was successful the Council should strongly promote the benefits in order to encourage other employers in the Borough to offer internships.

RESOLVED: That the WORKingham Internship Programme working in partnership with Addington 'Routes to Work' Team be approved.

77. FEES AND CHARGES

The Executive considered a report related to proposed changes to the Council's fees and charges and the Wokingham element of the Public Protection Partnership Service.

The Executive Member for Environment tabled a revised Appendix B to the report which related to the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) Service's fees and charges. This was due to the fact that it was found that, in the version contained in the agenda, some of the current year comparative figures were incorrect and differed from those presented to the Licensing Committee. It was noted that the revised schedule did not in any way change the figures for 2019/20. Councillor Norman Jorgensen advised that a charge relating to High Hedges, as shown in Appendix B in the agenda, had been deleted in the tabled version as this charge only applied to the other two authorities in the partnership as Wokingham provided the service itself; which was why it was contained in Appendix A.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen then went through the report and highlighted that most of the charges had been increased by inflation; an average of 3.2% which related to the RPI as at July 2018. Some of the fees and charges also varied according to the cost of providing the service and most of the revised fees and charges would be brought in from 1 December 2018; with those for sports from 1 January 2019, and cemeteries, housing and youth and community charges from 1 April 2019. With regard to the PPP fees and charges it was noted that these had been benchmarked against other authorities to ensure that the Council was remaining competitive whilst maximising income from the services.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved to be effective from the dates listed on the schedule;
- 2) Wokingham's discretionary fees and charges for the Public Protection Partnership be approved, and the statutory charges be noted, as set out in the revised Appendix B of the report as tabled, to be effective from 1 April 2019.