

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL
HELD ON 22 MAY 2019 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.15 PM**

Members Present

Councillors: Bill Soane (Mayor), Malcolm Richards (Deputy Mayor), Keith Baker, Parry Batth, Rachel Bishop-Firth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Shirley Boyt, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Jenny Cheng, UllaKarin Clark, Stephen Conway, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Carl Doran, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Guy Grandison, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, David Hare, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Emma Hobbs, Graham Howe, Clive Jones, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Sarah Kerr, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Tahir Maher, Charles Margetts, Adrian Mather, Andrew Mickleburgh, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray, Barrie Patman, Ian Pittock, Angus Ross, Daniel Sargeant, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Caroline Smith, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Alison Swaddle, Simon Weeks and Oliver Whittle

1. ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

John Kaiser, the current Mayor, welcomed recently elected Members. Councillor Kaiser thanked his wife, the Deputy Mayor and the Officers who had supported him throughout his year in office. During the year £24,993 had been raised for the Mayor's charity, the Me2 Club.

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Mayor for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by John Kaiser and seconded by Simon Weeks that Bill Soane be elected as Mayor for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Bill Soane be elected as Mayor for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

Bill Soane made the statutory acceptance of office pursuant to Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Bill Soane thanked the Council for electing him as Mayor for the 2019-20 Municipal Year and thanked his wife Hilary for her support. The Mayor welcomed the new Members to the Council meeting and announced that his charity for the year would be DEBRA, a charity which supported those suffering from Epidermolysis Bullosa, and their families. He went on to welcome two officers from the charity to the meeting.

2. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by Bill Soane and seconded by Lindsay Ferris that Malcolm Richards be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Malcolm Richards be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

Malcolm Richards made the statutory acceptance of office pursuant to Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Malcolm Richards thanked the Council for appointing him to the office of Deputy Mayor which he regarded as an honour.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the amendment of the words 'drive on a' to 'dry and' in the ward question submitted by Ian Pittock.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Maria Gee and Ken Miall.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Lindsay Ferris declared a Personal Interest in Item 11 Member Question Time on the grounds that he was a Non Executive Director of Loddon Homes Limited.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

Ian Pittock referred to the fact that outgoing Executive Members replied to public questions at the Annual Meeting. Councillor Pittock felt that the Public Question Time for this meeting should take place after the new Executive Members were announced.

Members agreed that this suggestion be referred to the Constitution Review Working Group.

6.1 Martin Branch asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

As 18m has been described as a reasonable distance between an overlooking window and my property, what distance would be considered as unreasonable below 18m?

Answer

Every planning application is considered on its merits and the impact on neighbouring amenities is assessed and always referred to in the Officer's report. The Borough Design Guide does not advise a minimum distance between side elevations for new development as this can often depend on the circumstances. Where windows are high level roof lights, these are often placed very close to other properties, even right on the boundary so there would be no minimum in these cases.

Supplementary Question:

Do the Planning Regulations stipulate a minimum distance when deciding to install a new window facing existing windows on a neighbour's property?

Supplementary Answer:

I think you will need to have a written answer on that as it is a technical question.

6.2 Gill Purchase asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question. Due to her inability to attend the following written

answer was provided:

How much did Crest Nicholson contribute via the section 106 agreement for the provision of a Swimming Pool within the Arborfield Strategic Development Location?

Answer

The swimming pool contribution agreed by Crest Nicholson Partnerships via the S106 Agreement for the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location equates to a contribution of £257.11 per dwelling, and is for the provision of enhanced, additional or new swimming pool facilities within the Council's administrative area. Assuming 2,000 dwellings, that would be a payment of £514,220. Payment is not due until the one thousandth dwelling has been occupied. There are currently 287 new homes occupied.

6.3 Tom Mayers asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

On 18 March I reported a pothole on Binfield Road near the junction to Barrett Crescent which has not yet been repaired. I got an email from the Council on 1st April saying that they aim to repair the pothole within 28 days which has now been and gone. I got a further update email on 11th April saying that they have investigated the pothole and confirmed that it needed fixing at the time. As of 13th May it's still not been repaired and is getting worse and will only get worse. I would like to ask the Council when do they think they will get this repaired?

Answer

Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

The Council have recently entered into a new highway and transport contract and there has been a transition between the old providers Balfour and the new providers Volker. The teams have been working very hard to ensure that the impact of this transition is minimal but I am afraid that this is a case which has slipped through the net as a result.

We have followed up your enquiry which was logged as Barrett Crescent rather than Binfield Road, which might be why they could not find it to fix it and I can now confirm that our team from Volk's completed the fix on 17th May and I would like to apologise for the delay and thank you for bringing it up.

7. PETITIONS

The following Member presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

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

Stephen Conway	Stephen Conway presented a petition on behalf of Twyford residents, containing 80 signatures regarding the problem of commuter parking in Wessex Gardens. <i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport.</i>
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8. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER - BOROUGH AND TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Council considered a report from the Returning Officer, set out at Agenda pages 45 to 48, which gave details of the results of the local elections held on 2 May 2019. The elections were held for 18 wards of the Borough Council, the Town Councils of Earley, Woodley and Wokingham and the north ward of Twyford Parish Council.

The report outlined the election process, the results and also the turnout for each Borough ward contested. It was noted that feedback was received at most stages of the elections process and this would be reviewed and fed into planning for future elections.

It was moved by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by John Halsall that the report of the Returning Officer be noted.

In response to a question from Andy Croy as to whether the results for the European Election could be recorded on a ward by ward basis, the Monitoring Officer clarified that this was not allowed.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the report of the Returning Officer be noted.

9. MAYOR'S OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Mayor's announcements.

10. ELECTION OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

In accordance with the governance arrangements which were adopted by Council at its meeting on 18 November 2010, the Mayor called for nominations for the Office of Leader of the Council for a four year term (or until the Leader's Term of Office as a Councillor expired).

It was proposed by Emma Hobbs and seconded by John Kaiser that John Halsall be elected as Leader of the Council for a four year term.

John Kaiser commented that John Halsall would carry out his duties as Leader to the best of his ability. He had a real sense of civic duty and always put residents first. He looked forward to working with him and helping to steer the Council through difficult times ahead.

There were no other nominations.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That John Halsall be elected as Leader of the Council for a four year term.

10.1 Statement by John Halsall, Leader of the Council

My Deputy is John Kaiser, the Executive Member for Children's Services is UllaKarin Clark and Deputy for Children's Services is Graham Howe; the Environment is Parry Batth and his Deputy is Michael Firmager. John Kaiser, as well as being the Deputy, will have the brief of Finance and Housing and his Deputy is Daniel Sargeant. Charles Margetts will handle Adult Services. His Deputy, I am very pleased to say, will be Richard Dolinski. For Planning, Wayne Smith, and his Deputy, I am also very pleased to say is Gary Cowan. Highways is Pauline Jorgensen and her Deputy will be Malcolm Richards. Business and

Economic Development is Stuart Munro with a Deputy of Barrie Patman. Climate Emergency is Gregor Murray, with his Deputy Laura Blumenthal. Regeneration is Charlotte Haitham Taylor and her Deputy, Dianne King.

I am enormously humbled to have been elected Leader of the Council. I hope to serve all of you in the period that I fill this post. We have many new faces here tonight. Welcome to you all. Welcome also to Susan, our new Chief Executive. We should also remember those who have given long and dedicated service who are no longer Members.

Mr Mayor, since last we met, sadly Bob Wyatt a stalwart of Wokingham Borough and Town passed away and Lyra McKee was murdered in Londonderry. Between them they represent the good, the diversity, the tradition, the hope, the optimism, the aspiration and vision of the United Kingdom today. We are a great country, have been a great country and will be a great country. Through the ages we have contributed to the world the template of modern life - science, literature, constitutional democracy, music, the industrial revolution, engineering etc. etc. We punch above our weight in all of these and more. But most importantly we are a liberal democracy looking after our least fortunate and playing a major part in alleviating deprivation around the world. At a moment of great national self-doubt, it is worth reminding ourselves of the place in the world that we have had and we continue to have.

As we begin our Municipal Year, I have no need to remind you that we are here for one purpose and one alone, which is to serve our residents and provide the very best services for the optimal cost. I am sure that all of us are proud that the Borough scores highly despite being the lowest funded unitary authority in England. We are indeed fortunate to live in this beautiful and vibrant part of the United Kingdom. Wokingham Borough is consistently among the best places to live and to do business.

We have a superb team of Directors and Officers who in the past achieved miracles and did so with very limited resources. I am sure that I can rely upon them to reach further and deliver a very ambitious programme for this administration.

In the last 20 years the impact of climate change on our world has changed conditions far faster than ever imagined. It may sound frightening, but the scientific evidence is that if we have not taken dramatic action within the next decade we could face irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse of our society. We are running out of time but there's still hope... I believe that if we better understand the threat we face, the more likely it is that we can avoid such a catastrophic future. Therefore, it is my intention that the administration hopefully seconded by the Leader of the Opposition with unanimous opposition support brings forward a motion to July Council as follows:

"Wokingham Borough Council believes the world is now in a climate emergency. More concerted and urgent action is needed at local, national and international level to protect our planet for future generations. As such, this Council commits to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030 and report within six months as to what actions are required."

The Executive Member for Climate Emergency will champion this programme as his key task. It may be vogueish and considered as jumping on the bandwagon, but the imperative of the clock ticking means that we have no option but to take on this target. You may wonder how we as a Borough can make an impact. Lots and lots and lots of ways without

waiting for big infrastructure delivery. I will run through a few of the opportunities.

We do not start from scratch. We have been continually seeking to become more efficient in the use of resources including reducing the amount of energy used on our own estate. These actions will help to reduce carbon emissions, (although the Council does not measure currently carbon emissions directly) and address climate change. Some of the Council's key actions and achievements to reduce energy usage and increase recycling are: Purchasing a proportion of its energy from generated renewable sources with a target of 25% renewables; installing solar panels on Council buildings; low energy lighting has been fitted in over 30% of Council buildings, which has saved an estimated 11% in energy consumption; insulation has been installed in over 20 Council buildings, saving over 3% in energy; enabling and encouraging more sustainable travel through enhancing pedestrian, cycle and bus routes. Bus usage in Wokingham Borough has grown by 14% between 2014/15 and 2017 compared to a 1% decline in the same period in the South East region.

WBC has developed a 'Greenway Project' which aims to deliver a sustainable transport network which provides traffic-free commuting and leisure routes connecting new Strategic Development Locations with the existing settlements. Also, ensuring that our planning policies encourage development to incorporate measures to improve energy efficiency and zero carbon as part of sustainable design and construction; promoting the use of ultra-low emission vehicles by supporting the electric vehicle charging infrastructure; increasing recycling and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill; encouraging the development of smart technologies to reduce energy usage; and striving to improve the air quality in the Borough through the Air Quality Management Plan; and rewriting the Sustainable Environment Strategy 2010-2020.

The Council is bidding for £500,000 of ERDF funding to invest in energy saving schemes. The use of urban greenery in our towns and urban areas and the protection of our countryside will have remarkable positive contribution to carbon generation. Development and its consequent congestion are without doubt the principle preoccupation of the residents. We aim to challenge the housing numbers through the residents' consultation, through negotiation with the Government and in the event, we do not succeed, by litigation. This administration is determined to do all that it can to reduce housing numbers.

We would like to timetable the Local Plan Update for this year and remove the Damoclean sword from the heads of the residents. We plan to rethink the housing companies to ensure that they are delivering homes to those on median incomes and below and examine how we can help in that funding. Rural exception is popular housing as it keeps communities alive; we wish to revisit these, working with Parish and Town Councils, as well as residents.

Congestion is probably the highest daily burden for our residents. The new roads should help but we must get better at controlling the epidemic of street works which have arisen. We are performing a review of the organisation and how it operates. Similarly, there is a backlog of TROs, many of which are pre-CPE, which need clearing. We will reinstate the Highways Board to enable residents and Councillors to bring forward projects, petitions and concerns.

We imminently expect an Ofsted Children's Services visit, which always is a concern. Unlike other Boroughs, we are opening libraries and leisure centres, who have all improved footfalls. Almost every week we are opening a new facility somewhere across

the Borough. Whilst we have been criticised for our cultural paucity, we proudly have dispersed a huge variety of cultural and social activities. I was stunned to learn that we have over 800 football teams. We intend to harness these in some sort of electronic directory. We plan to facilitate a festival in 2022 centred on Wokingham Town to celebrate the new facilities.

Mr Mayor, this will be a very active year with huge ambitions for change when some of the Wokingham Town Centre regeneration will be concluding and we will continue to have pressures on funding. However, this is wonderful Borough; we all have much to be proud of and be grateful for.

I am pleased to present my administration and am particularly pleased that it includes members of the Independent Group. I discussed with the Leader of the opposition Lib Dem appointments, but it seemed just a step too far at this moment.

10.2 Statement by Lindsay Ferris, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

I would like to thank the residents of Wokingham Borough for the confidence in and support shown for the Liberal Democrats in the recent local election. This is much appreciated. I acknowledge that Brexit had some impact but residents raised many local issues of concern during the campaign, including the threat from huge numbers of houses being pushed on to Wokingham Borough, and the quality and availability of local services provided by the Council. We will continue to put pressure on the ruling Conservatives on these and other issues.

The Liberal Democrats will continue to fight the huge number of houses being pushed on to Wokingham by the Conservative Government. If we do not fight this overdevelopment now, our area will be changed and changed forever. When our green space is gone, it is gone. We must use every means possible to prevent developers from destroying the character of the Borough. We believe there needs to be a significant change in the approach taken by the Council on the Local Plan. We must, for example, prevent developers from cutting down trees and destroying hedgerows in an inappropriate manner. The Council should be prepared to take legal action against these and other developers who act in an inappropriate way, destroying our local environment. The impact of the development is only one of the issues where, in our view, the Council has not done enough. Our planet is coming under ever-increasing threat from climate change and we should be playing our part in tackling it, and I am pleased that John has mentioned this part there. We also need to look at the other environmental issues including air quality.

There is no doubt in our minds that the quality of services has suffered in recent years and that the Council is stretched. We are concerned about Adult Social Care and regret that the initiative started last year to work cross-party on this issue for the benefit of residents, seems to have floundered.

The recent Ofsted inspection on the Council's Special Educational Needs Capability, was not acceptable. The ruling Conservatives have allowed the Council's Children's Services area to be decimated over the last two to three years. It has been underfunded and neglected by you.

The new leadership has talked about improved cooperation between the two groups, something I have always been willing to support. The ruling Conservative Group has an opportunity now to do this. The Liberal Democrats produced an amendment to the Budget

at February's Council meeting. Within that amendment, were two proposals providing additional funding of £70,000 for the Council's SEND service to help reduce the number of exclusions in primary schools, and also £230,000 for the Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Service, known as CAMHS. If the Conservative Group are serious about listening to residents and to the Opposition, they could introduce a supplementary estimate, provide additional resources for these two services at a future Council Executive. I would also hope that the Labour Party could support such measures. This is, we believe, a more practical way of working together for the benefit of our residents. It is more than just focusing on who is and who is not on a particular committee or working group.

11. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

11.1 Rachel Burgess asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

The local welfare provision scheme exists to provide emergency crisis support for those who find themselves in urgent financial difficulty, and to prevent serious risk to the health, wellbeing or safety of some of our most vulnerable residents.

Wokingham's funding in 2014/15 for such provision was £77k in the form of payments and loans, provided by the DWP. Fast forward to 2018-19 and the funding allocation for welfare assistance payments, now provided by WBC, was £23k – and actual spend last year just £6k.

It is extremely concerning that, in a time where our residents are turning to food banks or other forms of charity, the funds available to Wokingham's residents in a time of crisis have dropped by 70% in just four years.

Does the Executive Member agree with me that this funding is wholly inadequate to serve the needs of the most vulnerable in our borough?

Answer

Wokingham Borough Council along with partner agencies must and will ensure that the vulnerable in the Borough are protected and assisted where required. The figures you quote are correct. I can confirm that awards to applicants have never exceeded the budget available. It is also non-statutory but we choose as a Council to actually run the scheme. The scheme is actually demand driven and not budget based so we will continue to support the most vulnerable in the Borough.

Supplementary Question:

I am glad to hear the support for the scheme. Does the Executive Member commit to actually retaining this funding in future and will he actually work to increase the funds available for our vulnerable residents?

Supplementary Answer:

It is demand driven and not budget led so we will continue to put the money available where the money is needed.

11.2 Lindsay Ferris asked the Deputy Leader the following question which was answered by the Leader of the Council:

As a result of the recent local elections a number of now former Councillors were Non

Executive Directors of the 100% WBC owned subsidiary companies including WHL and, Optalis. Can we understand when they will relinquish these posts and be advised that this has happened?

Answer

The answer is yes and it has happened already.

11.3 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

On the 22nd March I presented a petition signed by over 1,000 Earley residents, calling for a full-time civil enforcement officer permanently and exclusively for Earley. What is the current status of this request?

Answer

I can confirm that the petition was provided to our Traffic Management team to consider and they have prepared a response. However due to the purdah and the recent election period officers were unable to share the response with me to discuss and agree. However now that this period is over I will be discussing the petition response with them and will issue it over the next few weeks.

11.4 Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

When will the Borough Design Guide be updated, it is not part of the Local Plan update because it is a companion guide, especially since the parking standards are out of date and WBC is one of the largest car owning vehicle boroughs in England?

Answer

As you know the Core Strategy was adopted in 2010 and the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document in 2012 which encompasses lots of policies including parking standards. Once the new Local Plan has been adopted we will be looking at and recommissioning those supplementary guides.

Supplementary Question:

Will you consider me as part of the committee for doing that please?

Supplementary Answer:

I actually think it is a very good point and we have had this debate on Planning Committee several times, and I am going to take it away and work out how I can work with the new Chair of Planning and old Chair of Planning, and I will come back to you, but I do think it is a good point.

11.5 Sarah Kerr asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

In January of this year, I was in attendance at a workshop held for members of local arts and cultural groups in the Borough, here at the Council offices. This was the kick off meeting to look at arts and culture across the borough, considering what Wokingham Borough already does well, what it can do better, and suggestions for developing its culture. In particular, it was to consider the possibility of a year of culture 2022 once the regeneration work was complete. This initiative was being spearheaded by Philip Mirfin. The question was raised by an attendee whether this had the full backing of Wokingham Borough Council, and would it continue, even if there were changes within the Executive. At the time we were assured this would be the case, but the following meeting scheduled

was subsequently cancelled and no new date has been circulated. My question is, with the change of Executive, will this initiative continue?

Answer

Simple answer is yes, this initiative is continuing. The Council is continuing to work around the development of an Arts and Culture Strategy. An Arts and Culture Member Working Group has been established, although with changes to the Council's leadership we anticipate there will be a change of political membership within the group. The arts and culture agenda requires a political champion and a commitment from the Council. Once the new Executive and arts and culture lead has been established we will arrange further meetings with the cultural organisations to progress the strategy. Our next consultation will be with the business sector at the Fit for Business event on the 7 June, where we will be asking businesses how we can work together to grow the cultural sector in the Borough.

Supplementary Question:

Great that this is going to be continued and we are going to have a Members' Working Group. Will that be cross-party?

Supplementary Answer:

I would very much hope so.

11.6 Tahir Maher asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Following the results of the recent local elections can I ask the Executive Member if they can confirm that the unnecessary expansion of Aldryngton Primary School will now definitely not go ahead?

Answer

Firstly, I would like to correct a misunderstanding on your part. It has to be understood that expansion of school places is nothing to do with local elections. It is purely based on need for those places. This need is ascertained by looking at housing numbers in an area and what sort of accommodation is being built, travel distances, rising birth rates, migration etc.

In respect of Aldryngton there is presently no plan to expand because we have enough places due to the expansion of Loddon School. This was confirmed already in 2018 by the "Wokingham Primary School Places Strategy" report so you can read more about it if you look into it.

11.7 Imogen Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Last year, we were told that there would be a cross party Highways working group to tackle issues surrounding our road infrastructure. Can I please ask when that is likely to be established?

Answer

I believe the cross party group was agreed with the last Executive Member. There seems to have been quite a few Highways Executive Members in the last few months or years. As the Leader said we are committed to setting this Group up and I think it would be really useful. It will meet again. I would like it to be meaningful and not only cross-party but also cover all the areas of the Borough. I think it would be very useful as a way of getting more

intelligence. I wish to make highways non-political. It is about time we actually started focusing on things that need to be done most urgently, regardless of where they are, and I also think we desperately need to get more money in order to improve the amount of highways we maintain. So yes the commitment is there. Yes, I am chasing more money to get more highways maintained. We also need to be faster at doing it so it causes less disruption and there will be meetings set up shortly.

Supplementary Question:

I have been concerned that some roads are getting fixed when they did not need fixing it seems, and other roads are getting neglected. I want to be sure that this Group has some effect going forwards. That it is what I want assurance on.

Supplementary Answer:

I agree with you. We have started a process and we are following a process of monitoring all the roads by automatic review of the state of the roads, both slip and skid; the ability to stop and resistance. All the roads have been categorised based on the actual wear on the road, and we need to start doing the roads in that priority order, bearing in mind the need to make sure the repairs are do-able. So I am completely with you, we need to use that data. We are already using it. We have got a two year list. The issue we have got is that we do not have enough money to improve all the roads to the state that I would like to get them to.

11.8 Caroline Smith asked the Executive Member for Housing the following question:

Can the Executive Member for Housing confirm when the 'planning for real' exercise will take place for the woodland next to Chalfont Park known as Area DD?

Answer

Area DD is a piece of woodland which was a piece of scrubland, which has now become a piece of woodland in Lower Earley.

The consultants who have been commissioned to undertake the planning for real exercise will be looking to hold an event in mid-June. They have prepared most of the information already for the event. They will be contacting local Members prior to any notifications going out. They are also aware of process, timings and can provide their own thoughts on the site. I would say that this is a piece of land that goes back to the time that we were under a different administration, so hopefully we can put this to bed, but no decision has been made at all as to whether or not there is an opportunity or any obstacles there.

Supplementary Question:

I feel that mid-June is a bit soon. We would like it a bit longer, six weeks consultation. I would like to know how many local Members and how many residents, as this effects an awful lot of residents in Hillside and Hawkedon.

Supplementary Answer:

I am not sure whether I have to declare an interest as my mother lives in Hillside. I am quite prepared to flex that if you would like to take part in that, but as I say it has been going on for nearly 20 years. I think we ought to get a handle on it one way or another.

12. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING

At this point in the meeting 8.45pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 9pm, up to no later than

9.30pm, to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. This was proposed by Chris Bowring and seconded by Guy Grandison.

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

13. POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL AND ALLOCATION AND APPOINTMENT TO SEATS ON COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

The Council considered a report on the political balance of the Council and the appointment to the Council's Committees and Boards, in accordance with the wishes of Groups.

The report set out a number of recommendations which Members were asked to consider.

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

Andy Croy expressed disappointment regarding how the appointments to the Royal Fire and Rescue Service had been apportioned.

It was moved by Ian Pittock and seconded by Lindsay Ferris that the Motion be amended as follows:

'That Council:

- 1) having reviewed the representation of the political groups on the Council, confirms that it has 31 Conservative Group Members, 16 Liberal Democrat Group Members, 4 Labour Group Members and 3 Independent Group Members (as set out in Para 1.1);
- 2) approves the appointment and composition of Committees and Boards as set out in Para 2.1;
- 3) approves the allocation of seats on Committees and Boards on the basis that, of the 92 seats (as set out in Para 3.6), 53 be allocated to the Conservative Group 27 be allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group, 7 be allocated to the Labour Group and 5 be allocated to the Independent Group;
- 4) approves the proposals submitted by the respective Group Leaders and that those Members be appointed to the Committees and Boards as set out in Appendix 1;
- 5) agree that the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of those Council Committees etc, set out in Appendix 1 be appointed at the first meeting of each of the Committees etc and therefore Rule 4.2.1.1u) of the Constitution be deleted ***and that the votes for Chair and Vice Chair of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees be conducted by secret ballot, in line with what is suggested in the document "Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities" published earlier this month by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government;***
- 6) agrees that the principles of proportionality be applied when Members are appointed to Sub Committees, Panels or Working Groups;
- 7) notes the appointment of the Independent Persons to assist the work of the Standards Committee and the co-opted Parish/Town Council Representatives as set out in Appendix 1;
- 8) notes the elected Member representatives on the Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board, as set out in Appendix 1, as nominated by the Leader of Council in accordance with Section 194 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.'

A number of Members expressed concern regarding the transparency of electing the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees by secret ballot.

Prue Bray stated that a secret ballot may lead to more open voting by individuals.

Lindsay Ferris stated that in many Councils the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were chaired by Opposition Councillors.

Chris Smith and Pauline Jorgensen proposed that the concept of the election of the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by secret ballot should be considered by the Constitution Review Working Group.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment to the Motion was lost.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) having reviewed the representation of the political groups on the Council, it be confirmed that Council has 31 Conservative Group Members, 16 Liberal Democrat Group Members, 4 Labour Group Members and 3 Independent Group Members (as set out in Para 1.1);
- 2) the appointment and composition of Committees and Boards as set out in Para 2.1 be approved;
- 3) the allocation of seats on Committees and Boards be approved on the basis that, of the 92 seats (as set out in Para 3.6), 53 be allocated to the Conservative Group 27 be allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group, 7 be allocated to the Labour Group and 5 be allocated to the Independent Group;
- 4) the proposals submitted by the respective Group Leaders and that those Members be appointed to the Committees and Boards as set out in Appendix 1 be approved;
- 5) it be agreed that the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of those Council Committees etc, set out in Appendix 1 be appointed at the first meeting of each of the Committees etc and therefore Rule 4.2.1.1u) of the Constitution be deleted;
- 6) it be agreed that the principles of proportionality be applied when Members are appointed to Sub Committees, Panels or Working Groups;
- 7) the appointment of the Independent Persons to assist the work of the Standards Committee and the co-opted Parish/Town Council Representatives as set out in Appendix 1, be noted;
- 8) the elected Member representatives on the Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board, as set out in Appendix 1, as nominated by the Leader of Council in accordance with Section 194 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, be noted.

14. APPOINTMENT TO PANELS/WORKING GROUPS ETC

Members were asked to refer to a list of nominations to various Panels, Working Groups, Joint Committees and various bodies, as circulated at the meeting as Appendix 2.

Where more nominations had been received than places, individual votes were taken.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Members be appointed to the Council's Panels, Working Groups, Joint Committees and Various Bodies as set out in Appendix 2 to the Minutes.

15. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members were asked to refer to a list of nominations to various Outside Bodies, as circulated at the meeting as Appendix 3.

Where more nominations had been received than places, individual votes were taken.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Members be appointed to the Outside Bodies as set out in Appendix 3 to the Minutes.

Appendix 1 - Committees and Boards