

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 28 MAY 2015 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.10 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**Other Councillors Present**

Prue Bray  
Norman Jorgensen  
Malcolm Richards

**1. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 26 March 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in Item 10, Council Owned Companies Business, by virtue of the fact that he was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Optalis. Councillor Pollock remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen declared a personal interest in Item 10, Council Owned Companies Business, by virtue of the fact that her husband was a paid Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd. Councillor Jorgensen remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

**4.1 Claire MacDonald asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

**Question**

We understand that space can be made available at Loddon School, using either "The Parent Hut", which has provision for young children, or the former Children's Centre which is, currently partly used as offices. Considering there are circa 30 Earley families that have been offered a divert school then we would like to understand from the Executive what factors are preventing the council from utilising this space for a 2015/16 reception class?"

**Answer**

The Loddon buildings as you know are fully deployed at the moment. The former Children's Centre has been leased to Loddon Primary School to provide additional Early Years capacity; so that is for two year old children at the moment. This is to meet a statutory need to provide additional places for younger children. The offices are used by Wokingham Borough Council and they accommodate the "Adopt Berkshire" service. Adopt Berkshire provide adoption services for four unitary authorities. Due to the sensitivity of the

services provided the activities could not be relocated in time to be confident that the space could be released to be remodelled as a classroom. The parent hut is well used to provide a necessary training space that it would be difficult to replicate elsewhere at short notice. It is possible that using any of these spaces as teaching spaces would constitute a change of use for planning purposes; and if so would require planning consent.

Internal space is only part of the need though and the Council would need to determine if the playing areas would provide sufficient space to accommodate 30 additional children and that needs to be done with safety in mind as well; without compromising their education.

The fundamental problem with creating a bulge class is not only around the provision of space (internal and external). They are around the recruitment of staff, funding, the wider impact on education, the impact on future admissions and on the local community and in particular managing the school run.

A bulge class requires a school to be able to deploy a series of specialist teachers for relatively short periods. This inevitably means employing teachers on short term contracts. This works against the need to provide a stable, highly skilled team of teachers to run a school to provide the quality of education that our children need.

Funding comes from a central pot; this is called the Dedicated Schools Grant or DSG as many people know it. It is normally "lagged" and that is to say that the funding is largely based on headcount from the previous academic year. Bulge classes need additional non formulaic funding to fund teacher and resources; because these are new classes on top of the previous year's headcount. This reduces the funding available to schools generally. This is particularly problematic at a time when the Council knows that it has a large number of new schools to open all of which will require top up funding, on top of the formulaic funding, to support them in their early years.

Not only would the new class require additional unplanned for spend in the 2015/16 year, but the removal of the children from other local schools to the bulge class would lead to the school suffering a reduced budget in their 2016/17 year. These schools are currently making staffing and activity plans based on their expected rolls and unplanned for roll reductions has a direct impact on the services they can provide for their school roll.

Children admitted to a bulge class after the normal admission round often come from the surrounding community, outside the school's Designated Area. The consequence of this is that additional siblings in later years may not have a prior claim on school places over first and only children; even when those live in the Designated Area and the families with a sibling claim do not.

The wider community impact must also be considered. A bulge class will generate additional school run car trips. Where schemes have a longer preparation period it is often possible to look at measures to mitigate that impact. This could be through additional parking controls eg yellow lines or new parent drop-off zones or measures to encourage walking to school like walking buses. If planning consent for change of use is required then these measures would need to be in place before the classes are opened. This might not be possible at this stage.

The final issue and consideration is the ability of the school to be able to respond to this request. The school are keen to help the community but have informed us that regrettably

they will not be able to assist due to the teaching capacity at the school available for 2015/2016.

### **Supplementary Question**

On 18 May George Osborne e-mailed a Leed's parent in a similar situation to us saying it is incumbent on councils to ensure school places are allocated in a way that meets the needs of local parents. Given that Loddon Primary School has existing infrastructure and empty classrooms what measures are the Council taking to help the headteacher of Loddon secure the staff she needs for an extra September intake and have the Council taken advice or learned lessons from George Osborne and Leeds City Council who have managed to secure 90 additional places for children, appoint the necessary teachers, secure the co-operation of heads and governors of three schools all within five weeks of a school place shortage becoming public knowledge?

### **Supplementary Answer**

We have asked the school and their response thus far has been that they are unable to assist this year. I understand why you are asking because of the other services that are already provided in those spaces. I think my first answer gave you the answers about what those spaces are being used for at the moment. If we were to put in a bulge class then we would need to consider where the bulge class would go and those spaces at the moment are not available for that bulge class.

If we are to go back to the school we would need to be asking them where else we could put a bulge class and we would also need to consider what other teachers would be used for that bulge class.

In terms of our duty to provide sufficient places this year we have done that in the Borough and over the last number of years I have been in place as Lead Member we have fulfilled our sufficiency duty to find places within the Borough. I am incredibly sympathetic with the fact that they are not within the local area to where you would wish them to be. What I can say is that it is a long time between now and September and I know that some of those places will change and some parents will be able to send their children to more local schools. I hope that those numbers will change dramatically between now and then but we will work with parents between this date and September to ensure that there are as many places as possible locally so that you are not having to go too far to local places.

### **The Leader of Council made the following comment:**

I know you will be disappointed with that answer but if the Head is saying they can't help. In the case of Leeds you are probably absolutely right that everybody was willing to try and work and I am sure we will be continuing to try and find a solution to this particular issue.

### **4.2 Gill Purchase had asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question and due to her inability to attend the meeting a written answer was provided as set out below:**

#### **Question**

Would the Lead for Children's Services, Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor, offer a detailed explanation as to why such a large amount of additional funding (6.9m) is now needed for the secondary school?

## **Answer**

As explained in section 2.1 of the Executive Paper, the project estimate of £24m provided in July 2014 was based on a basic, 3 storey DfE design. This design made certain assumptions, such as standard 'pad' foundations, basic external finishes and flat roofs. It only had a 4 court sports hall. The allowance for FFE (furniture, fittings and equipment) was also lower than WBC would normally provide. The price was also based on construction costs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2014.

When the design has been uplifted to take into account these features, eg. enlarging the sports hall from 4 to 6 courts for community use, and index linked the real cost (as at April 2015) is approximately £28m. This would still only provide a basic design.

Since July, the Council has worked with parents and other stakeholders to improve the design (see section 2.1), eg additional breakout space equivalent to 6 large classrooms has been added to improve teaching space flexibility. A full list of improvements to the design is set out below.

The design has also changed to take into account planning requirements which has resulted in changes to finishes eg. replacing render with bricks, increasing costs though ensuring that the building is in keeping with its environment.

In the normal course of building projects of this type, detailed site investigations have been carried out which have highlighted the need for additional groundworks including enhanced foundations and most importantly flood management and drainage. Finally, the design had to ensure that the building was capable of being expanded to 1500 places and this resulted in increases in core facilities and services. These changes have increased the cost by £2.9m

### **Summary of Design Improvements:**

- Break out spaces:
  - Equivalent to 6 additional classrooms
  - improves teaching options and introduces flexibility
- Pitched roofs and increased floor area to main hall/dining room and entrance/learning resource centre:
  - Improved environment for school use and cultural events
  - Seating for 500-600 people
  - Aesthetically pleasing, in keeping with masterplan vision and planning requirement
- Enhanced core facilities to support future growth and community use:
  - Kitchens, catering, services infrastructure
- Glazed stairwells at ends of wings
  - Improved safeguarding and lighting
- Wider corridors and covered walkway:
  - Improves circulation and flow management
- High specification sports facility:
  - full size all weather pitch with floodlighting.
  - allows competitive/league matches, and higher levels of usage for community

**4.3 Claire Hickman had asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question but due to her inability to attend the meeting a written answer was provided as set out below:**

## Question

In relation to Agenda item 13, Secondary School, pages 73 to 82, would the Lead for Children's Services, Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor, please tell parents how much of the £3.36m of the contingency finance request has been allocated to hire '*temporary specialist buildings*' (portable cabins) and why there use contradicts what a senior officer stated on WBC's Project 16 social media page that there would **not** be a 'portakabin in sight'?

## Answer

The cost of providing temporary accommodation, should there be a delay in opening the new school building, has yet to be detailed but would be dependent on the duration of the delay and the curriculum requirements of the school provider. A nominal sum of £500k has been allowed for but this is by no means fixed.

The S106 agreement already includes the option for the Council to use the existing garrison library/training centre and gymnasium as temporary accommodation to provide classrooms and sports facilities. These buildings are of high quality and have the support of parents, Members and providers who have inspected them. Dependent on the needs of the provider, they could be supplemented by, for example, specialist science or catering accommodation.

The quality of modular buildings these days is very high and the use of the term 'portakabin' is misleading. Modular buildings are in widespread use in schools and children are by no means disadvantaged by their use.

The Council is committed to providing a high quality learning environment for its pupils whether the accommodation is temporary or permanent.

## 5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

### 5.1 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance the following question:

## Question

The Capital Outturn Report on P.32 shows a proposed carry forward into 15/16 of £50,236,000. Pages 35 and 36 provide detail about £7,506,000 of the proposed carry forward that relates to 14/15 planned capital expenditure.

Would you specify in the same detail the remaining £ 42,730,000 proposed carry forward, so that the information shows which schemes and their related capital amount are being carried forward and when the spend was originally planned to occur?

## Answer

Your question relates to schemes that were funded and have already been committed and as such the funding is carried forward automatically; so we can't start schemes or put schemes in the programme until we have funding.

Out of the £42.7m committed carry forward, £30.5m relates to schemes that were profiled to begin in the following financial year, 15/16, and the remaining £12.2m relates to schemes begun in 14/15 where there has been slippage.

The detail you require I have not been able to dig up in time but perhaps you and I can meet outside this meeting and I will try and give you the information which you require.

### **Supplementary Question**

We do all understand that there is a difference between the carry forwards for capital schemes, which were profiled to last for several years, and the carry forwards for capital schemes which have slipped. For the sake of transparency and for the sake of strategic oversight I think the capital outturn report should give details of both. Could you undertake that in future capital outturn reports there will be some clear and detailed information on the carry forwards for both the multi-year projects and projects where spend has slipped?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I will discuss your suggestion with my relevant Officer and see what can be done.

## **6. REVENUE MONITORING 2014/15 - OUTTURN 2014-15**

The Executive considered a report setting out the outturn position of the revenue budget, general fund including carry forward requests, Housing Revenue Account, Schools Block and the Authority's investment portfolio.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance thanked the Council's Financial Team and Officers throughout the Council for managing to balance the budget, bearing in mind the issues that had arisen during the year that had suggested a potential overspend, and also for the small number of carry forwards proposed. Councillor Pollock confirmed that the final position of the revenue budget was a £30k underspend; the Housing Revenue Account an underspend of nearly £1m, which was effectively recycled spending on the Council's housing stock; and the Schools Block was an overspend of £22k.

The Executive Member for Environment highlighted the £10k carry forward for jubilee tree maintenance and the benefit of this money which was being spent on maintaining the 60 oak trees that had been planted around the Borough as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

### **RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the outturn position of the revenue budget and the level of forecast balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Schools Block and the Authority's investment portfolio be noted;
- 2) the General Fund carry forward requests of £297,000, as set out in Appendix F to the report, be agreed.

## **7. CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2014/15**

The Executive considered a report setting out the outturn for the capital budget, including proposed carry forwards.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance advised the meeting of an error in the report that had recently come to light. In Table 2.2 the overall underspend was actually £83k and not £46k as shown in the report.

Councillor Pollock highlighted the proposed carry forwards, as detailed in Appendix B of the report, some of which were as a result of a planned slippage and other slippages

related to schemes which were started and not completed as expected. He also highlighted that the level of the capital programme had increased substantially in recent years as a result of work on the Strategic Development Locations, the building of new schools and improvements to a number of secondary schools.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Capital Outturn and committed carry forwards (for 2014/15) as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- 2) the carry forwards for schemes which are awaiting contractual commitment (totalling £7.5m) detailed in Appendix B to the report, be approved.

**8. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION**

The Executive considered a report relating to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Preferred Options which were intended for consultation for an eight week period from 4 June to 30 July.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways advised that all Councils were required by Government to identify accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers and prepare a plan showing how these needs would be met. The Plan would also allow the Council to resist gypsy and traveller sites in unplanned and inappropriate locations whilst ensuring that there was sufficient provision available to meet any identified need.

Councillor Kaiser confirmed that no site allocation would be taking place until all comments from residents and other interested parties had been received which would inform the final decisions. The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Preferred Options document sets out how any identified future accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers could be met up to 2029. If approved the communities' view would be sought on the various approaches chosen to address this issue; including size and location of new gypsy and traveller sites.

Following the consultation the Council would prepare the proposed submission plan based on the outcome of the consultation which would be subject to further consultation later this year. The document would include detailed planning policy and guidance to inform and manage future gypsy and traveller development.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Preferred Options be approved for consultation for an eight week period together with publishing supporting documents;
- 2) the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Highways, be authorised to agree minor modifications to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Preferred Options and other supporting documents prior to consultation. (Any minor modifications would consist of non-material alterations such as rewording and correction of typing errors).

**9. CHANGES TO CHARGING FOR ATTENDANCE AT ADULT SOCIAL CARE DAY CENTRES FROM JUNE 2015**

The Executive considered a report relating to confirmation of changes to charging for attendance at Adult Social Care Day Centres as agreed at the 29 January Executive meeting.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing clarified that the Executive, at its meeting on 29 January 2015, agreed full cost recovery for day services subject to a maximum additional charge of £50 per week up to March 2017 before introducing the full charge for 2017/18 onwards. Unfortunately this change was inadvertently omitted in the fees and charges document that was considered by the Executive at its meeting on 19 February 2015 and therefore the decision made at that meeting reversed the decision made on 29 January 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the decision previously made at 29 January 2015 Executive of a new social care charging framework with social care customers, carers and residents in Wokingham Borough be confirmed. The recommendations are as follows:

- 1) that all chargeable services will be charged for, subject to a financial assessment, with the objective of removing subsidies for those who can afford to fund the cost of their care package (generally those with more than £23,250 in savings);
- 2) that the new charges are phased in for those currently receiving services such that any increase in charges is capped at £50 per week up until the end of March 2017, but that the full charge is applied thereafter.

#### **10. COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES' BUSINESS**

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

The Executive considered a report relating to the business of the Council owned companies, including the budget monitoring position up to February 2015.

The Leader of Council informed the meeting that the revised style of report was intended to address transparency issues that had been raised. The intention was that the report would be considered at every Executive meeting and would highlight significant changes and items of interest relating to the Council Owned Companies.

**RESOLVED** That the following be noted:

- 1) the strategy and objectives of the Council's subsidiary companies;
- 2) the budget monitoring position for the ten months to February 2015;
- 3) the operational update for the ten months to February 2015.

#### **11. GORSE RIDE SOUTH**

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals for Gorse Ride South, an estate in the Finchampstead South ward of Wokingham Borough, which were required following concerns raised about the construction type of the properties.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways reported that there were 177 houses in Gorse Ride South most of which were of non-traditional build and it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep them within the Government's Decent Homes Standards. It was therefore proposed to consult on proposals, which would be informed by the new Right to Buy legislation, and remove the right to buy which required the serving of a demolition order. Councillor Kaiser confirmed that as the site was so large it would take a number of years to finalise any scheme and there was no intention to rush in and demolish all the houses.

It was confirmed that the Community Development Team would fully support all residents. Councillor Kaiser also stated that if the project went forward it was the intention that living conditions for current tenants would continue as before and the Council would make sure that any repairs that were required to the properties would be undertaken.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) demolition notices be served to the tenants living in council owned homes in Gorse Ride South in order to suspend any further Right to Buy, excluding those living in sheltered accommodation and designated bungalows as these are exempt from the Right to Buy; and
- 2) a project group be formed to undertake feasibility work and carry out a public consultation around options for the future of Gorse Ride South, to include Cockayne Court.

**12. TAPE LANE**

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals to replace six defective homes at 21-26 Tape Lane, Hurst, which can no longer be maintained, with new homes at affordable rents; subject to planning permission.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways outlined the proposals which included the demolition of 21-26 Tape Lane and the decanting of current tenants to temporary or permanent homes. Councillor Kaiser confirmed that the current tenants would be given the choice of going to permanent accommodation supplied by the Council or temporary accommodation with the ability to move back to the new homes in Tape Lane where they would be given priority.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the demolition of 21 – 26 Tape Lane, Hurst be approved;
- 2) the decanting of tenants to temporary or permanent homes be approved;
- 3) funding of £2m consisting of £1.4m from the HRA and £600k from the retained Right to Buy receipts, which is currently available within the HRA be approved;
- 4) authority be delegated to the Director of Health and Wellbeing to submit a detailed planning application for the redevelopment of 21-26 Tape Lane.

**13. NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH OF WOKINGHAM**

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposed new Secondary School in the South of Wokingham including a request for additional funding and an update on the progress of the project.

The Executive Member for Children's Services went through the report and explained that when the project was first agreed by the Executive in 2014 the scheme was based on a basic three storey Department for Education design and it made certain assumptions about a number of different things including: foundations; basic external finishing of the building eg flat roofs etc; and also the fittings and fixtures within the building.

Since then a lot of work has been carried out to consider the community needs as well as the educational needs for the building. As a result of this work, which was informed by the

Parent Reference Group, the scheme has been uplifted to take into account a much larger sports facility and enhancements to the design of the building including: breakout spaces along the corridors which equates to the equivalent of six additional classrooms which would provide more flexible teaching spaces; two large barn constructions in the centre areas which would provide an improved environment for school use and community use when the building was not being used by the school; and enhanced facilities for a much larger school accommodating 1,500 pupils eg kitchen and science areas. As part of the enhanced sports facilities there would be a full size all-weather pitch with floodlighting which would allow competitive league matches to take place.

Members queried whether the additional spend would mean that other schools would have their capital funding removed. Councillor Haitham Taylor confirmed that there was £2m included in the capital budget for other school improvements. It was noted that schools, academies and free schools also had other routes they could use to apply for funding.

It was noted that in addition £3.36m, from basic need money, had been put aside as contingency for the project. It was not expected to have to use the contingency therefore if it was not required it would be used for other educational purposes.

Councillor Ross queried what the designated area of the new school would be as concerns had been raised by some of the residents in his ward who believed that the catchment area would spread to Wokingham Without. Councillor Haitham Taylor confirmed that all the interested providers had stated their intention to have the same designated area as currently applies to Forest, Holt, Emmbrook and St Crispins. There would be no change for Wokingham Without parents at this time however at some point in the future the school may wish to establish its own designated area and change it slightly but this would require Secretary of State approval.

The meeting noted that a lot of the changes that had resulted in the additional funding being required had been put forward by the Parent Reference Group who had played a key part in deciding what was best for the school. Councillor Haitham Taylor gave her thanks to the Group for being so committed in helping to develop the school for the community.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) additional funding of £6.9m be approved;
- 2) the provision of a contingency of £3.36m be approved;
- 3) the progress made by the project be noted;
- 4) the risks to the opening of the school and the contingency plans put in place be noted;
- 5) authority be delegated to the Director Finance and Resources to forward fund the project through short term borrowing of £7.5m in 15/16;
- 6) how the shortfall and contingency will be funded, as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report be noted.

#### **14. WOKINGHAM THEATRE NEW LEASE**

The Executive considered a report relating to the granting of a 50 year lease to Wokingham Theatre which would enable the Theatre to raise funds for the enhancement of the building.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities brought to the attention of the meeting that the wording in the report, which stated that the building was becoming dilapidated, was actually incorrect. In fact the building had been so successful it now needed to expand and that was why the Council wished to support the Theatre by extending the lease.

Councillor Mirfin reported that giving the Theatre a 50 year lease would allow them to get funding to provide rehearsal and studio rooms which would extend the opportunity in the community. In return the Theatre would ensure that the Council would be mentioned as sponsors in all their programmes. Members were pleased to note there would be regular RPI reviews.

**RESOLVED:** That a new 50 year lease be granted to allow Wokingham Theatre to raise funds to enhance the building.

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