

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON 18 JULY 2019 FROM 7.30 PM TO 11.05 PM

Members Present

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

16. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Prue Bray, Jim Frewin, Pauline Helliar Symons, Graham Howe, Dianne King, Tahir Maher and Oliver Whittle.

17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd May 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

19. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor presented awards to recipients of the Mayor's Roll of Honour.

The first recipient was Earley Air Cadet Squadron. The staff team were a group of ten volunteers who helped to develop young people between the ages of 12 to 20, teaching them skills such as team work, first aid, leadership and cooking. The award was collected by Pilot Officer Sacha Walton.

The second award was awarded to Emma Bardon, Sharon Bailey and Claire Revie from Norreys Church, who had helped to keep activities including the community café and after school club running at a time of staff shortages.

The Mayor informed Council of the third recipient of a Mayor's Award, Derek Davis from the Earley Environmental Group, who was awarded an award in his absence. Derek Davis had helped to restore the noticeboards which detailed the history of Earley, working without charge for his time or materials.

20. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

20.1 Alex Davies had asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. In his absence a written answer was provided:

Question

It is my understanding that the property developer Taylor Wimpey gave, as part of

Sandford Farm development, £30,000 towards the repair of the dilapidated footbridge crossing the River Loddon near the development. This access route would open up walking routes to Twyford, Hurst, Dinton Pastures etc. Please can you tell me when this bridge will be overhauled and opened?

Answer

The Council is considering this issue as part of the Loddon Long Distance Footpath Project which aims to link the Blackwater Valley Footpath to the Thames Trail. We are about to start the design stage of the first phase of this project which currently envisages linking the Sandford Farm (Taylor Wimpey) site to the Showcase Cinema via Dinton Pastures Country Park. Once we have completed the detailed design for this section we will be able to programme the construction works and provide proposed date for opening this important new link to the public. In the meantime you may not be aware that the Council has very recently completed the first two phases of the Bader Way Cycleway which links the Sandford Farm (Taylor Wimpey) site to Dinton Pastures via Mohawk Way.

20.2 John Walker asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question which was asked by Joe Jones in his absence:

Question

Following the cancellation of the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit scheme, the Thames Valley Park "Park and Ride" site would seem to be unnecessary. But there are still construction activities on the site. Would Wokingham Borough Council pause the construction activity on the site in order to consider the use of a trial park and ride service making use of one of the currently unused office car parks on the TVP site; this would make it possible to assess the likely level of take up and whether the Business Case still holds good in the light of the operational costs that were not originally included?

Answer

Thames Valley Park, park and ride was awarded funding by the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP) based on a business case which did not consider the East Reading MRT project; which I must also say as a local Member I objected to at the time of the project. Whilst this project would have added to the benefits of the park and ride, there are sufficient benefits without it to progress the scheme in the knowledge that it will provide value for money. The main objective of the scheme is to reduce congestion on the A4 corridor. The park and ride will provide car parking spaces and an alternative travel choice for residents around Wokingham Borough to access Reading town. The site will be served using the existing shuttle buses used by employees working at the Thames Valley Park utilising the spare space that they have on the way back to the station after they have dropped people off; so that makes a good sensible use of the bus and means that they are going with people in it in both directions. Hopefully, it will be greener.

With regard to using private land, it is not within our gift unfortunately as to what land we use. The site we are currently constructing is one that we own. In addition, the option of trialling the use of existing Business Park car park capacity was investigated at the time and discounted in the Option Appraisal in 2017. Any trial ahead of completing the final park and ride project would therefore be a costly duplication even if it were possible to obtain the currently vacant site.

Work on the site is well progressed and we expect the completion in Autumn, and we really do hope that it will improve the amount of people using buses, going backwards and forwards to Reading.

20.3 John Mullaney asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

In the Full Business Case for the Park and Ride at Broken Brow which was submitted to the Berkshire Local Transport Board (BLTB), there were no operational costs included. This was brought to the attention of the BLTB in a report considered at the meeting of the BLTB at which the business case was approved. The answer to the reason why there were no operational costs was that they would fall to the operator.

Can it be clarified: Will Wokingham Borough Council have operational responsibilities for the site and what is the operational budget that has been projected for the site and what is the envisaged scope that this budget will cover?

Answer

Yes, Wokingham Borough will be operating the car park which means managing day to day operations and maintaining it in its entirety including all the lighting, drainage and ticketing systems. Income from the parking will be used to pay for that as well as contributing to the bus service. It is currently projected that, even with a relatively low usage, the car park will cover its own costs and with a high usage it would actually generate income for the Council.

Supplementary Question:

Why not save on the sighted operational costs and reassess the site which is currently only at the drainage installation phase? There is a growing cross party concern that this development will become another insufficiently scrutinised, and consequentially derelict, park and ride facility in the wrong location. Why not consider any number of alternative uses more appropriate to a riverside location than a derelict car park? SOAR, Save Our Ancient Riverside, have received many suggestions from concerned Wokingham and Reading residents that we would be happy to share. Will this Council demonstrate to their residents that they are a Council on board with the climate emergency, and that they are committed to protecting the environment? Will they agree to meet with SOAR to consider alternative uses and a reappraisal of this development before it is too late, and this green space is squandered and lost forever.

Supplementary Answer:

I think I answered part of that in the previous answer, in that the work is well underway, and that we do not have the access to the other land that might be appropriate. However, I am always willing to meet SOAR. I went to your public meeting when you were objecting to the MRT, and I would certainly be happy to speak to you about ideas that you have got.

20.4 Alexandra Smith asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question which was asked on her behalf in her absence:

Question

In the draft SEND strategy the Council states that it will identify need as early as possible. We have parents here tonight who have been waiting longer than the statutory 20 weeks for a draft plan, and the OFSTED report states that staff shortages are impeding the timely delivery of plans. What steps have the Council identified to address this unacceptable situation?

Answer

The answer is that we have difficulties recruiting experienced SEN case managers. It is not a Wokingham problem, it is a nationwide problem. So how are we addressing it? Extra funding has been made available to the Council for recruitment. We are in touch with a recruitment agency who specialises in recruiting such experienced staff and we have had some success. We are hopeful that it will not be long before we will be able to meet the deadline of 20 weeks.

20.5 Tom Mayer has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

This question was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

20.6 Annabel Yoxall asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**Question**

All children with special needs require intervention as early as possible in order to achieve the best possible outcome. In the case of ASD, families are waiting in excess of twelve to eighteen months and beyond just to receive an initial assessment. This has a huge negative impact on children's ability to learn and their self-confidence as they fall further behind peers. What is the Council doing in order to reduce this waiting time?

Answer

The answer is the same as I have already given to Alexandra Smith's question.

Supplementary Question:

The Member of Coronation, Councillor Keith Baker, recently stated on a Wokingham residents' Facebook group, in response to a question on the housing consultation, that, and I quote "£80,000 is actually a drop in the ocean for both the overall expenditure of the Council and the cost of action to address the SEND issues." Therefore, given that £80,000 is considered a 'drop in the ocean', can the Council fund measures to immediately begin to reduce the backlog in assessments, both for ASD cases and for SEND applications?

Supplementary Answer:

I am afraid that is not a follow up to your question. That is a new question and it cannot be answered.

20.7 Ruth Rae asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**Question**

Some parents are having to seek legal aid in order to challenge decisions made by the Council on EHCP requests. This is both costly and stressful for parents. National figures show that the vast majority of appeals are decided against councils. Are the Council using the rejection of SEND provision as a cost-cutting measure?

Answer

The answer is no, I can assure that that is not the case. We are committed to meeting our legal duties and obligations in accordance with the Children's Act 2014. What has happened in the last year is an increase, about 15%, in the need for Education, Health and Care Plans, and in addition to what I have already said tonight, this has caused a problem,

which we are working very hard to solve.

Supplementary Question:

A Freedom of Information request is in place to gather information from Wokingham Borough Council on the number of appeals and the number lost, as well as the amount spent. However, the aggregate figure shows that in 2016/17 Councils nationally spent £28.2million on such tribunals and lost in 89% of cases. Does the Council accept that the rejection of EHCP's that are subsequently overturned on an appeal, are a waste of taxpayers' money, causing unnecessary stress on families and children and prevent children from achieving the best possible outcome?

Supplementary Answer:

As I have already stated, we are doing our very best to provide these plans for the children as quickly as possible. We are aware that we are so far not being able to fulfil the commitments of 20 weeks. We are working on it. We do understand how difficult it is and how stressful it is for parents and for children. You have to believe me when I am saying that we are doing out utmost to sort out this very unfortunate situation.

20.8 Marcus McDowell asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

According to the OFSTED report, "several parents described an inequitable system where some access private assessments because of lengthy delays, while others are not able to do this". How does the Council justify discriminating against children from less wealthy backgrounds in this manner?

Answer

We do not and I repeat, do not, discriminate against anyone. A private assessment does not give anyone more or quicker access to an assessment. The assessment is done by staff at Wokingham Borough Council. Everyone is being treated the same.

Supplementary Question:

I would like to say that that is not true. I know from speaking to parents that they have paid to get assessments to fill in the child psychologist report and to get Occupational Therapists' reports, which could be provided by Council funding? I would like you to please look at this and say how you will be able to help people from less wealthy families access the same care and support as those from wealthy families.

Supplementary Answer:

I am not privy to that information you have just given. Obviously it will have to be looked at.

20.9 Juliet Sheratt asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Finance and Housing:

Question

On the Wokingham Facebook Group, UllaKarin Clark, the Conservative Member for Emmbrook, commented that WBC are trying to find a suitable location to build an additional school for the provision of special needs education. In this comment, she mentioned that funding is an issue. How does the Council prioritise funding for children

and young adults with special needs and disabilities when it is able to find £80k to fund a consultation on housing in the Borough?

Answer

These are not competing demands. The Council needs to ensure that there is adequate provision available for children that have additional needs. Funding is prioritised so that the Authority meets its statutory duties and obligations. Where there are needs the Council will do all it can to ensure that needs are met. Children are an ongoing priority for this Council and we will do all we can to ensure that all children grow up happy and healthy.

The housing numbers are a major concern of many residents in the Borough and by making sure that we have housing numbers which are defensible at appeal, we save the Council hundreds of thousands of pounds, and protect the Borough from opportunistic developers using complexities which exist in the planning system around housing numbers. Showing we have the support of our residents in this quest to ensure we have the right housing numbers is important as we negotiate with Government to ensure we get numbers that are sustainable and meet the Borough’s needs.

Supplementary Question:

Going back to the earlier quote from the Member for Coronation regarding the ‘splash in the ocean’, why does the Council consider that there is plenty of money for both the housing consultation and addressing the SEND crisis, and yet cannot find the money to fund a desperately needed facility for the provision of SEND education?

Supplementary Answer:

I will answer your question with a question. Do you think there is anybody in this room that would rather spend on potholes than disadvantaged children, or anything else for that matter? I can assure you we would not. The truth is we have to do everything. We do not have a choice. At the end of the day we have a very limited budget, and as everyone has heard, we are one of the lowest funded authorities in the country, but no, children do take priority.

UllaKarin Clark, Executive Member for Children’s Services provided the following answer: I do not know if you aware but we are extending Addington with 50 places and we are looking at providing a site so we can build another Addington. We are not ignoring you or your children and there will be money provided for a new school once we have allocated a site. We will get help from the Department of Education.

21. PETITIONS

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

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

Councillor Imogen Shepherd- Dubey	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey presented a petition of 58 signatures regarding the demolition of the derelict garages located between No 8 &9 Tanhouse Lane. <i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and</i>
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	<i>Transport.</i>
Councillor Stephen Conway	<p>Stephen Conway presented a petition of 13 signatures regarding introducing residents-only parking arrangements for Ruscombe Road, Twyford.</p> <p><i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport.</i></p>

22. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Council considered the Pay Policy Statement, set out at Agenda pages 29 to 40.

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendation be agreed.

Rachel Burgess expressed concern that the Policy did not make reference to gender pay. Whilst she understood that it was not a legal requirement to include this information, the Council had a gender pay gap of 14%, which was 7% higher than the local authority average, and 11% higher than Reading Borough Council. The median gender pay was 26%. The Council needed to proactively put measures in place to close the gap.

Andy Croy also emphasised that he felt that the Policy should reference the gender pay gap and asked that this information be included in future.

Pauline Jorgensen indicated that the Council's senior officers were a good mix of both males and females.

John Halsall emphasised that a separate report on the Gender Pay Gap was considered by Personnel Board.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Pay Policy Statement for 2019 be approved.

23. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Council considered a report proposing amendments to the Constitution, set out at Agenda pages 41 to 78.

It was proposed by Chris Smith and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendations within the report be agreed. Andy Croy requested that each of the recommendations be voted on individually and this was agreed.

With regards to the proposal that the requirement that all licensing and appeals sub-committees be politically balanced, be removed, Rachel Burgess commented that she felt that there was no reasons why they could not always be politically balanced.

Imogen Shepherd-Dubey suggested that an annual report to the licensing and Appeals Committee should detail the political balance of each sub-committee.

Lindsay Ferris outlined the reasons why the proposal had been put forward and was sure that every effort would be made to ensure that licensing and appeals sub-committees would be politically balanced and that they would not be politically balanced only in an emergency. He advised that in the last municipal year he personally had sat on nine out of eleven sub committees to help ensure that the political balance requirement was met.

Chris Bowring also emphasised that the proposed removal of the political balance requirement for licensing and appeals sub-committees was purely a practical measure.

Chis Smith reminded Council that it was not a legal requirement that licensing and appeals sub-committees were politically balanced.

With regards to the proposal to review Members' Allowances every two years, Andy Croy commented that he felt that Members' Allowances should be reviewed annually.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) it be agreed that the requirement for Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committees to be politically balanced be removed.
- 2) the following changes to the Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group be agreed:
 - a) that Section 2.2 Members' Allowances Scheme be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
 - b) that Section 4.2.1.1 Timing and Order of Business [Annual Council] be amended as set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report;
 - c) that Section 4.4 [Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board] be amended as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
 - d) that Section 8.4.10 Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committee Procedure Rules be amended as set out in paragraph 5 of the report;
 - e) that Section 12.1.10 [Insurance, Risk and Opportunity Management] be amended as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

24. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER TO THE THAMES VALLEY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The Council considered a report regarding the appointment of a substitute Member on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel, set out at Agenda pages 79 to 82.

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that Council consider the nominations put forward by the political groups on the Council and decide which Councillor should be appointed as the substitute Member on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (Joint Committee) for the remainder of the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

The nominations put forward by the Political Groups were voted on and it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Emma Hobbs be appointed as the substitute Member on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (Joint Committee) for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year.

25. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

25.1 Pauline Jorgensen asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Thank you for responding to residents' concerns with regards the area of land in my ward known as Area DD, which I have been fighting to protect as natural green space. Is it possible to protect this area for future generations?

Answer

I would love to yes and as you know Pauline, the Council's assets play a very important role within the organisation by creating capital values for the benefit of all of the residents, of which area DD is but one, and these assets which are becoming increasingly important in the current difficult financial situation

Having said that, whilst the site is included within our Local Plan for mixed use development, I have persuaded the Executive to hold this site as we consider a new council wide housing strategy to run from 2019-2024. In addition this site is located in an area of high urban development and provides an additional area of undeveloped green space which is valued by our residents, and hence my persuasion.

That is not to say that future development of the site will not occur, this could take any form such as leisure, retail or much needed housing and as the current Executive Member it is not possible for me to say what future decision may or may not be made by members of any future administration.

But I am sure this will only be done in conjunction with a full consultation of residents and other interested parties.

Supplementary Question:

I am glad you recognise Area DD as a valuable green space in a built up area and a haven for wildlife. This site was first considered for development many years ago and I understand that you feel that you cannot bind future administrations, especially those of a different political hue, however, I am not entirely satisfied with the position. I have talked to hundreds of my residents and they have all been clear with me that the overwhelming view is that they would like this area to remain as a green haven for wildlife. I would welcome your support and advice as to how we might achieve that Parry.

Supplementary Answer:

Whilst this administration is in charge I will do my best to support you.

25.2 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

It was brought to my attention that several trees have just been felled in a protected copse opposite 10/12 Barker Close RG2 9NQ, which is privately owned land. I was very surprised to find out after the trees were felled that this Council gave permission to a local resident to fell these protected trees on land not in their ownership.

As the Ward Member, I was not made aware of this. Also, I am not aware of any site visit by the Council yet I have been informed that the permission to cut down these trees was based on a survey which I have never seen and which I would appreciate a copy of.

Can you explain why and if the Council permitted to allow the felling of protected trees on private land to someone who is not the landowner but a private resident.

Answer

The decision to approve this Tree Works Applications (TWA) was not based upon a survey provided by the applicant but the professional assessment of the Council's Senior Tree Officer assesses, which includes a site visit. This assessment informs her decision which is given in the decision letter. The Tree Officer's comments are not always included in the decision letter but often are.

In this instance, removal of trees covered by the TPO 1449/2012 was on health and safety grounds. The birch (T6), had a large main stem cavity with extensive decay - the 'target', had the tree failed catastrophically, was a domestic garden. T7, another birch, had excessive lean towards the adjacent property and the root plate had started to lift with fresh soil cracking around it. Again the 'target' was a domestic garden. The Council will in the future ensure that the phrase 'removal consented on health and safety grounds' is included in the decision letter where appropriate.

The goat willows on site, some of which were subject to the application, would not have been present at the time of the TPO (and therefore not covered by the Area TPO). They were included in the approval in order to make the extent of the works clear to the applicant and the public.

The tree works applications are available online and Councillors are sent a hard copy in the internal mail. Records on CIVICA from the Registration Team indicate that the relevant Councillor and the Parish Council were sent a record of this application on 30th April 2019. The decision letter was issued on 6th June.

Supplementary Question:

I have no record of a correspondence concerning the TPO, nor to my knowledge have any of the neighbours, so I would question that point. I did ask for the Officers' survey which the eventual reply was that the decision letter does not always include one, as the Executive Member did say. Without having any record of this how can we have checks and balances as to what is and what is not? More critically the decision letter to the tree surgeon states that to prune trees T1, T2 and 33, all protected trees, to protect the sunlight and aesthetics, and this is private trees on private land. My concern is if the reason to prune trees on private land, what hope has the Council got to deliver on climate emergency when it approves the pruning of TPO trees for aesthetic reasons on someone else's land? I have no idea what has been pruned or cut down but I do know it was done in the bird nesting season. Can I ask if the Council will revisit the site as soon as possible and establish what trees have been cut down, what has been pruned, establish why it was done in bird nesting season and let me know.

Supplementary Answer:

Yes, I can do that no problem.

25.3 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency the following question:**Question**

What are we doing for climate emergency: are we planning on putting solar panels on all Council buildings including affordable housing and new schools, if not why?

Answer

My colleague Councillor Graham Howe has been working on a solution to precisely this question for just under a year. As a result of the dedicated work of Councillor Howe and the Council Officers in identifying suppliers and partners, I am delighted to announce today that yes we will be seeking to install ethically manufactured solar panels and potentially other alternative energy generating devices onto the roofs of the Borough's schools, leisure centres, libraries and some other suitable Council owned properties, starting during the next school year. I must stress that this is not the work of an instant. There are many technical hurdles that have to be overcome when pairing state of the art energy generating equipment with some of schools, many of which are many decades old, and taking into consideration the fact that it is electricity near our children. I will not commit to when installation work will begin but I will keep all Councillors up to date of when that is going to happen.

I am also pleased to announce that our ambition is that once all costs have been taken into account, any cost savings or profits of selling energy to the National Grid will be passed back to individual schools to supplement their discretionary budget. We estimate that as a result of these programmes, with energy accounting for almost 6% of most schools' annual budgets, there will be a saving of potentially up to 25%. Our priority will be to ensure that Council run and maintained schools were included in this scheme first. We also seek to make this available to the Borough's academies as this initiative is for the benefit for children across Wokingham Borough Council and also aligns with policy stated by other parties. We ask for their support in this.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for doing something which is very much at the heart of the Liberal Democrats as well. We also want to know if you are planning to do any new technology such as heat exchange or something like this?

Supplementary Answer:

We will be looking at all forms of alternative energy generation, as there are many, many, many new technologies that are coming online every single day. Unfortunately, although this problem is decades old, some of the technology is still in its infancy so we will need to be able to assess it against a set of criteria that we have not yet created in order to be able to understand whether it will generate the type of energy versus the cost of installation but we will look at all options in terms of alternative generation of energy. We will report back to all Members, shortly.

25.4 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**Question**

Will Wokingham Borough Council undertake to ensure that every tree that is cut down in the Borough is replaced? Whoever cuts the tree down will replace it with an appropriate number of trees, within the area of Wokingham Borough, within 6 months, the appropriate number being sufficient to replicate the carbon uptake of the cut-down trees within 3 years.

Answer

Outside of the context of a planning application, the Council is not able to monitor the felling of trees on private land or to enforce replacement planting, unless the trees are covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

It is very rare for the Council to grant a planning consent where the number of trees lost exceeds those proposed for planting, indeed in the vast majority of cases the number of trees planted vastly exceeds those that are lost. Whilst it would be difficult to provide a definitive answer on numbers of trees planted, it is worth noting that the Council has secured the planting of approximately 45,000 new trees on the eleven SANGs that have been completed so far in the Borough.

- Rooks Nest Wood - 10,000
- Buckhurst - 6,500
- Kentwood - 5,500
- Old Forest Rd Meadows - 2,500
- Hazebrook Meadows - 2,500
- Shinfield SANGs - 3,000
- Eldridge Park - 4,000
- Keephatch Meadows - 11,000

Altogether that is 45,000.

Supplementary Question:

That is very positive and that is a good thing but we must go on planting trees. For every tree you cut down which is say 50 years old, you have to plant at least 10 trees to make up for the carbon that will come into the atmosphere because the old tree is cut down. This is the problem. It is not a one for one, a new for old. You have to plant more trees. Will the Council endeavour to plant many more trees because of that situation?

Supplementary Answer (provided by Gregor Murray, Executive Member for Climate Emergency):

The short answer is yes. The slightly longer answer is I have already made contact with several different agencies and well known charities who will hopefully be able to support us in planting more trees.

25.5 Ian Pittock asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Regarding the housing consultation. I am sure that we all wish there to be as large a response as possible. I understand, with some relief that responses are flooding in. There has, however, been some noise around concerning the lateness of delivery of letters to residents and other time related issues. Can you please confirm the latest date by which residents can respond to the consultation?

Answer

I do appreciate your concern of trying to make sure that we get as many people to respond as possible. Residents have until 23rd, which is next Tuesday. We have extended it by a day to allow extra to come in via the Wokingham Community Forum. We had another successful Forum last night in Shinfield. You will be pleased to know that we have well over 40,000 people that have already responded and it is uniform across the Borough, so everything is going well.

25.6 Caroline Smith asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Finance and Housing:

Question

The Earley Residents and Councillors are extremely pleased with the announcement that Area DD will not be developed in the immediate future but what I would like to understand is why the Earley Councillors were not informed before the public announcement and only found out by reading an item in the local papers?

Answer

I must admit as a Council we are doing so much at the moment, I find it difficult to report it, let alone reporting on things that I do not do, but I do understand why the Earley ward councillors are concerned.

I am pleased that Earley residents and local ward councillors are in support of our decision not to progress with the plans to develop Area DD for housing in the immediate future and please accept my apologies if any local ward councillors feel they were not informed before the decision became public.

Area DD, as it has been said, is Council owned land that was designated for housing in the Local Plan and so previously approved in principle as part of a standard consultation exercise. However following further consideration the Executive took the decision not to progress the site for housing for the foreseeable future.

Going forward the Council will, wherever possible, inform relevant ward councillors and members of the Affordable Housing Implementation Group of any key decisions relating to the development of Council owned land for housing.

25.7 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

I know this Council is working to improve South Lake and its water garden - please can you summarise the work that is on the horizon which my residents can look forward to?

Answer

There is currently a collaborative project in place working alongside Countryside Services; Biodiversity Officer and Localities to help improve the areas at South Lake.

With funding sparse we have pooled money together to carry out reed bed works to improve the ecology of the area as well as the look of the site. Over the Autumn /Winter period vegetation clearance works will also be taking place alongside the lake to reduce rhododendron which should aide the ecology of the lake and support its inhabitants.

Volunteers have been utilised in partnership with Countryside Services to carry out works to clear out the pond (water garden) of rubbish, water soldiers and bulrushes.

In recent years, stretches of footpath on both sides of the lake have been upgraded and a bund on the embankment introduced to assist the security of the dam.

As one of many of our parks and open spaces there is no set budget for this site and any available funds must be spent to serve all areas we look after across the Borough. Our contractor carries out scheduled work to cut back vegetation around the lake and pond and keep it litter free as far as practicable. Any additional works carried out would be on a health and safety basis and we are always willing to work in partnership with different services and Parish/Town Councils to improve areas wherever possible.

Supplementary Question:

Would you agree with me that the South Lake Angling Club deserves special thanks for all the work that they have done to maintain the health of the lake and making it a more pleasant place for all residents?

Supplementary Answer:

Yes, I do agree with you Laura. I think they do a great job and they did lay some barley bales around the lake earlier this year which has helped make the water healthier for the wildlife. I thank them for their ongoing hard work to make the lake better for all of us.

25.8 Jenny Cheng asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Highways and Transport:

Question

A number of elderly residents have tripped over the uneven paving in Woodley Precinct and broken bones or fallen unconscious. Outside Waitrose and around the trees are the worst areas which has been raised with this Council with photographic proof. An inspection by this Council was carried out recently and a few areas addressed, but not these accident hotspots. Please can you explain what will be done to fix the slabs in these areas and potentially save a life?

Answer:

I will take this one as it is my responsibility and not Parry's, although not personally.

I know we have been in a lot of conversations about Woodley Precinct and people falling over broken slabs and that sort of stuff, with you and Laura, for quite some time, so thank you for your perseverance. It is inspected regularly on a monthly basis for safety defects by Volker Highways safety inspectors. Any safety defects that have been identified as a safety issue will be repaired or have been repaired or made safe as per the Wokingham Highway Inspection Plan (WHIP).

Regarding the areas around the trees, the issue is really the roots. The slabs and blocks have been replaced where possible and concrete fillets replacing the remainder of the areas where tree roots prevent slabs and blocks being re-fixed, have been put in place. However, the real problem is that we have got trees pushing up the blocks all the time and we need to find a better solution to that.

The area outside and around Waitrose, all slabs and blocks that are considered a highway

safety risk have been replaced and re-set and again these works were carried out at the end of June.

The Highways Officer responsible for the precinct would be very happy to meet with both Ward Councillors for South Lake on site to walk around and discuss any issues and explain what is considered a dangerous safety defect on behalf of WHIP, and I would be happy to come as well.

There is a long-term issue regarding the undulations caused by the roots, as I mentioned, outside the Card Factory and the newsagents and we are currently looking at possible improvements. There is also an issue with continued damage to large volumes of broken slabs at the Headley Road end of the precinct with vehicles continuously using this area to drop off and pick up. This area is also being looked at for making it a more robust area or to restricting parking to try and avoid the damage caused by the lorries.

In the meantime, we will continue to inspect the precinct and repair it to keep it safe until we get a permanent solution.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for offering to come and meet us. Please could the Executive Member for the Environment come and meet us too since it concerns trees?

Supplementary Answer (provided by Parry Batth, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure):

Yes of course.

25.9 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

I have noted that one of our councillors, who left the Council last year, did not get removed as a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings until June this year

Can we have the information on how much money has been paid to ex-Councillors, in this way?

Answer

The companies have paid £ 3,350 to one ex-Councillor who was requested by the company to continue as a director after their term as a Councillor ended. This sum was for the period 04 May 2018 to 12 June 2019.

Supplementary Question

If this Councillor is no longer part of this Council, why are they occupying a space that is reserved for our councillors? What did they do for Wokingham Borough Council during that time?

Supplementary Answer

The appointments are made by the Board themselves. The particular Councillor was considered by the Board to have a particular expertise and as I say the appointment ended on 12 June so I have not really much idea what he was doing.

25.10 Maria Gee asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Will our Council be joining many other councils across the UK and the Houses of Parliament by flying the rainbow flag on the date of our local Pride celebration, which this year will be 31st August?

Answer

The answer is yes.

Supplementary Question

It has been 65 years since the death of the genius and war hero Alan Turing who was shamefully persecuted by the state. It is 50 years since the Stonewall uprising and 16 years since the repeal of Section 28, yet in the 3 years Thames Valley Police recorded 42 homophobic and transphobic hate crimes and other incidents in the Bracknell and Wokingham area. This is a very ugly truth. Will the Leader of the Council lead the way by stating that he abhors attacks on individual groups including our LGBT+ residents, commends those attempting to drive out homophobic and transphobic crimes and abuse, and commits to creating an inclusive community by supporting a Wokingham Borough Pride event in 2020?

Supplementary Answer

The Council welcomes diversity, recognises the interests of all minority groups and the importance of enabling equality for all, so if it is within the gift of the Council, the answer is yes.

25.11 Andy Croy asked the Leader of the Council the following question. Due to time constraints the following written answer was provided:

Question

Heathrow Airport, by making the area accessible for multinational companies seeking a UK base, is a major driver of economic growth in the Thames Valley. It is this economic growth which drives demand for extra housing in the Borough and which encourages people to move here.

Air travel is also a major contributor towards carbon emissions and climate change.

Wokingham Borough Council currently supports the expansion of Heathrow Airport by the addition of a third runway. WBC is therefore supporting a policy which will lead to increased demand for housing and which will increase carbon emissions.

There are two motions on this agenda, which imply WBC is opposed to increased housing demand and is committed to reducing carbon emissions.

Will the Leader commit to ensuring that WBC's policy will change to opposing the Third Runway at Heathrow and make a submission to the Heathrow Consultation to this effect?

Answer

We have to accept that we want to continue to make Wokingham Borough attractive to both businesses and residents and a consequence of that is that people will want to come here and will need somewhere to live. Accessibility to Heathrow is known to be a key factor in our healthy economy and quality of life, and this in turn attracts people here.

We have, in the past, supported the Heathrow expansion due to the economic advantages it will bring. However it is important that the operation of Heathrow both as it is now or in any expanded form, addresses the impact on the environment and its contribution to climate change.

We continue to monitor the situation with regard to the expansion and any negative consequences there might be for the Borough, particularly with regard to our ambitious target of making Wokingham Borough carbon neutral by 2030.

The Heathrow consultation suite of documents is very large and we are continuing to digest their contents. The report entitled Environmentally Managed Growth explains how Heathrow intends to expand without negatively impacting on the environment and specifically details surface access (traffic), air quality, aircraft noise and carbon. These relate mainly to the airport and its more immediate surroundings. With respect to Carbon in particular, the airport and airlines will be incentivised to reduce emissions and invest in new technology and climate change is a major concern across the aviation industry. However, the Airports Commission's initial analysis has concluded that a new runway is deliverable within the UK's carbon obligations.

We remain concerned about growth in traffic levels and welcome some of the measures Heathrow have proposed such as committing to at least 50% public transport mode share by 2030. We need to ensure that this is possible for people travelling from Wokingham Borough, so the Western Rail Link is an essential piece of infrastructure which we need to ensure is in place regardless of whether the expansion goes ahead. We also need to continue to manage investment in transport infrastructure and the location of development to ensure that we make alternatives to private car use a viable option for many so that the impact of any growth is lessened.

In summary, we recognise that the proposed Heathrow expansion could potentially bring both positive and negative consequences to the region and the Borough. We have a short time to investigate what this will mean for Wokingham before responding to the consultation and then make a decision on whether there should be a shift in our position on the expansion proposals.

26. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND WARD MATTERS

26.1 Shirley Boyt asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

In January 2019 our previous Mayor officially opened a new development of 20 houses in my Ward. Sutton Close is a mix of shared ownership and social rented homes. I have a press cutting here quoting Councillor Kaiser. "I was delighted to open this new development which brings 20 affordable homes to Wokingham Borough", he said. Sadly these homes are not quite as affordable as the residents were led to expect. In addition to Council Tax these residents are having to fork out an additional £100 each month in maintenance charges to the Housing Association. According to the Housing Association this is because the Council will not be adopting the road. I would like to ask the Executive Member responsible why the Borough has no plans to adopt this road?

Answer

It would have been nice to have that in writing so that I can actually do some investigation

beforehand, but if you would like to I will give you a written reply.

26.2 Charlotte Haitham Taylor asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Thank you for coming to visit Silchester Place in Shinfield South to see what Taylor Wimpy have been subjecting my residents to over the last 2 years whilst constructing behind their homes. There are very many serious health and safety breaches that their building contractors are exhibiting onsite, such as builders using angle grinders in shorts, without helmets, and builders on roof tops without hard hats, just to name two. Please can you advise me what the best course of action is and what your commitment is to stop this happening in the future in my Ward?

Answer

We did have a very good meeting with residents and I have to say we have got two very good workers working in the team, Connor Corrigan and Chris Howard, who have done a fantastic job for residents, but I think we have got to the stage now that we are going to have to raise the bar. We have taken it upon ourselves that we are going to write to the Chief Executive of Taylor Wimpy, including some support from John Redwood, and see what we can do, but it is serious. We need to now take action against Taylor Wimpy because it is not acceptable.

26.3 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Despite verbal assurances from the developers that they would secure the land at the former Auto Trader House site at Danehill if they gained planning permission, which has now been won, the site remains in a derelict and dangerous state. It is almost continuously occupied by travellers and is a cause of great concern to nearby residents. What steps is the Executive Member for Planning able and willing to take to ensure that the developer makes this site safe and secure without any further delays?

Answer

I do know the site because I was on the Planning Committee and I was part of the Planning Committee that supported the refusal of that application. I am going to have to take that away, but I am with Enforcement tomorrow so I will speak to Jason and see what we can do because when we visited the site, how long ago was it, 18 months ago, it was a dreadful mess then so we do need to do something so I will take that away.

26.4 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question:

Question

I would like to thank Councillor Cheng for speaking up for the people of Woodley. The Town Centre falls entirely in my Ward, and I would just like to ask Charlotte when Wokingham Town Centre had a couple of million pounds, I know there was more which came from the Town Council, this Borough spent a couple of million pounds on the regeneration of Wokingham town centre to take away exactly the same problems of uneven surfaces and trees. When will Woodley get the same money spent on it?

Answer

It is actually something that we have been talking about this week. Regeneration does not stop at Wokingham in the town and in my speech tonight I am going to be talking about where else we are going to be looking at. The town of Woodley is an example where actually the paving slabs are something that are a concern to us and we have talked about it this evening. The advantage of Wokingham Town was we were able to pool resources in order to deliver the Market Place and that is the kind of thing we need to be going and working together with parishes and towns in order to deliver regeneration right across the Borough.

The advantage of CIL is that it is paid out to Towns and Parishes and Towns and Parishes get more even if they have got a Local Plan. I think in future that will be a really great thing for us doing things in partnership and I would certainly like to look at Woodley and see if there is something that we can do in partnership there.

26.5 Chris Smith asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**Question**

I notice that in the local paper that Arthur Hill pool, the sale of that has fallen through, and this is a pool that is very close to my heart because as a primary school pupil at Hillside Primary, it was a place I was taken to learn to swim, so I know exactly how valued this is by the local community. Is there anything this Council can do to either purchase or fund the running of that pool, and protect it from the cuts of the Labour controlled Reading Council?

Answer

May I take it away with me because it is a little bit sprung on me? I am not sure what we can do in Reading but I will certainly have a look at it.

26.6 Rachel Burgess asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**Question**

Residents in my ward of Norreys are increasingly concerned about drug use and drug dealing in Wokingham Town Centre and other parts of my Ward. I appreciate that this is a criminal matter but with Police and Council resources both increasingly stretched how can I reassure my residents that the Council is doing all that it can to work with the Police to address their concerns?

Answer

I think I really need to have notice of that question Rachel. I am very happy to look into it but it covers a whole load of aspects which I do not have an answer to just off the top of my fingers.

26.7 Stephen Conway asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**Question**

Will the Leader of the Council accept my thanks for his personal commitment to delivering a new library for Twyford? I am particularly grateful for his willingness to work cross party on this issue of great importance to Twyford residents.

Answer

Thank you very much.

26.8 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

My residents in Kingfisher Drive are so happy that this Council is resurfacing their road, especially the service roads. Please can you share when this work will begin?

Answer

I am informed that the work should begin towards the end of September. Obviously that is dependent on what happens with previous roadworks and weather and all that sort of stuff, but we are pretty sure that is around the right day.

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

Question

Within my Ward of Emmbrook we have got a number of roads that have trouble with speeding on certain roads around the Ward. We occasionally get vehicle activated signs but they do not seem to get moved around the hotspots very often, and they do not seem to be available very often. They seem to be the only effective way that we have as a Borough Council of tackling speeding in 20 and 30mph zones. I would like to ask the Lead Executive for Highways what other actions WBC could take to reduce speed in these zones, and could we possibly get more equipment put into circulation?

Answer

We are happy to do speed watches in co-ordination with the Parish Council. In addition we did actually put a speed camera in Old Forest Road relatively recently to try and encourage people to keep their speed down before all the building work finishes and it becomes an area that does not have a lot of fast through traffic. Yes, that is one of the things. The complexity is that we actually not only have to find the device, and we have a couple of them in stock, we also have to find a lamppost to put them on and get the power sorted out. It does take a while but we have certainly put one in Old Forest Road recently, and if you have got any other suggestions I would be happy to see if we can put some more in from time to time for you.

26.10 Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

What is being done with the Winnersh Relief Road part 2? They were supposed to be moving the utilities and so far the only thing I have seen them do is put up some nice new boards and that is it.

Answer

I will have to give you a written reply to that Rachelle.

26.11 UllaKarin Clark asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

I would like to know why the ticket machines in Carnival Pool car park have changed?

Answer

The Carnival Pool car park ticketing machines were changed today I believe because recent legislation has banned the use of ANPR, which is the number plate recognition technology through CCTV for use by local authorities in the majority of circumstances. Local authorities can now only enforce parking restrictions by camera in the following instances: school keep clear markings; bus stop stand clearways; red routes and bus lanes. The result is that the ANPR systems used in Carnival Pool multi-storey cannot be used anymore and we are not able to enforce using them so we therefore we have to change the machines.

27. STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

John Halsall, Leader of the Council:

I was honoured to be elected Leader at the last Council meeting, since which time it has been a privilege to meet many of our officers. We have a magnificent team led by an impressive team of Directors who do great things with the sole objective of serving our residents as best they might at optimal cost. They are an ambitious team and have in the main a 'can do' attitude, willing to do new things and generate new thought processes. Sometimes an idea which seems sound has unforeseen consequences and we need to change. I believe in encouraging this positive attitude and experimenting with new ideas and technology full in the knowledge that not everything works, and maybe we have to backtrack. The only way of avoiding this is to do nothing at all.

We are, as you know, the lowest funded unitary. All the money that we spend comes from our residents or our commercial activities. Almost 80% of our available funds go to adults and children's services to look after the vulnerable. We cannot do everything that we want without a big increase in financial burden on our residents. To avoid this we need to constantly define new ways of generating new income, something which my predecessor started, reducing costs and improving services through technology and better methods. It is really disappointing therefore to have Members of the Opposition criticising our staff and what they do. Worse still information is being given to the press that is incorrect, harmful to our staff and not checked with the Executive Member as to its veracity.

Last summer, unprecedented demand, high staff turnover and leadership instability led to deterioration in the quality of services for children. It could have compromised the safety of some children and young people had it not been urgently addressed. It was. The new senior leadership team have taken steps to establish stability and improve services. I am delighted that Ofsted have acknowledged that things are improving. They made many positive observations about our work. This is testament to the quality of our staff and the hard work and dedication they put in daily to improve the lives of children and young people in our Borough. It has made me very proud to be the Leader of the Council watching this.

There are two motions tonight which are significant to the Administration's objectives; climate change and housing numbers. We must do everything in our armoury to reduce the required housing numbers because that is what we believe most of the Borough wants us to do. Even then we may fail in our endeavour. The response to the consultation to date has been exceptional. It is wrong to conflate the obligation to produce a Local Plan with any other services which we are obliged to deliver, including adults and children's. We must do all of them and still balance the budget. That is what a sound Conservative administration does and has done for the last 20 years in the Borough. Despite losing all

our Government grant which was a large proportion of our income, there has been no services lost. We still collect the rubbish every week, our roads are in better shape than our neighbours', our libraries and leisure centres have constantly increased footfalls, our care homes are really excellent, our home care is really excellent and our schools are the envy of our neighbours. The Borough is where people want to live. This is due in the main to our Officers, who are second to none. I hope all Councillors can join me in praising and supporting them.

UllaKarin Clark, Executive Member for Children's Services:

Following on from what Councillor Halsall said, this summer we were subject to an Ofsted inspection under the new ILACS framework. The judgement was 'Requires Improvement to be Good' which we consider to be an accurate appraisal of the current position in Children's Services. An unprecedented escalation in demand, coupled with high staff turnover and leadership instability in the summer of 2018 led to a deterioration in the quality of services for children and could have compromised the safety of some children and young people had this not urgently been addressed. However, this perilous situation was recognised and addressed by the new Senior Leadership Team who have taken steps to establish stability and to begin to improve services. Because of the recent instability, at this point in time we would not have expected a 'Good' judgement and we recognise that services for children are still too variable, but we are pleased that Ofsted have acknowledged that things are improving under the new, stable Leadership Team, and that they made many positive observations about our work with children and young people. This is testament to the quality of staff and the hard work and dedication that they put in daily to improve the lives of children and young people in Wokingham.

I am very proud to be the Executive Member for Children's Services which has a relentless focus on the safeguarding and achievement of all children. We have a first class Children's Leadership Team who know what needs to be done to improve services and is working tirelessly to ensure that services for all children and young people are good. The five areas identified by Ofsted for improvement to be good are; stability of the workforce, specifically children with disabilities team and longer term teams; effectiveness of child in need and child protection plans; quality and effectiveness of the social work support that disabled children and their families receive; level of critical scrutiny and quality of supervision provided by frontline managers; oversight and impact of the Corporate Parenting Board. None of this was a surprise to the Leadership team and work was already underway before the inspection to make these improvements.

Additionally, there appears to be some confusion between the Joint Local Area SEND inspection in Wokingham in March 2019 and the ILACS inspection in June 2019. The authority was subject to a Joint Local Area inspection of its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, which we call SEND services in March 2019. I would ask interested parties and particularly the press to check with me as to the veracity of reports made to them, and I have made my phone number available.

Now, I would like to report on the Northern House School. In short there is no further movement regarding the School since we first received notification from the Trust of their intention to withdraw from the running of the School. We are awaiting a decision from the Regional Schools Commissioner as to who they have appointed as a replacement. In the meantime we are continuing to place children at the School and we are supporting those young people and their families during a period of uncertainty. We are intending to place another 6 children there in September. This School will play an important role in providing future SEND placements for Wokingham but it will be necessary to renegotiate

arrangements both on cost and formal provision with a new provider Trust and it is unlikely that this will happen quickly.

We spoke earlier about the recruitment of SEN staff and I would like to tell you that an additional £250,000 have been made available to improve staffing levels, and it will be used to appoint additional SEN case managers. We have now filled our vacancies with the exception of two posts; the Team Manager and the SEN Case Manager. We still have some interim staff but it is the intention of our new Director, Carol Cammiss, to ensure that they are replaced with permanent staff over the coming months. We can already now see that additional resources are now beginning to positively impact on workloads and engagement with families.

Finally, Foundry School, work is ongoing to develop the school site. The local school, Keep Hatch, along with Ashridge Nursery, have met with senior officers to explore how the site can be best developed. There are issues that need to be resolved around the vehicle entrances, but overall there is support for the moves. We are going to move our staff from both the social care and the education and it is intended that we are going to submit a planning application for Foundry in August.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Regeneration

I wanted to start tonight by mentioning and thanking Councillor David Lee who was the previous Leader, a couple of Leaders ago. He was the original person who had the vision for the town centre and the drive to start the regeneration of this town. There were of course many naysayers, not just 10 or 12 years ago, but even some still today, but I am really pleased that we did not listen and we did not let the town die and shrivel. We have been rewarded by a town now that is pushing forward and bringing new investment, new leisure facilities and indeed new, fresh footfall.

Yesterday, crowds of hugely excited children, the next generation to enjoy this town, and their parents gathered at the gates of the new play park of Elms Field for the formal launch. They were the very first to enjoy it and try out all of the fabulous new, inclusive and accessible play equipment. The launch was a massive success, and if you were not there then just look at the photographs because they tell the stories in themselves. If you have not already been down to the park, please go and take a look. The play area has been specially designed using sustainably sourced wood, which looks fantastic, in and around the established trees, and the new elms, English oaks, birches and maples, which have been added in and around the park. Tonight I also wanted to thank the team of Officers and the builders who have managed to deliver this part of the scheme on time for all of us to enjoy over the summer holidays. People were already sitting out on the new grass, on rugs in the stunning new park and with areas also left to wildflower meadows lots of new wildlife will also be available to find a sustainable home here and hopefully we can also support Britain's shrinking bee population too. The park has also been fitted out with bins for recycling so there is absolutely no excuse to leave your litter and you can also recycle it whilst you are there on site. The park will also become the beating heart of the town with integrated electric and water and is now truly fit for outdoor events for the 21st century throughout the year, so everyone can come from right across the Borough to enjoy it.

Yesterday was another milestone in Wokingham's regeneration, but it does not stop here. Buildings are going up around the park very quickly. Aldi is already open, the hotel is near completion and we are in varying stages of discussion with over 10 different realtors who see Wokingham as a great place to come and to trade, but the regeneration should not

stop at Wokingham, as I intimated earlier, and this is perhaps best demonstrated in our investment in other parts of the Borough. The Bulmershe leisure centre is progressing at pace, and I am sure you will hear more about that, and also we are looking further north in the Borough, heading to Twyford. I am excited that the Executive will be asked to kick off the new library project there next week. This demonstrates that everywhere in the Borough is being looked at and considered, and that the Conservatives have a long term view regarding investment in our residents and their future, to ensure that this Borough continues to thrive.

Charles Margetts, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services:

I have now been in post for 8 weeks and would like to update you and fellow Members on progress in Adult Social Care in Wokingham and also plans for the future. This is an absolutely vital service which supports some of the most vulnerable people in the community and promotes the wellbeing and independence of many more. The picture nationally is very difficult in this sector. Since 2010 councils have had to bridge a £6billion funding shortfall to keep the system going. Demand for care however endlessly increases. Nationally in England there are 1.8million new requests for adult social care a year, the equivalent of 5,000 a day. A recent ADAS report states that the average Adult Social Care department is predicting an overspend this year of nearly £900,000, and that 89% of Adult Social Care Directors have no confidence or only partial confidence that their budget will meet their statutory duties by the end of 2019/20. This leads to unprecedented pressure on Adult Social Care staff who, to my mind, should be valued as NHS workers across the UK.

Turning to Wokingham I wanted to start with a couple more statistics. Adult Social Care consumes around 40% of the Council's annual budget. The complexity of what we do here is extraordinary. We support over 2,000 vulnerable adults, 27,000 care and support payments each year are made to do this. All of this is achieved with around 140 full time posts. To manage something of this complexity with such few people is a reflection on the hard work of our Officers, all of our staff basically from the new Director all the way down to the grass roots.

I mentioned earlier the national situation with Adult Social Care finances. In Wokingham, despite all the pressure, we are forecasting to keep to our current budget. The climate going forwards is very challenging but the Department is focused on keeping expenditure under control and doing as much as possible with the taxpayer's pound. The officers have put in considerable effort into improving forecasting to enable us to pick up problems coming forwards and to be as efficient as possible. We do many things well here within Adult Social Care in Wokingham. We have some of the shortest waiting times for social worker assessments in the country. During 2018-19 84% of older people who received reablement were still living in their own homes 3 months later, another example of high performance which keeps pressure off the NHS. 98% of our residential homes, 92% of our nursing homes and 94% of domiciliary care providers are classed as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by the CQC. Our Mental Health Team has recently received the prestigious accreditation from the Royal College of Psychiatry. I want to pay tribute to Christine Dale and her two service managers and their team for this achievement. Our Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Team continue to perform very well. However, the future is not easy. The national picture predicts that by 2025 8% of all people over 65, will have dementia. 42% of the budget is currently spent on services for those with learning disabilities. We are expecting a 10% increase by 2025. The total number of people aged 18 to 64 with a mental health disorder living in the Borough will increase again greatly by 2025. I think it

really is high time that central Government got its act together and produced a national long term Social Care Plan for the whole country.

Our priorities for the next 12 months are:

- an action plan to tackle social isolation across the Borough;
- to improve the way we review care packages across the Borough;
- to ensure residents get the correct quality of service and the taxpayers' pound is spent on the services that need it;
- to work our partners in the voluntary sector to ensure their efforts are focused alongside ours to deliver the complete package of services;
- to work with our partners in health and to provide a plan to improve primary care in the Borough; and
- to improve our financial forecasting to ensure that whilst the national picture is difficult, we make every effort to remain on budget; development and a review of help for young people with a learning disability focused on preparing them for adulthood; and
- an early integrated transition across children's and adults.

So, plenty to do.

Parry Batth, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure:

I would like to focus on some of the items under my watch that will benefit the residents of Wokingham Borough.

Ageing Actively Wokingham, just to support Charles here, this is an initiative to reduce social isolation and loneliness through physical activity for older people living in the Borough. To support these people the Sports and Leisure Team recruited 12 volunteers in the early part of 2019 and trained them to become Senior Peer Mentors with a view of supporting other, older residents in the Borough. Keeping active will help improve mental and physical wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation. Sessions are in place in Wokingham Borough Council's sheltered schemes, the Borough's country parks and the walking for health programme.

Second item, the Emmbrook 3G. The Emmbrook 3G pitch will provide the School and the community of Wokingham with a wonderful football facility. The work is due to start in July, construction taking place in 12-14 weeks. The pitch will not only enhance the School's PE provision but will also create facilities for the local community. The pitch will be adaptable for 5, 7, 9 and 11 a side games.

Bulmershe leisure centre was briefly mentioned. Construction of the new £14.5million leisure centre is going well. The site will include a 6 lane 25m swimming pool, teaching pool with moveable floor so larger groups of ages and abilities can fit, a larger gym plus a Live Well gym for people living with long term health conditions. It will also benefit from a 4 court sports hall and additional studio and a café.

Waste and recycling collection. The new food waste collection service is really going well. A target of 1.46kg per week per household has been met and that is going really well.

28. STATEMENTS FROM COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES

John Kaiser, Non-Executive Director Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd:

I have not got much to say at the moment purely and simply because the Boards have changed substantially. We have had Councillors that have left and we have also been

joined by Members from cross-party. I will be bringing forward so far as the housing company is concerned, an Affordable Housing Strategy, which will probably be within the next couple of months. I am working on it with Officers and that is across the different housing providers, the HRA, our own companies and also the houses we are providing within the Town Centre.

Optalis are in the same position. Of course we are changing all the Board members. We are looking at Optalis, Optalis is a company that produce quality care, and we are just really looking at whether or not the services we get from Optalis, whether they suit our residents' requirements. I am sure we will be coming back with that again, so that is all I really have to say on the companies.

29. MOTIONS

29.1 Motion 416 submitted by Sarah Kerr

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Sarah Kerr and seconded by John Halsall.

'Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to demonstrate their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equalities Act 2010. This Act requires Local Authorities to consider how their work affects people of different ages, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, marital status, pregnancy and maternity and gender identity. Everyone that lives in, works and visits Wokingham Borough needs to have confidence that this is being done throughout the Borough. This Council will evidence its compliance with the PSED through undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) when required, and ensure they are included in public reports and are easily accessible on the Council's website. In addition, all newly elected Members will have PSED and EqIA training as part of their induction. Executive Members will also have to undertake PSED and EqIA training.'

Sarah Kerr commented that her grandfather was visually impaired and that when Market Place had first opened she had realised that there may be some difficulties for those with visual impairments in getting around the Market Place. She had found that those with visual impairments had not been consulted at all stages of the design process. The Council was required to have a regard to a number of considerations in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, including evidencing its compliance with the Equality Act 2010. An Equality Impact Assessment was a way doing so. Sarah Kerr indicated that Officers underwent mandatory training on the subject and suggested that all Members should undertake the available online training. The online training should also be available to any new Members as part the Members' induction and at the first Executive Briefing of a municipal year. Sarah Kerr also suggested that EQIAs or Initial Impact Views should be published on the Council's website, and that report templates make reference to the fact that regard had been made to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

John Halsall stated that the Motion reaffirmed the Council's commitment to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010. He agreed that Members should undergo training.

In accordance with Rule 4.2.13.12, the Leader of the Council, moved a closure Motion. However, this was not agreed by the Mayor who felt that there had not been sufficient debate of the Motion.

Imogen Shepherd-Dubey felt that equalities had been underrated by the Council in the past, particularly when it came to people with disabilities. She referred to the moving of disabled spaces at Carnival Pool. She therefore wanted to see a higher prioritisation of equalities.

Clive Jones emphasised that there needed to be change of culture. He wanted to see all Executive Members trained on equalities within 3 months of taking office.

Andrew Mickleburgh commented that equalities should be at the heart of policy and strategy and that regular refresher training should be offered to Members.

Following debate the Motion was then put to the vote and was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

RESOLVED: That Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to demonstrate their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equalities Act 2010. This Act requires Local Authorities to consider how their work affects people of different ages, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, marital status, pregnancy and maternity and gender identity. Everyone that lives in, works and visits Wokingham Borough needs to have confidence that this is being done throughout the Borough. This Council will evidence its compliance with the PSED through undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) when required, and ensure they are included in public reports and are easily accessible on the Council's website. In addition, all newly elected Members will have PSED and EqIA training as part of their induction. Executive Members will also have to undertake PSED and EqIA training.

29.2 Motion 417 submitted by John Halsall

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by John Halsall and seconded by Gregor Murray.

'Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) 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.'

It was moved by Carl Doran and seconded by Clive Jones that the Motion be amended as follows:

'Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) 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 back within six months as to what actions are required.'

The Executive Member for Climate Change will set up a cross-party working group on the climate crisis to investigate and propose further recommendations to help achieve a carbon neutral Borough, reporting back within six months.

The working group will invite, consult and involve as wide a participation from our local community as possible, in order to create a broad consensus of how we contribute to the fight against the climate crisis.'

Carl Doran commented that whilst he welcomed the commitment to declaring a climate emergency he had felt that the original Motion did not go far enough. Actions that would be taken to address the climate emergency needed to be agreed and residents engaged in and supportive of this process. He hoped that the Working Group would be able to make representations to Government to urge them to take on board recommendations and give the additional powers and funding to ensure that the Council was carbon neutral by 2030.

Clive Jones suggested that the Working Group also work on Wokingham Council's ethical framework to ensure that all the Council's suppliers were committed to a carbon neutral future.

The amendment to the Motion was accepted by the proposer of the original Motion and therefore became the substantive Motion

A number of Members emphasised the importance of the Council acting to address the climate emergency and to work in the interests of future generations. Stephen Conway referred to initiatives in Twyford. Angus Ross questioned whether consideration could be given to putting solar panels on the Shute End building and also asked that a Tree Strategy be developed. Rachel Burgess commented that small actions were not unimportant but big action such as removing support for a third runway at Heathrow, was vital. Paul Fishwick stated that whilst 2030 was ambitious to become carbon neutral, the Council could not sit around any longer. Pauline Jorgensen asked that when the Council considered the carbon impact of things that it might do, that it also look at the pollution impact of some of the alternatives. Sarah Kerr suggested that the Council offer free trial periods in vacant shop units to eco-friendly businesses. She also suggested that all reports regarding policies make reference to the impact of these policies on the environment.

The Motion was put to the vote and was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

RESOLVED: That Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) 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.

The Executive Member for Climate Change will set up a cross-party working group on the climate crisis to investigate and propose further recommendations to help achieve a carbon neutral Borough, reporting back within six months.

The working group will invite, consult and involve as wide a participation from our local community as possible, in order to create a broad consensus of how we contribute to the fight against the climate crisis.

30. CONTINUATION THE MEETING

At this point in the meeting, 10.20pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), the 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 Chris Bowring and seconded by Pauline Jorgensen.

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

30.1 Motion 418 submitted by Wayne Smith

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Wayne Smith and seconded by Gary Cowan.

‘Wokingham Borough Council understands and supports the need to provide homes, as it does the Government’s desire to speed up delivery. That is why we are a proactive planning authority, seeking to shape future development through a carefully managed approach, which is enabling the delivery of sustainable, infrastructure rich new communities, including schools, new strategic roads, neighbourhood centres, sports hubs and improved public transport, in addition to 35% affordable housing.

Since 2006, over 8,200 new homes have been provided and outstanding planning permissions are in place to deliver a further 7,000 new homes. In addition, current allocations will deliver a further 2,300 new homes.

Looking at future delivery from now: our housing permissions, allocations and windfalls are capable of delivering 10,700 homes between 2019 and 2036 (equates to an average of 630pa). This compares with the projected demographic growth of new households of 555pa calculated by the 2014-based ONS projections used by the standard method for calculating local housing need (despite more recent ONS figures in the 2016-based ONS projections demonstrating that this figure is an overestimate; the real growth is more likely to be around 486pa).

The standard method for calculating local housing need is designed to require more homes to be built above that required by demographic growth, which is flawed for Wokingham Borough. Building more homes drives up house prices rather than lowering it because of the 20-30% premium on the cost of new homes. Developers will not build housing for sale at lower prices. Also the focus on workplace earnings fails to recognise that residents travel out of the borough to high value, well paid jobs, and that flexible working with work registered out of the Borough, where in reality work is undertaken locally, often at home. The real and necessary response would be to allow us to focus on affordable housing and self-build products, both of which directly help our residents.

The Council supports the Executive to oppose any housing need calculation over and above the demographic growth by whatever means the Executive has at its disposal.’

Wayne Smith commented that the Council was committed to taking its fair share of housing. The Council was currently targeted to build 840 homes a year, Reading 631, Bracknell, 615 and West Berkshire 520. The Motion was about getting the right housing numbers for the Borough.

Gary Cowan referred to the challenging housing number and pressure on infrastructure.

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

‘Wokingham Borough Council understands and supports the need to provide homes, as it

does the Government's desire to speed up delivery. That is why we are a proactive planning authority, seeking to shape future development through a carefully managed approach, which is enabling the delivery of sustainable, infrastructure rich new communities, including schools, new strategic roads, neighbourhood centres, sports hubs and improved public transport, in addition to 35% affordable housing.

Since 2006, over 8,200 new homes have been provided and outstanding planning permissions are in place to deliver a further 7,000 new homes. In addition, current allocations will deliver a further 2,300 new homes.

Looking at future delivery from now: our housing permissions, allocations and windfalls are capable of delivering 10,700 homes between 2019 and 2036 (equates to an average of 630pa). This compares with the projected demographic growth of new households of 555pa calculated by the 2014-based ONS projections used by the standard method for calculating local housing need (despite more recent ONS figures in the 2016-based ONS projections demonstrating that this figure is an overestimate; the real growth is more likely to be around 486pa).

The standard method for calculating local housing need is designed to require more homes to be built above that required by demographic growth, which is flawed for Wokingham Borough. Building more homes drives up house prices rather than lowering it because of the 20-30% premium on the cost of new homes. Developers will not build housing for sale at lower prices. Also the focus on workplace earnings fails to recognise that residents travel out of the borough to high value, well paid jobs, and that flexible working with work registered out of the borough, where in reality work is undertaken locally, often at home. The real and necessary response would be to allow us to focus on affordable housing and self-build products, both of which directly help our residents.

The Council ~~supports the Executive to~~ oppose any housing need calculation over and above the demographic growth by whatever means the Executive has at its disposal **and agrees to ensure that what is actually built meets the needs of existing residents.'**

Ian Pittock emphasised that it was vital that the Council as a whole and not just the Executive, acted.

The amendment to the Motion was accepted by the proposer of the original Motion and therefore became the substantive Motion.

A number of Members indicated that they supported efforts to reduce the Council's housing numbers.

Carl Doran commented that there was a lack of suitable infrastructure and that the 35% affordable housing target had not been met in many cases. He did not support undertaking a housing consultation as he felt that the answer was already known.

Andy Croy suggested that the Council not support a third runway for Heathrow Airport.

Stephen Conway stated that there was a need for more housing, particularly affordable housing but the scale requested by the Government was unsustainable. The green belt should be safe from housing.

Gary Cowan and John Kaiser emphasised that development was to meet the needs of

prospective and new residents rather than existing residents.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor referred to the scale of development in Shinfield. Whilst she supported new housing, especially affordable housing, not at the current housing numbers.

Lindsay Ferris emphasised that the Council could not continue to accommodate the current housing numbers. It was time for the Council to fight before it was too late and he supported a cross-party consultation.

Charles Margetts referred to several applications in his ward that had been refused and had gone to appeal, which the Council had then won. The cost of these appeals had been high.

Clive Jones stated that there was a shortage of the right types of homes and that there needed to be more 1 and 2 bedroom properties.

It was moved by Wayne Smith and seconded by Pauline Jorgensen that the Motion be amended as follows:

‘Wokingham Borough Council understands and supports the need to provide homes, as it does the Government’s desire to speed up delivery. That is why we are a proactive planning authority, seeking to shape future development through a carefully managed approach, which is enabling the delivery of sustainable, infrastructure rich new communities, including schools, new strategic roads, neighbourhood centres, sports hubs and improved public transport, in addition to 35% affordable housing.

Since 2006, over 8,200 new homes have been provided and outstanding planning permissions are in place to deliver a further 7,000 new homes. In addition, current allocations will deliver a further 2,300 new homes.

Looking at future delivery from now: our housing permissions, allocations and windfalls are capable of delivering 10,700 homes between 2019 and 2036 (equates to an average of 630pa). This compares with the projected demographic growth of new households of 555pa calculated by the 2014-based ONS projections used by the standard method for calculating local housing need (despite more recent ONS figures in the 2016-based ONS projections demonstrating that this figure is an overestimate; the real growth is more likely to be around 486pa).

The standard method for calculating local housing need is designed to require more homes to be built above that required by demographic growth, which is flawed for Wokingham Borough. Building more homes drives up house prices rather than lowering it because of the 20-30% premium on the cost of new homes. Developers will not build housing for sale at lower prices. Also the focus on workplace earnings fails to recognise that residents travel out of the borough to high value, well paid jobs, and that flexible working with work registered out of the borough, where in reality work is undertaken locally, often at home. The real and necessary response would be to allow us to focus on affordable housing and self-build products, both of which directly help our residents.

The Council oppose any housing need calculation over and above the demographic growth by whatever means the Executive has at its disposal and agrees to ensure that what is actually built meets the needs of existing residents.’

The amendment to the Motion was accepted by the proposer of the original Motion and therefore became the substantive Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, the amended (substantive) Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

RESOLVED: That Wokingham Borough Council understands and supports the need to provide homes, as it does the Government's desire to speed up delivery. That is why we are a proactive planning authority, seeking to shape future development through a carefully managed approach, which is enabling the delivery of sustainable, infrastructure rich new communities, including schools, new strategic roads, neighbourhood centres, sports hubs and improved public transport, in addition to 35% affordable housing.

Since 2006, over 8,200 new homes have been provided and outstanding planning permissions are in place to deliver a further 7,000 new homes. In addition, current allocations will deliver a further 2,300 new homes.

Looking at future delivery from now: our housing permissions, allocations and windfalls are capable of delivering 10,700 homes between 2019 and 2036 (equates to an average of 630pa). This compares with the projected demographic growth of new households of 555pa calculated by the 2014-based ONS projections used by the standard method for calculating local housing need (despite more recent ONS figures in the 2016-based ONS projections demonstrating that this figure is an overestimate; the real growth is more likely to be around 486pa).

The standard method for calculating local housing need is designed to require more homes to be built above that required by demographic growth, which is flawed for Wokingham Borough. Building more homes drives up house prices rather than lowering it because of the 20-30% premium on the cost of new homes. Developers will not build housing for sale at lower prices. Also the focus on workplace earnings fails to recognise that residents travel out of the borough to high value, well paid jobs, and that flexible working with work registered out of the borough, where in reality work is undertaken locally, often at home. The real and necessary response would be to allow us to focus on affordable housing and self-build products, both of which directly help our residents.

The Council oppose any housing need calculation over and above the demographic growth by whatever means the Executive has at its disposal and agrees to ensure that what is actually built meets the needs of residents.

30.2 Motion 419 submitted by Keith Baker

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Keith Baker and seconded by Laura Blumenthal.

'Recently a major political party has been embroiled in a large number of allegations of statements and speeches which express serious anti-Semitic sentiments. Up until now this had not really emerged locally but recent local newspaper reports have suggested that this area is not immune. Get Reading reported on 22nd May that "Reading Labour scraps anti-Semitism training session because of a pro-Palestinian speaker." This was followed up by an article in the Jewish Chronicle on the same day, 22nd May expanding this same story.

Nationally the Equality and Human Rights Commission have now opened an investigation into the Labour Party following complaints about anti-Semitism. On 28th May they posted

“The Equality and Human Rights Commission is today launching a formal investigation to determine whether The Labour Party has unlawfully discriminated against, harassed or victimised people because they are Jewish.”

I do not envy the Reading Labour Party or any other political party as they wrestle with how to deal with these matters and I wish them well in dealing with anyone who has expressed anti-Semitic views.

I hope all Councillors will put party politics aside and support this motion:

This Council abhors any attack on individual groups, including our Jewish residents and commits to lend support to anyone attempting to drive out such anti-Semitic views from our local political scene regardless of any political allegiance.’

At this point in the meeting, 11pm, in accordance with rule 4.2.8.1, the Mayor put the Motion to vote without further discussion.

Prior to the 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:

For	Against	Abstained
Keith Baker		Malcolm Richards
Parry Batth		Bill Soane
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		
UllaKarin Clark		
Andy Croy		
Richard Dolinski		
Carl Doran		
Michael Firmager		
Guy Grandison		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
John Halsall		
Emma Hobbs		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Abdul Loyes		
Charles Margetts		
Ken Miall		
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Barrie Patman		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Chris Smith		

Wayne Smith		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		

RESOLVED: That recently a major political party has been embroiled in a large number of allegations of statements and speeches which express serious anti-Semitic sentiments. Up until now this had not really emerged locally but recent local newspaper reports have suggested that this area is not immune. Get Reading reported on 22nd May that “Reading Labour scraps anti-Semitism training session because of a pro-Palestinian speaker.” This was followed up by an article in the Jewish Chronicle on the same day, 22nd May expanding this same story.

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I do not envy the Reading Labour Party or any other political party as they wrestle with how to deal with these matters and I wish them well in dealing with anyone who has expressed anti-Semitic views.

I hope all Councillors will put party politics aside and support this motion:

This Council abhors any attack on individual groups, including our Jewish residents and commits to lend support to anyone attempting to drive out such anti-Semitic views from our local political scene regardless of any political allegiance.