

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 30 JULY 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.25 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser, Parry Batth, UllaKarin Clark, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Jorgensen, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray and Wayne Smith

Other Councillors Present

Chris Bowring
Gary Cowan
Andy Croy
Michael Firmager
Paul Fishwick
Maria Gee
David Hare
Clive Jones
Sarah Kerr
Andrew Mickleburgh
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
Bill Soane

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Charles Margetts.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 28 May 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and will be signed by the Leader of Council at a later date.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor UllaKarin Clark declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6, Shareholders' Report, by virtue of the fact she was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes Ltd. Councillor Clark remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillors John Halsall, Stuart Munro and Wayne Smith declared personal interests in Agenda Item 6, Shareholders' Report, by virtue of the fact that they were unpaid Non-Executive Directors of WBC (Holdings) Ltd. Councillors Halsall, Munro and Smith remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor John Kaiser declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6, Shareholders' Report, by virtue of the fact he was an unpaid Non-Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Ltd and Berry Brook Homes Ltd. Councillor Kaiser remained in the meeting during discussions and voted on the matter.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

4.1 Philip Challis had asked the Leader of the Council the following question but as he was unable to attend the meeting a written response was provided:

Question

Would you agree that Taylor Wimpey have done a good job in creating the Loddon Countryside Amenity Area adjacent to Loddon Park (Sandford Farm) development, including a path which extends right up to an old bridge over the River Loddon which for safety reasons is closed off. Would you further agree with residents' disappointment that despite £250,000 funding from Taylor Wimpey and the willingness of Sustrans to provide further funding that the Council have failed to upgrade this bridge over the Loddon and provide the envisaged good links into the wider network of footpaths and provide a pedestrian/cycle link to Twyford. Would he explore the possibility of completing the reinstatement of this bridge given the current emphasis the Government are placing on walking and cycling.

Answer

The benefits of active travel (by bike or foot) have been integral to our plans to manage the impact of growth in Wokingham for many years and our policies, decisions and capital investment schemes have an enabling impact on this objective. More specifically the cycleway and greenways projects are part of a joined up strategy to enable active travel connectivity between our many settlements. Climate change and Covid 19 emphasise the importance of these initiatives for the environment, health and wellbeing, show that we have been a forward thinking authority in this area.

The Country Park at Sandford Farm will provide an enjoyable open space for local residents on completion of the snagging items identified by Officers at WBC. Taylor Wimpey tell us that they will complete the outstanding remedial works this month and Officers hope to carry out a final inspection before July.

There are three bridges at Sandford Farm, one of which being the Bailey bridge referred to, currently in the ownership of Summerleaze and Taylor Wimpey. The bridge is closed to public access as on investigation it was found to need replacement. As part of their planning commitments for Sandford Farm, Taylor Wimpey provided £30,000 to repair and renovate the bridge; this amount is insufficient to cover replacement. Officers are currently investigating how to move forward with this issue. There is a possibility that the bridge could be replaced and included within our wider greenways network because of the benefits this route provides for residents. We are in very early discussions with the landowners as well as undertaking further investigative works to assess the specification for and cost of replacement.

4.2 Elizabeth Mayers asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Following your social media posts incorrectly linking Black Lives Matter with the atrocious killings in Forbury Gardens do you accept that you have destroyed the trust and confidence of black, anti-racist residents and staff at WBC, failing in your duty to foster good relations and, some would say, inflaming racial division? As a result will you be considering your position?

Answer

I was as shocked and disgusted at the killing of George Floyd as any other right thinking person and it is my sincere hope that the world can change for the better as a result of the outcry it has produced.

I completely support the message, principles, and the aims of Black Lives Matter in the UK. I have always been opposed to discrimination in all its forms. I understand the need today to have a clear focus of tackling racism wherever it is found.

The senseless stabbings in Forbury Gardens underline the fragility of life. One of the victims was a very popular Holt teacher James Furlong. It is difficult to find words to console in such a dreadful circumstance. It is impossible to understand the motive for such actions.

None of my social media posts have linked Black Lives Matter with the killings in Forbury Gardens.

In case there was any possibility of a mistaken conflation, I posted a clarification immediately which stated: "I would like to make it clear that there is no suggestion that the Black Lives Matter march that afternoon had anything to do with what has now been described as a terrorist incident."

Wokingham Borough Council is antiracist, promotes equality and celebrates diversity. We are determined to do better to ensure that every resident in the Borough feels truly valued. It will continue to do so whilst I am Leader.

We are undertaking a survey with our communities to listen to anybody who has experienced racism in any form as well as anybody with views on how this issue can be tackled. In particular the importance that Black Lives Matter. It is deliberately an open, listening exercise that acknowledges there will be problems we have not seen and answers we have not thought of. The survey is open throughout July and August and I urge everybody to take part.

I will not be reconsidering my position. This is an important community issue and I will continue to lead the Council on behalf of the communities, working with the independent BME Forum, and listening to staff and residents on their views on this vitally important issue. Working with Council Officers I will address the inequalities that are identified and I determinedly take forward our ongoing quest for community cohesion.

If any comments I have made have been offensive to anyone I apologise unreservedly; that was never my intention. Rather by reaching out, I hope to bring residents together. I fully support Nelson Mandela who said, "I detest racialism, because I regard it as a barbaric thing, whether it comes from a black or a white man".

Supplementary Question

Sadly your answer and the things you say on equality feel pretty insincere and scripted. Apart from your comments at the previous Council meeting, saying that you would not support Black Lives Matter, and the social media posts in which you actually apologised in 'Wokingham Today' on 25th June acknowledging what you did was an entire mistake "I have done damage to myself and the Council".

These things seem to reflect genuine sentiments a little more than the answer that you have given. The fact that you still believe that Black Lives Matter is about George Floyd's death shows your lack of understanding or knowledge about the Human Rights' Movement which was actually founded in 2013.

As the Leader of the Council which is apparently hardwired to promote equality if you are not prepared to reconsider your position what steps and commitment are you prepared to make today to better educate yourself, and your fellow Councillors, on these crucial and sensitive matters to ensure that your behaviour does not contravene the Councillor's Code of Conduct again?

Supplementary Answer

I do not believe my conduct has contravened the Councillor Code of Conduct nor the Nolan Principles. I believe that there is another agenda. I reiterate where we are. As a Council we are antiracist, we promote equality and celebrate diversity and we will do our very best to make that happen.

4.3 Beth Rowland asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

The enforced lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that a considerable portion of our residents will have been furloughed from their jobs on 80% of their normal salary. Some will have lost their jobs altogether – over the next few months many more will be unemployed as companies are forced to stop trading. That means that many more of our residents and their families will be forced to live on benefits with the problems that brings to children and young people. Will this Authority work with local charities and organisations including Berkshire Credit Union to support families living in poverty and debt?

Answer

Wokingham Borough Council is working closely with the third sector to support residents in the Borough.

We are working with our residents, which include tenants, site dwellers, leaseholders and licensees and others at this difficult time.

If, as many are, they are experiencing financial difficulties we will actually work with them. If they are struggling to pay their Council Tax or money that they owe to the Council we will work with them on an individual basis to understand their personal circumstances and come up with a sustainable payment plan.

We will also look at what they will be entitled to e.g. means tested benefits to maximise their incomes or they may even be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment, Local Welfare or signpost them to access many of the great charities that are working in Wokingham.

We also signpost them to the following independent money and advice organisations such as: National Debt, Money Advice Service and Step Change.

Finally I guess even though the Council is in step with the guidance of the CAB and the Council Tax Protocol and best practice, which is agreed by the LGA, it is but a short step

for us to formally adopt that Protocol and to indicate our commitment to our residents who require help and as such I will commit to signing the CAB Council Tax Protocol Agreement as agreed with the LGA. That said we will continue to review our procedures to ensure the best outcome for all residents.

4.4 Carol Jewell had asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question but as she was unable to attend the meeting a written answer was provided:

Question

Woodley Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in October 2019 and a working group was formed to monitor the effects of climate change on the Town and its carbon footprint. Nine months later the committee has still not met as its Chairman, the leader of the Town Council, is awaiting action from this Borough Council. The forced lockdown during the Covid 19 pandemic has seen much reduced traffic especially on our road network. How is this Council going to work with both local Town and Parish Councils to take advantage of this to maintain the reduced levels of pollution that have been seen throughout the country and to encourage walking and cycling?

Answer

Having looked into the points you raise my understanding is that the Chairman was waiting for the Deputy Town Clerk to write Woodley's Climate Emergency Action Plan and was not awaiting action from Wokingham Borough Council. For information I have been consulted as part of the review of your Action Plan and have provided the Leader of Woodley Town Council with detailed feedback.

The response to the Covid 19 outbreak has provided evidence that we can do things differently. The lockdown resulted in a significant reduction in transport, workplace commuting in Wokingham went down by 54% during April. The Council has been engaging with businesses in order to understand how they can be supported through the green economic recovery. In our latest survey, businesses said that a lower carbon footprint was a positive impact of the lockdown and some will consider increasing their flexibility to allow more regular home working.

However, these have been challenging times for businesses, as some have not been able to function over the last few months. Because of the wide variety of businesses across the Borough, it is relevant that we engage with them effectively, the Council needs to consider their priorities and business model. For example, in town centres, there are a very high number of businesses in the retail and hospitality sector who do not have the option to work from home.

The Department for Transport has made some funding available for Emergency Active Travel measures and this is to be used to try and encourage and enable more people to travel on foot or by bike throughout the current social distancing but also beyond. So far we have been awarded £76k for the works which were completed around Wokingham Town Centre. We are currently working to identify further temporary measures across the Borough which we can implement quickly in order to help encourage further cycling and walking. There is up to £605k available to WBC, however the DfT criteria are quite strict and so we will only know later whether any of our proposals are accepted. Throughout lockdown the My Journey Team has continued to support people by assisting with training and advice and also loaning bikes to key workers and ensuring those returning to cycling are able to check and maintain their bicycles for safety. Now the rules are relaxing, there

is going to be more training available, though we have found that these courses are very popular and are already almost fully booked. For further training and advice people can visit the My Journey Webpages for routes and tips on both walking and cycling.

The Council is currently working on producing individual carbon footprint reports for each Town and Parish Council that will guide their actions towards becoming carbon neutral. While dialogue has already started with representatives from Towns and Parish Councils, we are working on creating a closer relationship over the coming months. The Council will engage individually with representatives to align our plans and create a joint approach to take advantage of the reduction in car use caused by the lock down. I have also promised the Leader of Woodley Town Council direct and community specific interaction with the Wokingham Borough Council's Climate Officers and myself over and above the Town Clerk's Forum. I want to ensure that Woodley receives all the help and support it requires in achieving your own climate objectives and reducing your carbon footprint.

4.5 James Vyvyan-Robinson asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

What action is the Council Executive going to take to rectify the A33 road surface noise bearing in mind the severe and life changing impact the increased noise is having on the mental health and wellbeing of local residents?

Answer

The Council has commissioned WSP, who are a specialist consultancy, to investigate the noise levels along the A33 corridor and to look at what measures are required to effectively mitigate the impact on local residents. The final report is expected to be issued to the Council by WSP in September which will allow the Council to take a decision on the way forward during October.

Supplementary Question

October sounds rather late to me but I will come back to that, I am sure, in due course.

My question is bearing in mind the Executive's decision to use this new surface are the Executive therefore going to take full responsibility and liability for the impact the increased noise will have on residents?

Supplementary Answer

I can tell you that whatever WSP conclude in their review we will take the appropriate action.

We are taking responsibility for the result of the WSP review whatever that is.

4.6 Colin Brooks asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

In respect of the resurfacing of the A33 bypass near the village of Riseley, please can you explain the criteria used in the decision making process. I am interested to understand if the decision was purely financial and if the increased environmental noise pollution, impact on health, wellbeing and enjoyment of local residents or the potential devaluation of

property (and subsequent negative equity position for newer residents) were included in the process or completely overlooked?

Answer

The Council manages the Wokingham highways network in accordance with UK Pavement Management System recommendations. This is recognised by central Government and the wider industry through its code of practice as a national standard for well maintained and well managed highway infrastructure. It is this system that establishes through technical survey data what parts of the network are prioritised for maintenance and what kind of resurfacing treatment are appropriate for each location.

Like most other highways authorities Wokingham Borough Council makes use of materials such as micro-asphalt and surface dressing to extend the lifespan of the road network before it requires a more expensive full resurfacing treatment. The full life expectancy of the new plane and inlay HRA road of up to 20 years is usually only achieved through the application of a surface dressing or micro asphalt treatment after 8 to 10 years. So it is quite normal practice to do that. All these materials are of course approved by the Highways Authority Product Approval Scheme (HAPAS) which was developed by market experts to offer consistent and clear testing methods for products and systems designed for use in the highways industry.

In addition both micro-asphalt and surface dressing treatments benefit from having a low carbon footprint and are quick to apply, which means less disruption to road users, residents, local businesses and the emergency services.

Lockchip, which was used on the recent resurfacing works on the A33, is a type of surface dressing and differs from conventional surface dressing in that a further layer of bituminous emulsion, which is very difficult to say, is sprayed over the top of the loose stone. As a consequence lockchip generally has a smoother surface with less loose material and looks more like new tarmac. Whilst these kinds of treatment do not last as long as full resurfacing treatment, such as a plane and inlay HRA scheme, they are a very cost effective and important component in the maintenance of the Wokingham highways network. It is worth noting that a full plane and inlay HRA scheme on the recently resurfaced section of the A33 would have cost £1.3million as opposed to the £200k for lockchip.

That said the Council has commissioned WSP, as I have said before, to investigate the noise levels along the A33 and look into what measures might be required to effectively mitigate the impact on local residents. The final report is expected, as I said in September, which will allow the Council to take a decision on the way forward in October.

So the answer is what we are doing is quite standard but we will look at the impact on local residents and take the appropriate action.

Supplementary Question

Could you please explain what change in policy has occurred since the resurfacing of phases 1 and 2 of the A33 in a much smoother and almost quiet material that was used by your department a few years' ago? Could you answer using a like for like comparable please?

Supplementary Answer

I am afraid I am going to have to give you a written answer to that because the previous resurfacing was before my time as Highways Executive and I do not know why they used what they did then versus what they do now but I will certainly get you a written answer.

4.7 Alan Winter asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

In agenda item 8, you've described the proposed new recycling sacks as being made of 'hessian'. Can you reassure residents who are concerned about the environmental impact and guarantee that the hessian bags will be made of natural, recyclable material and not actually made of plastic?

Answer

I can confirm that these types of sacks have been generically called 'hessian' but in fact are made from woven polypropylene fibre with a light plastic coating to ensure resistance to moisture. They are though reusable and can last up to 5 years and so they are not a single plastic use. We will though be investigating the possibility of having them recycled when they are no longer usable.

Supplementary Question

So basically they are not hessian, which is of a natural material, they are made of polypropylene. Firstly can you stop using the term hessian bags as that is entirely misleading and wrong and secondly the continued use of plastic sacks is very disappointing given last week's Council motion on trying to reduce the use of plastics by the Council.

Can I ask has the level of carbon emissions from the sacks been considered in the decision to change the sacks rather than boxes or has that decision been purely about saving money?

Supplementary Answer

Question number 1 – yes you are absolutely right I have asked for the word 'hessian' to be removed from all the publicity material in the future. These bags use a small amount of plastic and that is on the outside to keep the moisture out and that is the sole intention of these things to actually keep our paper and card dry because wet waste gets rejected and costs us a lot of money to actually process. These bags are not really plastic they are polypropylene.

With regard to the question you asked about the carbon emissions there is hardly any plastic in there and I am advised that we will investigate the possibility of having them recycled when they are no longer used.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

5.1 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

What can we do through the Arts and Culture Strategy to help lift Wokingham Borough out of the coronavirus emergency?

Answer

As you know I am a great supporter of arts and culture and am really pleased that we now have a draft strategy that not only seeks to develop and promote our local cultural offer but also highlights the many ways in which arts and culture can impact on social and economic well-being. Whilst the pandemic has sadly curtailed pretty well all 'live' events, performances and attendance at cultural venues, the amount of on-line content that has been made available and widely accessed pays testimony to the importance of arts and culture to all our lives and identities. Particularly in 'lockdown' we have seen how valuable arts and culture is in supporting people's mental health and well-being, providing connection and stimulation and reducing social isolation. Many have also taken the opportunity to develop their own creative talents from baking, hence we ran out of flour, painting, writing and making things.

I would hope that this renewed appetite for arts and culture will continue and that when conditions allow more engagement people will respond to our consultation on the Strategy and help us to grow an even more dynamic, accessible and exciting cultural offer across the Borough. As the severity of the 'lockdown' eases and performances, community events, carnivals, events in libraries and other venues are all once again possible, this will be a great way to draw people out of their homes and encourage them to embrace as well as contribute to the arts and cultural activities on their doorstep.

5.2 Paul Fishwick asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

There have been a number of street trees that have been removed, but not replaced, in the last few years and in many cases the verge is wide enough and conditions suitable to enable replacements to be planted.

Wokingham Borough Council does not have a tree replacement policy but has planted new trees elsewhere. The loss of these trees has changed the street scene making it look more 'urban'. Will the Council ensure street trees are replaced wherever feasibly possible including locations where trees have been lost in the last 5 years?

Answer

The Council acknowledges the importance of street trees in softening the urban street scene and has ensured that the provision of street trees is an integral part of the designs for the major new roads we are building as part of the Strategic Development Locations (SDLs). Whilst we do not currently have a policy on replacing the loss of existing street trees, it is worth noting that it is very rare for the Council to agree to the removal of street trees for anything other than health and safety grounds. In the event that a street tree must be removed for health and safety reasons the decision on whether to plant a replacement tree is taken on a case by case basis.

The Council is in the process of developing a Tree Strategy and it is likely that this document will establish policies that will identify areas with existing valuable treescapes, identify areas that could be improved by tree planting and guide our decisions on the replacement of lost street trees. The development of the Tree Strategy will of course

include a public consultation with residents and we would welcome your personal input into that process.

Supplementary Question

We are really looking at the existing areas at the moment rather than the SDLs. Would you please confirm that a planting schedule will commence as soon as possible and hopefully by this forthcoming planting season, i.e. Autumn/Winter, and try and aim for about a 75% loss of trees where feasible that would be planted this season?

Supplementary Answer

I totally wholeheartedly agree there with you and I very much hope that what you are suggesting will happen.

5.3 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

When are you planning to restart the Local Plan Update Committee, since Grazeley is non-viable without the DCLG funding according to a statement by the Housing Executive at an Executive Committee Meeting and most other sources are not available due to the spending on the pandemic?

Answer

As part of the Local Plan process update we commissioned growth scenarios and I will send you the link. I am sure you know where they are but I will send you the link.

In particular we considered viability on page 103. More detailed analysis of Grazeley and the scenarios also indicated that for both the 10,000 and 15,000 unit tests the initial phases indicated a loss, largely due to the timing of investment needed in the upfront utilities infrastructure.

The next point was in 7.10 of page 103. Both these outcomes indicated a strong case for early investment to secure housing delivery. This highlights the importance of the contribution to the HIF, which is the Housing Infrastructure Fund, in securing the planning and the delivery of new homes.

Grazeley is therefore not an unviable proposition; rather that it is a heavily forwarded funding burden which would have been lifted if we were successful in the Housing Infrastructure Fund and the bid that we put in.

In reply to our bid on 10 March 2019 MHCLG commented that: -

“Wokingham’s bid was an ambitious proposal in an area of high housing demand. However, following due diligence, the bid was found to not meet the gateway criteria, specifically on demonstrating sufficient market failure to require capital investment from the Government. Most of the infrastructure could be funded by other means if for example, it was progressively delivered with the build out of the development, or using loan finance.”

In essence, the Government’s review has confirmed the viability of Grazeley but suggests a different delivery model to that which was selected and supporting our preferred option.

In their reply MHCLG drew attention to the proposed Single Housing Infrastructure Fund as a potential supporting mechanism for us. Full details of that have yet to be announced.

We therefore are considering these options and the factors as well as the responses we received to the consultation. As soon as we have a clear picture the Planning and Transport Policy Member Working Group will resume and I am sure you will be part of that as you were before.

Supplementary Question

MHCLG is also proposing that the OAN, better known as the housing numbers we are required to build, will be changed in late Autumn. We do not seem to know whether it will be raised or lowered. Considering that the Government has said that they want to raise the number of houses built throughout the country how will we take this into account when we are doing the Local Plan Update?

Supplementary Answer

That is a very good question and I can assure you that the team of all Members that you will know have had constant conversations with MHCLG. Also we will be testing because if they do come back to us with a higher number, as you know before in our due diligence in using a well-known barrister and a demographer, we will be testing anything they put forward to us to make sure that it works for us and not just for Government.

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

Question

From time to time I see planning applications with Officer recommendations approving the removal of trees while other planning applications approve increased traffic on already busy roads.

My question is with regard to the Council flagship policy on climate emergency what specific directions has the Council given to its Planning, Environment and Highway Departments to take climate emergency into consideration when dealing with all planning applications?

Answer

Planning policy is designed to help decision makers balance competing objectives such as protecting our environment and making new places for our people to live and work from. Our existing Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plans to 2026, as obviously you know, embed sound planning policies to help us make decisions, mitigate change through infrastructure investment and other measures. Managing change in the public interest will inevitably lead to some very difficult decisions made around traffic and landscaping as part of that balance.

Climate change affects us all and our communities and as they grow the tensions you refer to will remain and we will need to carefully manage those. Policy within the new Local Plan will require developments to provide adequate landscapes and biodiversity gain as well as improved environmental performance with major residential developments being designed to achieve carbon neutral homes. A subsequent Supplementary Planning Document, the SPD, will also be developed to provide additional detail on how development of all types is expected to demonstrate the achievement of the policy requirements, including carbon neutrality.

As with the previous plan the new plan will establish a spatial strategy that allows for more people to choose to live and work where journeys can be undertaken in ways that do not add to climate change and ensure connectivity to allow working from home. Enabling our residents to make a choice for a healthier and more environmentally sensitive options such as walking and cycling for shorter journeys, including links to facilities, such as using local buses and train stations will help meet our collective commitments to address the climate change agenda.

Supplementary Question

My question is really dealing with more now than tomorrow. The Council has committed £50m to fight climate change and it is also opposed to Heathrow airport expansion if it is detrimental to the environment and the Council's carbon footprint. Wokingham Borough Council's planning guidelines are silent, as we stand now, on climate emergency. I have seen many examples where the environment plays second fiddle to random development.

The new Local Plan will need to be updated now to include climate emergency rules for the Planning Department to refer to as material considerations.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan on page 3 states: "This is a Plan for right now and for the future".

My question is what action is being taken right now to refuse planning applications that are detrimental to the environment and the Council's carbon footprint?

Supplementary Answer

It is a very good point and it is a point that we are obviously cognisant that we need to get right. Equally planning policies exist and it is important, and hence the reason why we did go with a draft plan earlier on this year, that we get those updated.

We will obviously look at all applications that come but obviously the larger ones are the bigger ones when it comes to carbon neutrality in terms of what can be done and what the Council can actually do in terms of fuel sources, localities, as you say, in order to make those. We are working on it; I mean obviously it is not an easy fix.

Having been in the energy industry all of my life carbon neutrality is not an easy one to achieve and it is something that we are in constant dialogue, especially with Gregor and his team, to ensure that we try to achieve what is important to us. It is not an easy fix Gary I am not at all saying that we can just change all our policies overnight so that every house is zero-carbon. It is not going to happen that easily but we are working on it and we have an agenda to get there and all those policies will be updated once we get the final Local Plan through.

5.5 Sarah Kerr asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Does the Leader of this Council acknowledge that poverty exists within the Borough?

Answer

Wokingham Borough is one of the least deprived unitary authority areas in England. In fact it ranked as the least deprived (in 2019). However, in all cases, Wokingham Borough does

have some pockets of deprivation and poverty; where households are living on low incomes and have been there for many years.

The Department for Work and Pensions estimate that around 7% of Wokingham Borough children, approximately 2,400 aged 16 years and under, live in low income households compared to 15% in Great Britain, 8% in Bracknell Forest, and 7% in Windsor and Maidenhead.

We have a clear understanding of our demographic profile for the Borough and of where our more vulnerable communities reside; including those who may be most affected by poverty. Nevertheless, we realise there is always more that we can do, and moreover we want to do more to get a greater level of granular detail around the key poverty metrics to aid our understanding. The impact of Covid 19, for example, has seen that almost 18% of our workforce in Wokingham has been furloughed up to 31 May 2020, compared to 24% over the UK as a whole. Naturally, some of these workers on the furlough scheme may experience subsequent issues which we need to understand, track and monitor.

We aim to target our services to support these communities most in need; for areas such as Norreys, Finchampstead South, and some areas within Winnersh ward. Since Wokingham Borough is one of the most affluent areas in the country, there is a significant gap between residents on low income compared to those on higher incomes. Much of the work done by Wokingham Borough Council, and its partners, aims to bridge this gap, enable self-sustaining lifestyles for our vulnerable communities and offer targeted support.

Wokingham Borough Council is a member of the Berkshire Recovery Group which is focussing on four priority themes; one of which relates to individual hardship. Hence from a County perspective, there is a spotlight on this area, and moreover an agreed partnership approach to providing and supporting those communities facing hardship at this challenging time.

It is also important to recognise that the Council itself is, too, suffering unprecedented financial challenges with declining balances. Therefore, we must be judicious in our approach to poverty ensuring that we are truly focusing on and supporting those most in need. Despite this, we are taking a compassionate approach with our Council Tax collections by contacting those residents who may be having difficulty with their payments, engaging with them to understand their individual circumstances and to proactively support them going forward.

Supplementary Question

Thank you very much for your detailed answer and I appreciate that you have acknowledged that there is a problem. The difficulty with statistics obviously is that it depends on what you are actually using as the unit of measurement. As an example the End to Child Poverty Charity measure poverty in possibly a different way because they have actually got, and the last time they took statistics May 2019, 18.4% of our children in this Borough actually live in relative poverty when you take housing costs into consideration. Which is a huge number actually.

I think we have the issue that a lot of people assume that we do not have that much of an issue because we are an affluent area but that obviously makes the gap bigger as you say.

We have had a problem for a long time; it is not just a Covid thing although obviously Covid is going to make it worse and the figures of poverty have been going up and up and up and the

fact that we have food banks and the food banks are increasing the number of people that they are dealing with.

The point is that it has been increasing for a long time and it is set to increase further because of Covid but it has been a problem for a long time. So what I am struggling to understand, and would like to know, is whatever we have been doing as a Council in the past has not been working because we have been increasing our levels of poverty not decreasing.

So what I would like to know is what are we going to be doing now that is different to actually tackle this issue? Not just in relation to Covid but in relation to the fact that we have had increasing poverty levels for years and years and years.

Supplementary Answer

What are we going to be doing now that is different? I do not know that what we have been doing in the past has not worked. I will get back to you on that because you are saying something which I do not know.

My understanding is that we have looked after the people that we need to look after in our Borough and it is our intention to do so. We are a very compassionate Council and trying to find the people who need the help. But as I said in my answer we can only do so if we have the resources to do so. So we, as in Councillors, are going to face some very challenging conversations in ensuring those resources continue to exist.

5.6 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

The fact that poverty is multi-dimensional, and that some of its elements and manifestations are intangible, are just two of the challenges that make poverty complex to measure and track. Notwithstanding, it is vital that this is done in order to serve our residents – to help to reduce numbers falling into poverty, and to help to lift others out of poverty; and to ensure a timely, efficient and effective use of scarce resources. What processes and procedures are in place in our Borough to ensure timely, meaningful and comprehensive data on poverty, in all its manifestations wherever it might exist in our community, is being collected and used to good effect?

Answer

There are a variety of data sources published nationally which we monitor to help identify the levels of poverty that exist within the Borough. The published data also enables us to track how numbers are changing over time and allows us comparisons with neighbouring areas, regional and national trends. The Council regularly monitors all available data sources, along with local intelligence and knowledge to effectively understand our communities and deliver the right services. Nevertheless, we realise that there is always more that we can do, and moreover we want to do more to get a greater level of granular detail around the key poverty metrics to aid our understanding.

Our Community Engagement Team, who work directly with our residents, have a good knowledge of the demographics within the Borough and through their local connections, understand and know residents and communities who may be more vulnerable; and are able to plan and target their support work and initiatives to directly benefit those communities most in need.

The Council is also aware that many residents may be experiencing impacts to their finances during Covid 19. Nearly 18% of our workforce in Wokingham have been furloughed, as I said before, compared to 24% across the UK. Naturally, some of these workers may experience subsequent issues which we need to understand, track and monitor. For those affected households with lower incomes, who traditionally operate on little or no savings, the impact of the Coronavirus and the risk of poverty could be greater. Therefore maintaining our engagement with the communities is vital to continue providing support.

The Council has created a new directorate, Communities, Insight and Change, with the remit of getting an improved bank of insight and data to drive more informed decisions. This will aid our strategic approach around areas we want to focus on as a priority; of which poverty is one. My previous answer outlines the Council's work on a Berkshire level.

5.7 David Hare asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Charities are amongst the many organisations raising alarm that large numbers of people in all parts of the UK are falling into poverty as a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic. Many of these charities have also seen their own financial resources slashed, and thus their ability to help people in need, suffer as a result of the pandemic. What is WBC's strategy for ensuring that key local charities engaged with tackling poverty in our Borough will be able to meet the increasing demand for vital services provided by charities, despite the current funding crises that some of these charities face.

Answer

I have mentioned in previous responses that we will be facing some severe financial challenges as parlance goes and those on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be faced, as we will be faced, with some very unpalatable choices. We are certainly not going to be able to do everything.

However we have worked very closely with the charities during the emergency and we have an organisation which is now working very well. In response to this guidance we have set up a Service Sustainability Fund to support providers to maintain service continuity during this period of dealing with the Coronavirus. The fund is administered through an application process for additional retrospective funding. This Fund has been promoted to all providers of Adult Services including all those we contract within the Voluntary and Community Sector.

To qualify for reimbursement items of expenditure must be all of the following:

- related to clients in receipt of adult social care services that are funded by Wokingham Borough Council, or related to self-funders within the Wokingham geographical area;
- over and above usual business costs;
- directly related to the Coronavirus emergency;
- in respect of actual payments made.

Several VCS providers have requested and have received funding through this scheme including WADE, CLASP, ASD Family Help, Age UK Berkshire, Young People with Dementia and Ridgeline Trust.

At the start of the outbreak we set up a Wokingham Borough Community Response to meet the needs of vulnerable residents due to Covid 19. This has been a joint working group with the VCS. The focus has also included supporting the VCS through this difficult period. We have supported the VCS to apply for grant applications. We have provided PPE for many local VCS organisations who found it difficult to source reasonably priced PPE on their own and we have provided advice and guidance, via Public Health, on understanding all the guidance issued.

It is also important to recognise that the Council itself is, too, suffering unprecedented financial hardship with declining balances. Therefore, we must be judicious in our approach to poverty ensuring we are truly focusing on and supporting those most in need. Wokingham Borough Council is a member of the Berkshire Recovery Group. Hence from a County perspective, there is a spotlight on this area.

5.8 Bill Soane asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:

Question

In view of the Government announcement regarding recompense to assist local authorities in their shortfall in income at their leisure centres during the Covid 19 pandemic, will this grant assist the Council in any way, and if so how?

Answer

On the assumption that you are referring to the “75p in the £” scheme in which the Government will recompense principal local authorities for 75% of lost income, subject to a 5% threshold, it has been confirmed that the Council cannot claim for its lost third-party income; i.e. the support of places for leisure. But it is able to claim for any lost, or foregoing, management fee that was budgeted but not received. Details on how to claim are awaited but the Council will be aiming to recover as much of its lost income as permitted.

The cost to the Council as a result of the forced closure of our Leisure Centres is a big financial issue and we will continue to work with our leisure providers, work with other Local Authorities in a similar position and work with Government Departments to alleviate our costs and restore both the financial position for our Council taxpayers and the service provision for our community going forward.

5.9 Chris Bowring had asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question. Due to time constraints the question was not asked and the following written answer provided:

Question

Would the Executive Member tell me how the ‘Tackling Racism Matters’ survey is progressing?

Answer

The survey is open until August 28 and is being promoted via local media, social media and through the BME Forum. We have had about 260 responses to date and are keen to hear from more people in order to make the survey as meaningful as possible. I would urge all residents to take part by visiting the Council’s website and searching for ‘consultations’.

5.10 Andy Croy had asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question. Due to time constraints the question was not asked and the following written answer provided:

Question

Regarding Agenda item 8. Manufacturers of kerbside recycling bags to protect paper and cardboard from water also provide elasticated covers to black bins which also protect the contents from water. For example:

<https://sackmaker.com/kerbside-recycling-sacks.html>

Why have we opted for an expensive full replacement of the black bins when the same result could more quickly and more cheaply be achieved by providing elasticated covers?

Answer

The Council must find a solution to prevent recycling getting wet as this is impacting on the Borough's recycling rates and causing significant environmental and financial cost to the Council.

The Council has commissioned a leading waste consultancy to consider options for a solution to this issue which include the option of elasticated covers for black bins. This will be reported at the Executive on 24th September. The MTFP report to this Executive secures funding for a solution that will be recommended to the September meeting. Elasticated covers have been considered as an option but do not represent a holistic solution in terms of resilience to weather and becoming detached from the vessel/ box.

5.11 Maria Gee had asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question. Due to time constraints the question was not asked and the following written answer provided:

Question

Regarding Item 7, Appendix B Estimated General Fund Balance. The balance on the general fund is now predicted to be £5.1 million at 31 March next year, which is very worrying and unsafe. It should be at a safe level of between £9.3m and £14.3m. This Council has to set the balance in this range as this is policy, because the Council should be taking risk into account and practising good financial management.

Risks were identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan as increasing significantly in 2020/21, and include the risks of further grant reductions, additional service pressures, dependency on future commercial income, and risks around business rate receipts. These risks are certainly higher as a result of the pandemic.

Given that the Government is running out of money, and there is a risk of a second wave of Covid 19 over winter, what plans does the Council have to get the general fund balance back up to the safe level, should lobbying not be successful?

Answer

Despite the fact that this Council has been one of the best financially managed Councils in the country over many years, as demonstrated by the independent assessments set out in the Executive Report, we are indeed facing considerable financial challenges as a result of Covid 19. We have incurred considerable additional costs to support our most vulnerable who have been dependant on our support during such difficult times and we have lost considerable income from activities that help fund what we do, such as car parking and

leisure. As I am sure you are aware the financial impact of this pandemic is being faced by local authorities throughout the country with numerous claiming publicly that they are no longer sustainable.

The judgement of whether this Council has safe balances and its medium to long term financial viability rests with our Statutory Finance Officer, our CFO, who was the author of the MTFP you refer to. It is not a judgement that sits with our politicians. As the Lead Member for Finance you will understand that we discuss the finances of the Council almost daily.

We continue to recognise the importance of strong and robust financial management of our Council taxpayers' money. This will involve ensuring our expenditure remains targeted to those most in need and delivering the key objectives of the Council. We will continue our endeavours to maximise our income streams where appropriate to fund the growing gap between Government grant and the costs of delivering our statutory services. We will further embrace new and innovative ways of working to ensure the provision of our services are most cost effective and efficient in delivering services to our residents whilst maintaining or improving the customer experience. And, as you referenced in your question, we will continue to make representations to the Government to seek the best funding deal for our community.

This work is already underway and in many ways it has never stopped, it just needs to be taken with greater intensity. It also needs to be taken in a calm, considered and planned way focused on achieving the medium term to long term health of the organisation rather than making knee jerk quick fix solutions to restore balances immediately which could generate catastrophic service and financial outcomes further down the road. I am confident we have the calibre of politicians and Officers to do this the right way and in the way we have collectively successfully addressed our financial challenges in the past.

5.12 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey had asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question. Due to time constraints the question was not asked and the following written answer provided:

Question

Looking at the Capital Monitoring Report there is a quantity of £105M rephased to later years.

Please can you explain what exactly will be impacted by this deferral?

Answer

The detailed schedule of re-phasing is shown on page 64 of this Agenda. The impact of this is that schemes are progressed in a way that minimises our financial risk with regards to ensuring we have the resources secured to fund them, and it ensures the timing of the investment is better aligned to the service need. This approach is part of our strong overall financial management and entirely necessary in the context of the financial challenges we currently face as a result of Covid 19.

5.13 Clive Jones had asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question. Due to time constraints the question was not asked and the following written answer provided:

Question

The proposal to use hessian sacks has come to the Executive as part of an update on the MTFP. Can you explain why this has not come to the Executive as an item in its own right with a full business case attached?"

Answer

Changes in the world market for recycled material have meant that wet paper and card is no longer being accepted by recycling plants and this is impacting on the Borough's recycling rates and causing significant environmental and financial cost to the Council. The Council must therefore find a solution to prevent this recycling getting wet. The financial report being considered by this Executive meeting secures funding for a solution to this issue. A further update report will be presented by the Executive on 24th September.

6. SHAREHOLDER'S REPORT

(Councillors Ulla Karin Clark, John Halsall, John Kaiser, Stuart Munro and Wayne Smith declared personal interests in this item)

The Executive considered a report setting out the budget monitoring position of the Council owned companies up to 30 June 2020.

Whilst introducing the report the Executive Member for Finance and Housing highlighted the facts relating to the national effects of Covid 19 and the costs of coping with the crisis.

Councillor Kaiser advised that with regard to Wokingham the number of residents supported had risen from 1,800 to nearly 5,000 people at its peak. In addition £39.4m had been paid out in Government grants and rate relief to businesses large and small and the Council was now faced with an expected overspend of £19m; which would be supported by around £15m worth of grants received from the Government, NHS and other income.

Councillor Kaiser reiterated that although the Council was currently planning for recovery nobody had any idea what normal would look like or cost. With spikes turning up around the UK and Europe and the third world just beginning to count the cost in lives and resources he believed that the Country was still in the early stages of this world wide pandemic.

With regard to the Shareholders' Report Councillor Kaiser confirmed that the companies were on target for the current financial year.

With regard to WHL there were currently 57 houses under construction. Councillor Kaiser reminded Members that the Council had an ambitious target to build 1,000 houses over four years; a mixture of homes which would produce an overall return of 5%. To achieve this it had been agreed to move to a more efficient one team approach between the Council and the housing companies. This was being achieved by the development function of the housing companies being brought back in-house and this was proving to be successful.

Councillor Kaiser highlighted the anticipated budget shortfall for WHL but confirmed that even taking this shortfall into account it was expected that a full year profit of about £400,000 would be achieved from the housing companies overall. This profit would be included in the General Fund Account.

RESOLVED: That the budget monitoring position for the financial year up to 30 June 2020 (Quarter 1) be noted.

7. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FY2020/21 - QUARTER 1

The Executive considered a report setting out the Revenue budget monitoring position at the end of quarter 1 of the current financial year.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing went through the report and drew Members' attention to the Council's strong financial standing at the start of the pandemic, as set out in the executive summary section. This included healthy non-general reserves that were earmarked for specific expenditure and risks that the Council may face.

Councillor Jorgensen advised the meeting that she had sent the Executive Member for Environment a large number of questions from residents related to the details of the hessian sack scheme and asked Councillor Batth if he would be happy to answer those questions as part of the "Q and A" on the scheme? Councillor Batth confirmed that he would be happy to respond to those questions.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Council's strong financial standing leading up to the COVID-19 crisis as illustrated in the Executive Summary, as set out in the report, be noted;
- 2) the significant financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis as illustrated in the Executive Summary be noted;
- 3) the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report, be noted;
- 4) the ongoing work to manage the budget and ensure the financial viability of the Council, as set out in the Executive Summary, be noted;
- 5) the revenue implications of capital borrowing for £288k for the purchase of hessian sacks, which will have the effect of increasing recycling levels and generating a beneficial financial impact far in excess of the cost of borrowing, be approved.

8. CAPITAL MONITORING 2020/21 - END OF JUNE 2020

The Executive considered a report setting out the progress of the Council's Capital Programme as at 30 June 2020.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Finance and Housing advised that the "hessian" sacks, as mentioned in the Revenue Monitoring report, were being purchased via the Capital Budget.

Due to the uncertainty going forward Councillor Kaiser highlighted the changes to a number of projects which had been re-phased, as shown in Appendix B to the report, amounting to £105m. It was noted that these projects were not being cancelled at this stage but were basically being deferred.

With regard to the recyclability of the "hessian" sacks Councillor Jorgensen stated that she believed that polypropylene was recyclable. In addition Councillor Kaiser believed that the

rubber weights utilised in the sacks were also 100% recyclable and that parts of the bags were actually made from material that had been previously recycled.

Councillor Kaiser also highlighted the additional £600k funding for the development of Dinton Pastures Activity Centre.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) it be noted that the Council's Capital Programme will continue to be reviewed throughout the year in the context of the impact of Covid-19 on funding sources and service requirements, and that any changes will be presented to Executive for approval;
- 2) the proposed rephrasing to parts of the Capital Programme following the 'in-year' review including the impact of Covid-19, as set out in Appendix B, be approved;
- 3) £600k additional budget funded by borrowing for the Dinton Pastures Activity Centre (DAC), for changes necessitated as an outcome of public consultations and planning requirements be approved. The cost of borrowing estimated at £27k p.a. will be covered from expected additional incomes generated by the new activity centre, as set out in paragraph 6 of the Executive Summary of the report;
- 4) a reduction of the Schools Devolved Formula grant budget in the capital programme to £302k, due to the Council receiving £87k less than originally budgeted, as set out in paragraph 7 of the Executive Summary, be noted;
- 5) borrowing of £288k for the purchase of hessian sacks which will have the effect of increasing recycling levels and generating a beneficial financial impact far in excess of the cost of borrowing, as set out in paragraph 8 of the Executive Summary, be approved;
- 6) it be noted that consultants will be engaged within existing budgets to review the noise levels and options with regards to recent major resurfacing works, as set out in paragraph 9 of the Executive Summary;
- 7) the quarter one position for the capital budgets, as set out in Appendix A to the report as summarised in the Executive Summary, be noted.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2019-20

The Executive considered a report relating to the Treasury Management Outturn for 2019-20.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing advised the meeting that the report demonstrated how the treasury management function had effectively managed the Council's debt and cash balances to support the funding of the delivery of the Council's key priorities. It was noted that the report had been considered by the Audit Committee and would be reported to Council.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the report be recommended to Council;

- 2) it be noted that the report was presented to Audit Committee on 29th July 2020;
- 3) the managed repayment of debt over time which illustrates the increased borrowing required to fund key Council priorities, which in turn generate income streams (to repay debt) and provides revenue funding for vital statutory services (as set out in the graph in table 2 of the report), be noted;
- 4) the asset value created through the Council's capital investments compared to the debt required to generate the asset value (as set out in the graph in table 2 of the report) be noted;
- 5) the capital investments made in the Council's priorities for its community, by category (as set out in table 1 of the report) be noted;
- 6) the Treasury Management report in Appendix A, that shows that all approved indicators have been adhered to and that prudent and safe management has been adhered to, be noted.

10. WOKINGHAM OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN SUMMARY

The Executive considered a report relating to the Wokingham Outbreak Control Plan which was produced jointly with Public Health England and other partners.

The Leader of Council informed the meeting that the implementation of the Plan would take place within a recently formed Local Outbreak Engagement Board; which was a sub-committee of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the scale of preparation in a short timescale to develop an outbreak control plan jointly with Public Health England and other partners be noted;
- 2) the impact of the Plan for the public be noted.

11. CENTRAL AND EASTERN BERKSHIRE JOINT MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN: DUTY TO COOPERATE

The Executive considered a report relating to the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan and specifically the Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) which provide a record of engagement, clarify areas of agreement and where necessary areas of disagreement.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement highlighted that the Minerals and Waste Plan had been considered over a number of years and had been consulted on widely. The Plan was a great example of listening to residents' views as a number of the sites that had originally been put forward when reviewed were not found to be suitable and therefore were not included in the Plan.

Councillor Smith highlighted that the reason the Statements of Common Ground were required was because of the Council's reliance on neighbouring authorities for the purchase of raw materials for building roads, networks, etc.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the following Statements of Common Ground, as part of on-going Duty to Cooperate requirements, be approved:
 - i. South East Waste Planning Advisory Group (SEWPAG) Statement of Common Ground concerning Strategic Policies for Waste Management (see Appendix A).
 - ii. Statement of Common Ground between the Central and Eastern Berkshire Authorities and Buckinghamshire Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Hampshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Surrey County Council, South Downs National Park Authority, West Berkshire Council and Wiltshire Council concerning Soft Sand Supply (see Appendix B).
 - iii. Statement of Common Ground between the Central and Eastern Berkshire Authorities, and Buckinghamshire Council, Hampshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Surrey County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wiltshire Council, concerning Sharp Sand and Gravel Supply (see Appendix C).
 - iv. Statement of Common Ground between Central and East Berkshire Authorities and the South London Waste Plan Boroughs concerning Strategic Policies for Waste (see Appendix D).
 - v. Statement of Common Ground between Westminster City Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham concerning strategic waste matters (see Appendix E).
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for Strategic Planning, to enter into future Statements of Common Ground;
- 3) any minor changes to the Statements of Common Ground be delegated to the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement.

12. CENTRAL AND EASTERN BERKSHIRE JOINT MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN: PROPOSED SUBMISSION PLAN

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposal to publish and consult on the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan.

The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement reiterated that the Plan had been widely consulted over a number of years. It was not expected that the Plan would be contentious as all the mineral and waste sites had been removed and the Council would be relying on neighbouring authorities.

RESOLVED that the following be recommended to the Special Council Executive Committee:

- 1) approve the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Proposed Submission Plan and supporting documentation for publication and public consultation under Regulation 19;

- 2) authorise community engagement on the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Proposed Submission Plan and associated supporting documents to take place for 6 weeks from Thursday 3rd September 2020;
- 3) authorise the submission of the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Proposed Submission Plan, and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for independent examination in public, under Regulation 22;
- 4) authorise the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement, to agree minor amendments necessary to the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Proposed Submission Plan and other supporting documents prior to consultation. Any minor modifications would consist of non-material amendments such as rewording and correction of typing errors;
- 5) request the appointed Inspector to recommend modifications to the submitted Joint Plan, in the event that the Inspector considers that such modifications would make the plan sound.

13. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN – DINTON ACTIVITY CENTRE (DAC) PROJECT

The Executive considered a report providing an update on capital projects relating to a replacement provision at Dinton Activity Centre and the expansion of Addington School both of which would assist with the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions informed the meeting that an additional capital budget of £483,900 was being requested to finance the two climate emergency projects. The first related to the use of environmentally friendly technology eg air source heat pumps, alterations to the domestic hot water systems, solar panels both on the roof and in the car park, etc. to reduce the energy usage of Dinton Activity Centre. This project would reduce and offset carbon at the facility which would lead to it becoming energy positive i.e. it would generate 126% more energy than it uses and would take 30% more carbon from the environment than it produces. Councillor Murray stated that the intention was to roll this out to other Council assets in the coming months.

Councillor Murray informed the meeting that the second project related to the addition of solar panels to the Addington School new build. Unfortunately the design process had been too advanced, and build deadlines too close, to add additional climate infrastructure at that phase. The project would, however, still cut carbon emissions by 49.7% and improve energy efficiency versus the original plan by 46%.

Councillor Murray reiterated that the motion, supported by Council last year, did agree that the Council would play as active a role as possible in fighting climate change with the objective of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030 if possible. The Council was, of course, reliant on other bodies eg Highways England, Southwest Trains and Reading Buses, as well as Central Government and the energy companies, to play their part in achieving carbon neutrality.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the proposals and the anticipated outcomes, as set out in the report, be noted;
- 2) the decision to invest in the carbon neutrality proposals in Dinton Activity Centre and Addington School to significantly reduce the carbon emission of the new buildings in line with the Council's net zero carbon by 2030 target, be confirmed;
- 3) an additional capital budget of £483,900 financed by borrowing and fully repaid from savings generated through reduced energy costs be approved;
- 4) it be noted that the annual financial cost reductions in excess of the capital financing costs will be set aside to provide for component replacement in future years.

This page is intentionally left blank