

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

**HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2021 FROM 8.00 PM TO 11.55 PM**

### **Members Present**

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

### **98. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Oliver Whittle.

### **99. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council, held on 21 January 2021, were confirmed as a correct record, subject to inclusion of a missing section from the recorded vote table and resolution relating to Minute 97.1 – Motion 450 submitted by Andy Croy, as set out below:

	Daniel Sargeant	
	Chris Smith	
	Wayne Smith	
	Bill Soane	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Simon Weeks	

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be lost.

The Minutes, as amended, would be signed by the Mayor at a subsequent date.

Gary Cowan referred to two issues in the Minutes which, in his opinion, were not an accurate record of the discussion. The Mayor confirmed that the Minutes were not a verbatim record. Any specific issues relating to accuracy could be considered and voted upon by the Council.

### **100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were submitted as follows:

Lindsay Ferris declared a Personal Interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes.

UllaKarin Clark declared a Personal Interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that she was a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes.

John Kaiser declared a Personal interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis and Wokingham Housing Ltd.

Wayne Smith declared a Personal Interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that he was a Non- Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Stuart Munro declared a Personal Interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that he was a Non- Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

John Halsall declared a Personal Interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis.

Daniel Sergeant declared a Personal Interest in Item 94 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Ltd, and Berry Brook Homes Ltd.

All the above Members took part in discussions related to Item 94 and voted on the matter.

#### **101. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members of the ongoing work between his chosen charity and Homestart. The latest project was an art competition for children aged 4 to 11. Details were available on the Council and Homestart websites.

#### **102. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

##### **102.1 Alistair Neal asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

##### **Question**

This is a question about Settled Status for EU citizens. The deadline for EU citizens to register for Settled Status is 30th June, 2021.

The September Council meeting passed a Motion that called on officers to review the Council's plans with respect to EU Settled Status.

Other Councils are taking active steps to contact EU residents; e.g. Brighton & Hove City Council have delivered a postcard to all addresses in the city, with a friendly message on the front, "We want EU citizens to stay in Brighton & Hove", and information sources, including phone numbers, on the back.

There are 4,097 EU citizens in the Wokingham Borough according to the 2018 Electoral Roll, but there may be others, living in less formal circumstances such as sub-lets, HMOs or agricultural accommodation.

Some EU citizens are working where they have no formal contact with employers and HR resources to tell them about the new rules, such as self-employed tradesmen workers in the app-based gig economy.

I'm sure that the Council would like all its EU citizens to continue to live their lives in the Borough. With these points in mind, could the Council Leader give me an update on the review called for in the Council's September Motion, and on its plan of action going forward for contacting Wokingham's EU citizens before July?

### **Answer**

Following the Motion last September, the Council has taken the following action to mitigate the impact of Brexit for EU nationals living the Borough.

WBC is actively promoting information and advice targeted at EU citizens. Particularly, the need to register through the EU Settlement programme if they wish to remain in the UK and have access to services that they are entitled to under the scheme. Under the current regulations EU Citizens that have registered for settled status will be able access public services such as, NHS, adult social care services, benefits, housing/homelessness, housing services, primary and secondary schooling, and professional qualifications gained in EU countries will continue to be recognised.

Advice and information was distributed through a newsletter to 5000 residents in early February 2021. Information is further disseminated through regular social media messaging, reaching, 13.5K followers as well as on the Council's website. The Council additionally plans to send information to community groups, third-party charities and organisations that are likely to be in contact with EU residents. Advice on how businesses can support EU nations will be distributed though the Business Matters newsletter.

The Council's Public Health partner, PPP, issue licences to HMO's and plan to ensure that information around settlement documentation for EU citizens will encourage landlords to share information with their tenants. The Council is also working in partnership with local housing providers to ensure that they share relevant information with their tenants.

The Council has offered to assist residents with the settled status app. The Registry Office and One Front Door (CAB) are providing direct information to EU citizens as well as offering document scanning and one to one support services. Registry officers will become designated under Government plans to support EU nationals seeking settled status.

There are several other actions that the Council is taking.

### **Supplementary Question**

At last month's Executive meeting you said that the Golden Thread that runs through the Borough is the Council. Also, that the Council holds a unique position in contacting residents. With that in mind, could you tell me if there is any target for the number of EU citizens you expect to take up Settled Status in the Borough?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I don't think it is for us to do that. It is a decision for them. The obligation on us is to make sure that they are aware of what they need to do to do that.

## **102.2 Philip Cunnington asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

### **Question**

What additional provision has been put in place to support the mental health and wellbeing of 15-18 year olds in the Borough whose education and exams have been particularly

badly disrupted during the Covid lockdowns?

**Answer**

The Covid pandemic has affected the lives and education of children and young people across the Borough and we have been working with schools and settings on providing the right resources and information via the schools hub to support staff and student emotional health and wellbeing.

Whilst all secondary schools will have different arrangements to support the wellbeing of their students as part of their pastoral care responsibilities, we have invited all schools to training sessions developed under the Wellbeing for Education Return roll out.

This training, designed to enable schools to use psychological education to better manage the impact of coronavirus has been developed by the Anna Freud Centre, Mind Education, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Department for Education and Health Education England. The Wokingham Educational Psychology Service and School Improvement Service have reviewed the materials and shared this bespoke package for use within Wokingham settings.

This term our teams have come together again to deliver further sessions to senior members of staff in settings so that they can support their students focussing on specific areas such as Bereavement and Loss; Supporting Recovery from Anxiety and Low Mood; and Trauma in the Context of Covid-19.

In addition, the LA in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has commissioned Kooth, which is a free, safe and anonymous online counselling support for young people aged between 10 and 25. Many schools and settings will also access ARC Youth Counselling in Wokingham, or make referrals to the AnDY clinic which offers assessments and treatment for children and young people experiencing anxiety disorders and depression.

We also have training for individual schools.

**102.3 Richard Tredgett asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

**Question**

While I was pleased to see the Winter 2020 Wokingham Borough News includes an article on mental health and well-being during lockdown, I was disappointed that the new, excellent, and Council funded, Wokingham Recovery College was not mentioned. Can you assure me that the Recovery College will get a full page in the spring edition enabling residents to find out about and apply for the wide range of online courses, all designed to promote mental well-being?

**Answer**

I am answering this question as it relates to Communications.

It is correct that there was no article about the Recovery College in the winter edition of Borough News simply because the college only opened after Borough News was sent to print. We start planning the Borough News about three months in advance and, at the time the Recovery College article was not ready to be released.

But I would agree that the college provides an excellent service, which is why it has been funded by the council and why it has been extensively promoted, with a news release to announce the launch and regular social media updates that have included monthly promotion of the courses available and case studies of students. Facebook posts alone about the college have reached about 17,000 views. It has also been included more than once in the Wokingham Borough Connect, the direct email service sent out to 40,000 residents with a 65% opening rate.

We will continue to promote the college in a variety of ways and can assure you that it will be included in the next Borough News, early spring edition, in which we are planning a full page on the mental health support available to all Borough residents.

**102.4 Peter Humphreys asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question:**

**Question**

Despite the many unoccupied units in Peach Place, the Council decided to press on with destroying Elms Field to create even more empty units. Whilst Covid hasn't helped, these units pre-date it and many created during the regeneration have been empty for well over two years. Yet, even during the pandemic, several new businesses, not including ones relocating a few hundred metres to take advantage of a rent free holiday, have opened in the Borough. Would you please state how much, if any, income has been generated by the shop units at Elms Field as a result of the regeneration, and how this compares with the original budget?

**Answer**

Contrary to your statement in your question, far from being unoccupied, the regeneration is nearly at full capacity. 90 % of the units are let by income.

With this, and the strong residential sales being made, the regeneration is already proving a huge success for the Council and generating good levels of income. The income achieved in the current year is sufficient to cover the project costs. Indeed the income is set to grow each year as more businesses open up and receipts received go in to pay down the debt.

Forecasts currently identify income in excess of finance costs of £900K, £1.1m and £1.5m for the next 3 years – this is money that will be used to fund Council services across the Borough. As a note this also includes the rent free period which forms part of the project costs and is industry best practice to help support new businesses whilst they fit out and start to trade.

I certainly do not recognise your, quite misleading, description of 'empty for years', as many of the businesses had already signed up or started their fit out whilst our main building contractors were still on site.

This included Elms Field where the Council only took possession of the development when it was completed last September, by which time several of the businesses were already up and running along Elms Walk. Others have followed on in the few months since.

I'm pleased to confirm that out of the remaining units, four are already under offer, with two of them currently going through the legal process. And I am looking forward to shortly being able to issue news of these exciting new tenants. Of the few that remain at Elms

Field, we are keen to ensure we select the right tenants, ones that are a good fit for our town for the longer term. However, we continue to receive interest in these, along with the former Clintons unit, that remains with the business's administrators. Our letting agents carry on reinforcing to us the interest being received and advise us that, as a town, we are ahead of the game.

Indeed, the fact that so many new businesses have continued to sign up and open units, despite the ongoing threat of Covid, not just in Wokingham's regeneration but right across the town centre, is a massive testament to Wokingham, and the catalyst of our regeneration project. It's a clear sign that, where others might struggle, Wokingham remains on the road to a strong and vibrant recovery.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am most amazed by that answer. To say that 90% of the units have been let. As can be seen in the photograph I took a few days ago, they are all empty. But let's move on. On a similar theme, five houses were built and completed more than two years ago in Rose Street – as part of the Peach Place scheme. Last month, the asking price was reduced yet again. Would you please enlighten us as to the paper loss to date on these properties?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I will have to give you a written answer in terms of the exact number of properties. But, what I can tell you is some of the numbers relating to the properties we have released. We are doing it, of course, right across the Borough and right across Wokingham town. Some of it is in partnership with David Wilson Homes. We have completed a number of houses, but not all at this time. We have completed or reserved 21 houses, despite only 10 being fully built and we have just released another 12 on to the market.

Trying to put across that it is all doom and gloom in Wokingham is clearly not the case. Actually, I think that your photograph was in front of two of the units at Elms Field that are actually let.

### **102.5 Frank Moore asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:**

#### **Question**

During the past few weeks the Council, through the Standards Committee and the Audit Committee, have been shown to be infringing the rules of the Council Constitution. As regards the Standards Committee this has been going on for nearly two years. These are serious breaches of the Wokingham Borough Council Constitution and reflect badly in the eyes of the public on our Council. As such, I would like to ask through the Leader of the Council for these serious shortcomings to be formally investigated through an independent person such as a retired QC or judge?

#### **Answer**

Councillor Halsall has already explained that there was no constitutional breach with regards to the composition of the Standards Committee and why this was so.

You then go on to suggest that the report considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting of 23 November was changed before being presented to the Executive on 28 January. I can category confirm that this was not the case.

The report reviewed by Audit Committee was presented to the Executive fully and

unabridged as required in the Constitution. Audit Committee is required to review progress against Treasury Management indicators (which they rightly did) and note further information in the report.

Executive on 28 January was asked to (and did):

*“note Appendix A, the Treasury Management Mid-Year report, which was agreed at Audit Committee on 23rd November 2020”.*

This is stated quite clearly in the covering report recommendations and, furthermore, is covered in more detail at the second paragraph of the executive summary to the Executive report.

Therefore, the report that the Audit Committee debated and agreed democratically is the one being presented to Council and does not need to be presented back to Audit Committee.

However, in passing on the report noted by the Audit Committee to the Executive, our statutory Chief Finance Officer thought it would be helpful for Executive and the public to be aware of the broader impact of the treasury management activities by including the income generated by our commercial activities funded by our borrowing. This information was conveyed by way of a covering report and I would consider it to be extremely helpful, particularly given recent media debate around the cost of Council debt to the local taxpayer. So the Treasury Mid-Year report presented to the Audit Committee was not changed, the Audit Committee discharged their responsibilities under the constitution and the Chief Finance Officer is required to provide a covering report in passing the Mid-Year report on to the Executive. There is no constitutional breach here whatsoever.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Kaiser, thank you for not answering the question.

Councillor Halsall, Wokingham Borough Council is daily becoming more like Handforth Parish Council under your leadership, for the following reasons.

It is chaotic – three quick examples:

- Your response to two breaches of the Constitution;
- The comment that was going to be made by Councillor Conway tonight, querying why the Council bothers to have a Constitution when it can be so easily overridden;
- Publishing Ernst & Young’s report for the Audit Committee on 22 February when Ernst & Young stated that the report should not have been published.

In last week’s Wokingham Paper Councillor Halsall, as Leader of the Council stated that “the buck stops here”. Please can you advise, Councillor Halsall, how you intend to address these issues, to salvage the credibility of Wokingham Borough Council under your leadership in the eyes of the electorate?

### **Supplementary Answer**

That was a question for John Halsall. You obviously weren’t listening because I answered both your questions.

**102.6 Beth Rowland asked the Executive Member for Regeneration the following question:**

**Question**

Some years ago when I was a Borough Councillor and sat on the working party that dealt with the regeneration of Wokingham Town centre, the plan was that money generated by this would go to regenerate other town centres in the Borough.

Please will you tell me how much has Wokingham's regeneration cost in total and how much in profit has it returned to date?

**Answer**

The Wokingham Regeneration, to date, has proved to be a huge success and the programme is progressing well, with both Peach Place and the commercial part of Elms Field complete. The residential sections of Elms Field continue in conjunction with our partner David Wilson Homes (DWH) and the Carnival Hub is now under construction and due for completion next summer. The scheme has won several awards for its place-making, quality and financial approach.

There were several objectives behind the Wokingham Regeneration project with many outputs. Its key objective was first and foremost to deliver a town centre fit for, and reflective of the, then existing and, now, growing population of the town.

The Council chose to act as developer in this process because it gave us much more control over the design, layout, architecture and, importantly, type of uses and businesses coming into the town – we were clear that we wanted to resist the national trend of introducing the same old national tenants and ensuring Wokingham retained its feel and offer from local independent traders. This we have done very successfully. It is one of the reasons why Wokingham is proving so popular.

Despite the current pandemic, whilst the majority of town centres up and down the country are struggling to identify tenants, Wokingham continues to 'buck the trend' with a lot of interest from potential tenants. As I said before we are now 90% let across both schemes and have another two leases currently going through the legal process.

In terms of residential sales, there is enormous interest in Elms Field, with the majority of the 'stand-alone' residential being reserved ahead of it being built, and above our budgeted figures. Currently, on the stand-alone residential scheme with our partners DWH, we have completed, or had reserved 21 homes, despite only 10 being fully built. We have just released another 12 onto the market.

The total cost of delivering all schemes will be ascertained upon final completion of all schemes. Based on the viability and financial appraisal established before work commenced, and updated more recently, the total cost is expected to be £113m, creating assets valued at £162m, £48m of which is realised through residential sales.

In addition, when the scheme is fully operational, the surplus income is expected to be circa £2m per annum. Over the fullness of time, when debt is fully repaid, the surplus will be in the region of £5m – £6m per annum.

**Supplementary Question**

When I sat on the Committee it was not clear to me that there would be no returns in my lifetime for Woodley. The figures given are projected over many years. Could you give me

some idea of when other towns in the Borough, including Woodley, will benefit from all this money that has been spent on Wokingham?

### **Supplementary Answer**

As I stated in my earlier answer, the money from this goes to pay for other Council services. This is taking Capital and producing Revenue from selling houses and rental income. We have already started regeneration in other areas around the Borough, despite what we are doing here. We have already regenerated Phoenix, for example. We are working on Gorse Ride and other smaller schemes. We have already purchased, through the Property Investment Group, buildings in Twyford and Woodley.

We are not stopping at just Wokingham. But it is clear to make this point, and I am not sure why you have not recognised it having been involved early on, that this scheme is not solely related to generating other areas of the Borough. That happens on its own. It is not linked to this. This is to produce revenue to help fund other vital services.

We don't have as much money coming in to the Council from central Government. In fact we were threatened with negative revenue support grant, as you know. At the moment, we are at zero for that. It is always with the longer view. This scheme, if you think of it like a household mortgage, takes a while to pay back. This has a pay back over 20 years.

### **102.7 Anne Chadwick has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

#### **Question**

In July 2019 you announced that the Council were committing to energy efficiency upgrades and solar PV for the roofs of our schools. Can you give me an update on how many schools have had energy efficiency upgrades and solar installations so far and how many are planned for this year?

#### **Answer**

I am pleased to advise that, in spite of Covid preventing us from getting on to school sites for obvious reasons, the energy efficiency programme is progressing at pace, the key elements being:

- LED lighting replacements to over ten different sites. This equates to a carbon saving of some 8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum and annual energy savings of over £3,000 per annum. We have a plan to install over nine additional school sites with LED lighting replacements by the end of April 2021, saving a further 28 Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and an additional £11,000 per annum for our schools.
- Loft Insulation to five different sites. This equates to a carbon saving of some 2.5 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum and annual energy savings of over £1,500 per annum for our schools. We have three more sites planned before June 2021
- Replacement Glazing in three schools. This equates to a carbon saving of just over 1 tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum and an annual energy saving for our schools of over £500 per annum.
- Solar PV to have been installed to Arborfield Primary School and Addington School, saving 18 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually and an annual energy saving of £8,900 per annum.

In addition, we have a plan to install further Solar PV arrays at six schools before the end of the summer, with another three likely before the end of September. We have another 20 who we are talking to at the moment and we will move forwards once the Covid lockdown has passed us by.

We have also added controls to five sites totalling a saving of 2 tonnes per annum of CO2 and an annual energy saving of £1,000 per annum.

All that I have referenced above equates to a total CO2 savings per annum by the end of July 2021 of 83.5 tonnes and a cost saving of £37,900 per annum for our schools which is going back into their budgets.

### **Supplementary Question**

Can you tell me which schools you are currently working on in relation to energy efficiency, solar panels and lighting?

### **Supplementary Answer**

In terms of energy efficiency and lighting schemes, there are quite a lot on the list, including some of the biggest schools in the Borough. Places like Bulmershe, St Crispins, Rivermead Primary, Loddon Primary, Hawkedon, Bearwood, South Lake, The Holt and Shinfield St Marys. In terms of solar panels, the six we are working with at the moment are Highwood Primary, Shinfield St Marys, Loddon Primary, The Forest comprehensive, Whiteknights and one that I know is particularly close to your heart, Woodley Primary School.

### **102.8 Jane Davenport asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**

#### **Question**

David Wilson Homes have destroyed Montague Park SANG for the last two consecutive years to plant a wildflower meadow so that Wokingham Council will adopt the site. The SANG is home to endangered species and species protected by law, namely Roe Deer and Hedgehogs. The SANG's plant life was killed by indiscriminately spraying glyphosate, a chemical described by the WHO as "probably carcinogenic to humans" and banned in countless countries around the world and many Boroughs in the UK. A chemical that when ingested by humans or animals can cause internal burns, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, not to mention its links with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and the decline of our bee population. The SANG was further destroyed by ploughing, leaving huge furrows, turning it in to an unusable mud pit.

In view of the total failure by David Wilson Homes to plant a wildflower meadow in 2019, and, in the absence of wildlife survey data, residents themselves have demonstrated species inhabit this SANG that are protected by law, what have Wokingham Council done to ensure the 2020 attempt has been successfully carried out, because if this second attempt fails, the meadow cannot be destroyed in 2021 for a third consecutive year.

#### **Answer**

You are right that David Wilson Homes are responsible for the SANG at Montague Park and have carried out the planting at the site.

Because the 2019 attempt failed, Wokingham Borough Council wanted to make sure that the 2020 planting went ahead successfully. To do that we ensured that the existing

vegetation was effectively removed. This was to prevent existing plants from competing with the wildflower seed mix and preventing effective growth. We also verified the seed mix that was purchased by the developer, to prevent any repetition of the errors that occurred in 2019. We checked and ensured that the ground was properly prepared to ensure maximum seed contact with the ground and therefore give the greatest chance of germination and success. We also made site inspections before and following the laying of the seed to verify that the seed has been laid correctly. Additionally, we ensured that works were communicated via signage to users of the particular section of the SANG and ensured that the developer laid the seeds at the optimum time of year for growth, mimicking when the germination would normally happen in nature.

This is the work we have done to support the 2020 planting, but the responsibility still lies with David Wilson Homes.

### **Supplementary Question**

Did David Wilson Homes carry out wildlife surveys prior to destroying the Montague Park SANG? When will we see these results?

### **Supplementary Answer**

You will have to ask David Wilson Homes as they are still responsible for the SANG. We haven't taken over responsibility for the SANG yet.

### **102.9 Extension of Public Question Time**

It was proposed by Andy Croy and seconded by Sarah Kerr that the Public Question Time be extended to allow responses to the remaining public questions.

The Mayor confirmed that the Public Question Time would be extended.

### **102.10 Peter Dennis asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

#### **Question**

With regards to the Coppid Beach Park and Ride, the Climate Emergency Action Plan states in outcomes a "10% increase in the number of Wokingham borough residents who use a train or park and ride at least once a week." But I contend that is a fallacy in that residents on that side of Wokingham do not need a place to park vehicles and residents from other parts of the town will have to drive past the town to get to it (if used the town would then lose car park income).

Therefore, the use case is of people from outside of town using it (which leads to some interesting thoughts). This leads to a query about the sustainability and business case for this park and ride.

How will this park and ride contribute to the climate emergency action plan bearing in mind the continued need to monitor it to demonstrate its worth?

#### **Answer**

The Coppid Beech Park and Ride has a full "WebTAG compliant" Business Case, which was completed in order to attract funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership. This case has been independently assessed and verified. The business case suggests that there will be users parking here and travelling to both Bracknell and Wokingham Town Centres

which will reduce the number of single occupancy car journeys and carbon emissions.

The Park and Ride was actually proposed and designed before the Council declared a Climate Emergency, as a means of reducing congestion for the town centre. The Climate Emergency Action Plan reductions rely partly on increases in Park and Ride and train use. So the business case wasn't around Climate Emergency, but does help to contribute to that.

It is likely that the carbon saving will be from those travelling from the east of the Borough to access Wokingham town centre (it is not just for people in Wokingham) as well as those from within the Borough accessing Bracknell town centre. Even though some of these people may not be travelling from within the Borough, a large number will be. I hope you will agree that cutting their carbon intensive journey short is still a good thing. The aim of the car park is to reduce the number of car trips into Wokingham, thereby reducing mileage by private car which delivers carbon reductions.

Finally, we will be investigating the possibility of providing other links such as between Coppid Beech and Twyford Station, to improve public access to the express train network, further reducing car journeys.

### **Supplementary Question**

Looking at the financials, this car park is costing £2.7m which equates roughly to 5% of the Climate budget from previous years. But the actual saving is going to be less than 0.005% of the Climate budget. When you look at this costing, the maximum cost of a cycle lane, according to Manchester, where they built it is £1.5m per km. As such, I would contend that this money would have been better spent on a proper cycling facility that actually did go down London Road, that is, the stretch from Coppid Beech to the town centre. How does that equate?

### **Supplementary Answer**

It equates, as I said before, as the business case was approved before the Climate Emergency. It wasn't based on Climate Emergency, it was based on reducing congestion. As you have seen, and will hear more on later, we have significant plans for improving cycleways. It is not an either or. This plan was before Climate Emergency and the business case was not predicated on climate change achievements. It was predicated on a good business case which was independently assessed.

With regard to the Climate Emergency Action Plan, there is an outcome which relates to all of our Park and Ride Sites which is an increase in Park and Ride and train use. You are correct, however, that in this example it is likely that the carbon saving will potentially be from those travelling from outside our borough to access Wokingham Town Centre, as well as those from within the borough accessing Bracknell Town Centre. Even though some of these people are not travelling from within the Borough, I hope you will agree that cutting their carbon intensive journey short is still a good thing. The aim of the car park is to reduce the number of trips coming into both Town Centres, thus reducing mileage by private car, which will result in these Carbon savings as well as other benefits such as reduced congestion.

### **102.11 Keith Kerr asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

#### **Question**

There is an ongoing covert campaign by right wing activists and political organisations to

delegitimise the call for fairness, equality and justice that resonated in the UK and all over the world at the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement. Cllr Halsall, do you expect your commitments to equality, given in writing, on behalf of WBC to be honoured or is the Council's inaction and unwillingness to engage with concerned BME residents, part of your personal de-legitimation strategy?

### **Answer**

As I have said to you many times, my mandate is as Leader of Wokingham Borough Council. UK and universal issues are for another forum; I neither comment upon them nor do I advocate Wokingham Borough Council aligning itself to them or distancing itself from them.

I am not given to virtue signalling.

My ambition is that all residents of Wokingham Borough feel valued, safe, and secure and that inequality is tackled, discrimination challenged and diversity celebrated. My focus is to create the culture and the practices within the council and borough to not only identify current concerns and remedy them, but also address future concerns as they occur. We have been and will continue to reach out to all in the community. Indeed, I understand that you have had discussions with officers and you and I have met, which I can say, was enjoyable and productive.

As set out in our Community Vision, we are committed to ensuring that Wokingham Borough is a great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business. We want to enrich the lives of all our residents, in safe and strong communities, and tackle inequality together.

We have various important roles in tackling inequality and will fulfil these as:

- A service provider – by making sure we meet different needs for different people and ensure we treat everyone fairly.
- An employer – by making sure we treat workers and potential workers fairly. Offering a safe and accessible workplace free from discrimination.
- Community Leaders – by working with residents, partners, Councillors and staff to enrich the lives of everyone.

We are currently working to develop an Equality Plan 2021-25. In it we will prioritise listening to, and learning from, our communities and use this information to effectively deliver improved services that work well for everyone. We will actively champion our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and aim to build a diverse and engaged workforce, where everyone is respected.

We are utilising the Local Government Association Equality Framework to continually review and improve our services for people with protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

We are embedding the four elements of the Local Government Equality Framework (listed below) into our planned work programmes to ensure we can assess and track our achievements; which are categorised as 'developing', 'achieving' or 'excellent'.

1. Understanding and Working with your Communities;
2. Leadership and Organisational Commitment;
3. Responsive Services and Customer Care;
4. Diverse and Engaged Workforce.

The framework will also be used to compare our performance with that of our peers to ensure continuous learning and improvement. I hope to bring that to the Executive in March.

### **Supplementary Question**

As a Black, British-born Englishman, to a fellow traveller Italian immigrant, when do you intend to reactivate the BME Forum, which you will be perfectly entitled to attend as a foreigner as well, so that we can hold you to account for what is being done in our name, knowing that the May elections are coming up soon?

### **Supplementary Answer**

We are both British, Keith.

### **102.12 Mike Smith asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:**

#### **Question**

Question related to Agenda item 94.2 The Capital Programme Strategy 2021-2024, sub paragraph 2 the three-year capital programme for 2021 - 2024 – Appendix B; as follows:

On page 1 of Appendix B, Capital Programme, under the item *Roads and Transport - Improvements to existing structures*, there are two lines with exactly the same wording which is “*Bridge Strengthening – Continued enhancements to highway structures.*” One is a modest £225,000 in each of the next 3 years, the other is more substantial £3,800,000 occurring only in year 22-23.

You may remember my enquiring of the Council, a number of times, about the replacement of the footbridge adjacent to Earley Station which spans both the railway and the motorway and is in an advanced state of decay. I am sure there is a plausible reason for the apparent duplication – but what I am really interested in how much of this capital programme has been allocated to the replacement of the footbridge at Earley station?

#### **Answer**

The item in the MTFP capital programme called Bridge Strengthening (Continued enhancements to highway structures), which has £3.8million allocated in 22/23 is solely there to fund the project to replace the WBC owned Earley Station Footbridge which links Nightingale Road in Woodley to the Earley Station forecourt (but not to the platforms). The other item, which has £225,000 allocated for each of the three years is there to undertake various bridge strengthening work as part of our programme of planned bridge maintenance across the Borough.

On reflection, the Council accepts that having two items with the same name and description in the capital programme is not ideal and we will endeavour to ensure that this does not occur in future years.

### **Supplementary Question**

Are there any other such duplications that will confuse the layperson?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I would suggest that there are not, but you have found one, so well done!

### **103. PETITIONS**

There were no Petitions received.

### **104. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND ASSOCIATED REPORTS**

The Council considered four reports which together comprised a single Agenda item:

- The Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 as set out on Agenda pages 47 to 56;
- The Capital Programme and Strategy 2021/24 as set out on Agenda pages 57 to 96;
- The Treasury Management Strategy 2021/24 as set out on Agenda pages 97 to 142;
- The Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/24 – Revenue Budget Submission 2021/22 as set out on Agenda pages 143 to 146.

The Mayor reminded Members that a total of 90 minutes would be set aside for the debate.

The Mayor also reminded Members that Appendix A to the Medium Term Financial Plan (the Statutory Resolution) had been sent to all Members and was available on the Council's website.

### **Statutory Resolution**

#### **104.1 Councillor John Halsall, Leader of the Council 2021/22, Budget Statement**

Mr Mayor, who could have possibly known at last year's budget what a year it would be.

The budget is our statement of our vision for the future.

We, Wokingham Borough Council, are the golden thread - the indispensable and fundamental partner joining all the institutions, businesses, and residents of the Borough. It is a measure of our prowess that the Borough is one of the first choices to live, work and grow.

We have no other purpose than to serve our residents.

We strive to produce the optimal service for the minimum cost and seek to obtain our residents acclaim and affection for so doing, whilst diversity, equality, compassion, and fairness are at the heart of everything we do.

In short, we endeavour to be the natural and beloved, friend and partner of our residents, whose complaints, comments, and concerns are captured as valuable feedback and signals.

We are not a faceless monolith. We are some 1,100 members of staff and councillors, whose central purpose and mission is to continuously improve the lives of our residents.

We want the Council to be an employer of choice and pride.

We can only fulfil this role if our finances are strong; thanks to all our officers and councillors they are. I have constantly preached an ethos that officers are bold, take

initiatives, try novel approaches, and learn from the inevitable mistakes; it is only someone who does nothing who makes no mistakes. I am delighted to say that this creed has taken root and we have achieved remarkable things.

Whilst the responsibility for all that is done (particularly the bad stuff) is mine; what is being achieved through innovation, risk, flexibility and hard work is a credit to all the officers and councillors, all of whom I am understandably proud.

As the lowest funded unitary in England, to be the best is hardly good enough.

This budget is ambitious, seeks to fuel recovery, maintain, and improve services. Our ambition is only tempered by our resources.

- We will work tirelessly to help those in need across the Borough whilst continuing to deliver excellent and good value services to all our residents.
- We will protect and look after our vulnerable children and adults both through the pandemic and afterwards.
- We will keep our traffic moving and improve our highways by dealing with congestion, tackling the blight of potholes, and investing in intelligent traffic systems.
- We will take bold and ambitious action to do our part to achieve a carbon neutral Borough.
- We will invest further in our schools and give our young people the best opportunities in life through a good education at a local school
- We will continue to fight over-development and support building homes only in the right places. We will build more affordable homes and council homes.
- We will ensure our Borough continues to be one of the best places to live. We will tackle anti-social behaviour, environmental health, air quality issues and fly tipping. We will work with our health partners to maintain resident mobility, combat isolation and mental health.
- We will strive to help our residents stay safe during the Covid pandemic and do as much as we can to help them protect their families and livelihoods.

Furthermore, and most significantly in the context of this Council meeting, I am this evening putting forward a budget proposal that invests significantly in services much needed by our community, it remarkably avoids making any cuts to services, and still leaves our financial standing in a strong and sound position. General Fund balances are forecast to be just under nine million pounds at March 2022.

Ladies and gentlemen, the budget, I put before you, has capital investment of £445m over the next three years:

- £160million Roads and transport: including new park and rides, Nine Mile Ride extension, Highways Investment Strategy, flood alleviation schemes, and traffic signal upgrade programme.
- £156million Housing, local economy and regeneration: including Gorse Ride estate redevelopment delivering over 200 affordable homes.
- £71million Climate emergency: including developing solar farms to create a renewable energy infrastructure, energy reduction projects at existing properties to make them energy efficient, managing congestion by improving traffic flow and reducing incidents which cause delays.
- £23million Environment: including refurbishment of leisure facilities, play area enhancement projects, and Carnival Pool redevelopment.

- £13million Internal Services: including upgrades to cyber security and IT, to improve services to residents.
- £12million Children services and schools: including new schools (Arborfield Primary, Matthews Green Primary, and new Special Educational Needs at Winnersh Farm), maintenance of school buildings, and ICT equipment for children in care.
- £11million Adult social care: including a new dementia home, community equipment, Learning Disability respite centre, and supported living accommodation.

Next year we will be injecting growth and special items budgets in Adult Social Care of approximately £2.5m and Children's services of £3.2m. This will help us continue to respond to the needs of our growing elderly population and provides the resources needed to meet our objective of getting Children's Services to "Good".

Our Capital Investment of a staggering £445m has only £11m of this falling on our council taxpayers. In fact, as a result of a numerous innovative commercial ventures over the years the impact of all the Council's borrowing will actually be an overall credit of £13.64 per Band D Council taxpayer next year, rising to a credit of £62.86 in year three. I consider this to be an immense achievement and a further reflection of our outstanding financial management.

Our borrowings far from already being at £700m and running away from us as the opposition states, is budgeted to be just under £400m at the end of next year. In reality it is likely to be nearer £300m given the necessary level of slippage on the capital programme into future years. Our net borrowings after taking into account of our cash balances will be somewhere between £200m and £265m. It surely must give us great confidence that backing this debt, we have total asset value rising to £1.4bn. What an incredibly strong position to be in.

Our revenue budget proposals are equally impressive, whose cornerstone is recovery. We will be actively working to create new jobs with a variety of initiatives already advanced including attracting enterprises into the Borough and retraining erstwhile hospitality and retail to care sector.

We will be laying out the new local plan proposals in the midyear after having fought against our own Government's white paper proposals on housing numbers, whose success was contingent on our being a Conservative Council talking to a Conservative Government and lowered the target from some 1,650 houses per annum to less than half – but still too much.

We will be taking decisive steps to improve our environmental health, licensing, and trading standards for residents so that neighbourhoods, community safety, public protection and enforcement work together in an integrated way locally and that we are more effectively tackling the issues that are of utmost importance to residents. We will be reviewing in depth our waste collection and processing services, shared legal and other shared services.

Despite the financial impact of Covid, both this year and into the future, and despite still being the lowest funded Council in the country, we continue to significantly invest in our care services. We are proposing no cuts to services, something I am aware is being forced on Councils across the country who are having to vote on stark service reductions packages. We can protect our services and invest in them because of our strong financial management and innovative, commercial approach to how we run our services. We

propose a further £6.3m in service efficiencies and income streams next year, rising to £16.2m in 2023/24.

The details are set out in my budget proposal. It is this relentless work that enables additional investment in services, with no cuts, whilst maintaining a safe and healthy general fund balance of just under £9m at March 2022.

Although it gives me great satisfaction to propose this budget for our residents, I remain acutely aware we have a great responsibility to continue to respond to the needs of our residents as the impact of the pandemic is felt beyond this financial year. I am confident, with the competent Councillors and Officers of this Council, who have responded so immensely since the outbreak in early 2020, that we will step up to make whatever difference we can. Again, I stress, this is only possible because we have previously succeeded and will continue to succeed in strong and stable financial management of this Council.

It is indeed in the very spirit of this, I put forward the 2021/22 budget tonight and the Statutory Resolution (Appendix A) circulated by Democratic Services earlier this week. It is an investment in our community, which our indefatigable financial management endeavours have made possible.

Thank you, Mr Mayor.

#### **104.2 Councillor Lindsay Ferris, Leader of the Opposition, Budget Statement on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group**

Good Evening.

I hope everyone will be able to join the national Day of reflection that is planned for Noon on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This is exactly one year after the first lockdown. It is to provide people across our area and the country with an opportunity to remember family, friends and others who have died, or been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic. It not only includes people who had Covid-19, but all other people who suffered as well.

I should like to thank all the WBC officers and staff who have been actively involved with dealing with the Covid-19 Pandemic in our Borough. I should in particular like to thank staff in Adult Social Services and Children's Services as well as all those who were seconded onto Covid-19 duties. Our thanks also go to the voluntary sector, who played a pivotal role in delivering much needed food, prescriptions and other help to our residents during the Pandemic.

There is one area I have mentioned before, but I want to restate here. That is the WBC Protocol developed last April by the Director of Adult Social Care (Matt Pope) in conjunction with other senior officers to prevent patients being discharged from our local Hospitals into Care Homes without being clear of Covid-19, this is something that I believe has saved many lives. Not just our local people, but across the Country. I believe WBC was the first authority in the Country to produce such a protocol. It was followed by many other local authorities shortly afterwards. This was nearly 2 weeks before the Government changed the policy to discharge people from Hospitals with only 2 hours-notice without any testing. I believe this needs national recognition and is in my view one of the most significant actions taken by WBC in the time I have been on the Council.

I should also like to thank the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and senior officers for the regular briefings that have been given to all Party Leaders since last March.

I now turn to the Budget. This is a Conservative Budget, they have the majority on the Council at the moment and it will be the budget that will be approved as a result. However should there be a change of Administration this May, then we (The Liberal Democrats) would have to use this budget as a starting point. We however have a different set of priorities and as a result do not support all aspects of this budget. One area of concern is that it comes across as being a Business as usual Budget rather than one that provides a clear route to recovery once the Pandemic has subsided. This in my view shows a lack of strategic thinking and vision by the Conservatives.

I should also like to highlight that the Adult Social Care element of the Council Tax will now be 9% of the overall Council Tax collected. This represents somewhere between £150 & £300 of your annual Council Tax. The Liberal Democrats believe this should only be a short term measure, and that a nationally agreed means of financing adult social care needs to be developed for the future.

During the last year the Council has lost significant income, including from Leisure services where a loss of around £1.7- £2M has been forecast, plus there are others, as many services have been closed and in addition it has had additional costs, especially associated with support for Covid-19 issues. That is why the level of borrowing (or debt) incurred by the Council is so important. I am sure we all remember large well-known companies financially overstretching themselves, often with unfortunate outcomes. It is the role of Councillors to ensure that we do not follow the same path as some of these now extinct companies.

Throughout the year the Government has provided the Council with financial support, including grants for local businesses, care homes and to cover some of the losses in income due to the Pandemic. I applaud the flexibility shown by the Council officers in the discretion taken in enabling local businesses to receive at least some financial support, when initially they were not eligible.

We need to remember that many people will still have financial problems for a considerable while, even as things improve. Increased unemployment is forecast, and many local businesses will struggle to get going again, and unfortunately some that will not have made it through the pandemic. The Council needs to continue to assist in these areas as best it can and to encourage local people to support our local businesses again. This will not be easy to achieve. We believe that there needs to be a structured Recovery Plan developed to ensure the Council is best placed to help. I do not see sufficient evidence of this happening in this Conservative Budget.

When we are in control we would focus on:

- Continue to provide what support we can to our local businesses, plus when it can happen encourage our local residents to support our local shops, leisure facilities, libraries, Theatres and other activities within the Borough again. They will need our help. We would encourage special events across the Borough.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing will be a priority at all ages, but especially for our children.

- Ensuring sufficient support is provided to assist with the increasing levels of Domestic Abuse that have occurred during the Pandemic. This will be one of those areas we would urgently address. This is particularly significant with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020, which is expected to gain ascent in April.
- Continue to provide what financial support it can to help our local residents who still have financial problems as a result of the Pandemic. This will include help with Council Tax deferred payments, use of the Council Tax Reduction scheme, plus help with rent where WBC is the landlord. We shall investigate what other activities can be developed to assist in this area.
- In time we would reopen those WBC services that have been closed throughout the duration.
- Throughout 2021 we would put in place actions to change the culture of the Council, from its current *"We know best, arrogant attitude to residents"*, to one where the local residents are at the centre of all actions of the Council. This includes greater openness, and a willingness to admit its mistakes when they occur, instead of hiding behind such statements as *"it was perfectly legal"*.

During the autumn the subject of the Council's debt raised its head. On one occasion this subject was raised during a Full Council Meeting. The discussion since then makes interesting reading. Back then the Tories were talking of the debt being £7.52 per resident per annum, then briefly there was mention just before Christmas of a figure around £100M and then at the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Executive meeting there was mention of a figure of £400M (*I suggest people watch the video of that meeting*). However this is only the start. Slowly we are beginning to extract the real level of debt (or total borrowing) incurred by this arrogant, deceitful Conservative administration. Until now they have denied there was any debt (*my comments on debt were ignored for several years*), now it is being extracted tooth by tooth from them. This is shameful as they have tried to hide this from our local residents. The Conservatives have mortgaged the Council's future for many years to come. Residents need to realise that they are the "last resort" for the majority of the financial shortfall, should that occur, at some point in the future.

Interest rates are currently low, but they will not remain that way for ever. The Council will now be burdened by this huge debt for many years to come and as a result the Council will have to generate additional income every year, just to stand still, and who could end up paying?

Local Residents would have to pay more for services, and some services may end up being cut, or removed to make ends meet. This has been an appalling way to behave and it is our job (the Liberal Democrats) to let everyone know what legacy the Tories are leaving.

No matter what mess you leave us, we will deal with it!!

On the capital programme there is one issue I should like to mention. I was extremely pleased to see the planning application for the new library and community hub in Twyford was recently approved. It is also pleasing to find that phase 1 of the project (£740k) has already been approved. Phase 2 is not financially supported by WBC. Should the Liberal Democrats be in control we see no reason why WBC could not also assist with at least part funding Phase 2 of this much delayed and wanted local community facility and one

the local Liberal Democrats have pressed for 20 years.

Finally - Lead Members from the Liberal Democrat team will now further provide more detailed views on the Budget as well as outlining our priorities for the Council when we are in control.

### 104.3 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 as set out in Agenda pages 47 to 56, be approved.

Prior to the vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule 4.2.15.5, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposal.

The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Parry Batth	Jim Frewin	Keith Baker
Rachel Bishop-Firth		Malcolm Richards
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		
UllaKarin Clark		
Stephen Conway		
Gary Cowan		
Andy Croy		
Richard Dolinski		
Carl Doran		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Emma Hobbs		
Graham Howe		
Clive Jones		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Sarah Kerr		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Tahir Maher		
Charles Margetts		
Adrian Mather		
Ken Miall		

Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Barrie Patman		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		

Following the vote, the Mayor confirmed that the proposal was approved.

**RESOLVED** That Council approve:

- 1) the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22 (Appendix A);
- 2) Council house dwelling rents be increased by up to 1.5%, effective from April 2021, in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2015;
- 3) Garage rents be increased by 1.16%, effective from April 2021, in line with the Council's general Fees and Charges;
- 4) Shared Equity Rents to be increased by 1.13%, based on September RPI, effective from April 2021;
- 5) Tenant Service Charges to be set based on cost recovery;
- 6) The Housing Major Repairs (Capital) programme for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix B;
- 7) Sheltered room guest charges for 2021/22 remain unchanged at £9.50 per night per room.

#### **104.4 Capital Programme and Strategy 2021-2024**

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Capital Programme and Strategy 2021/24, as set out at Agenda pages 57 to 96, be approved.

It was proposed by Carl Doran and seconded by Andy Croy that Appendix B: Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2023/24 be amended as follows:

Remove the following line from the Climate Emergency Heading (Page 83):

Key Areas by Sub-Category	Project Name	Project description	Year 1 2021/22 £'000	Year 2 2022/23 £'000	Year 3 2023/24 £'000	Total £'000
CO2 Reduction	Managing Congestion	Improvement to traffic flow and reducing the likelihood of incidents on the	5,000	5,000	7,000	17,000

		network causing problems for congestion including use of CCTV				
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And insert it under the Roads and Transport Heading (Pages 79 to 81) as follows:

Key Areas by Sub-Category	Project Name	Project description	Year 1 2021/22 £'000	Year 2 2022/23 £'000	Year 3 2023/24 £'000	Total £'000
CO2 Reduction - delete  Improvement to existing facilities - insert	Managing Congestion	Improvement to traffic flow and reducing the likelihood of incidents on the network causing problems for congestion including use of CCTV	5,000	5,000	7,000	17,000

John Halsall confirmed that the amendment was not acceptable.

Prior to the vote on the amendment, six Members, in accordance with Rule 4.2.15.5 requested that a recorded vote be taken.

The voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Rachel-Bishop Firth	Parry Batth	Keith Baker
Shirley Boyt	Laura Blumenthal	Malcolm Richards
Prue Bray	Chris Bowring	
Rachel Burgess	Jenny Cheng	
Stephen Conway	UllaKarin Clark	
Gary Cowan	Richard Dolinski	
Andy Croy	Michael Firmager	
Carl Doran	Guy Grandison	
Lindsay Ferris	Charlotte Haitham Taylor	
Paul Fishwick	John Halsall	
Jim Frewin	Pauline Helliard-Symons	
Maria Gee	Emma Hobbs	
David Hare	Graham Howe	
Clive Jones	Pauline Jorgensen	
Sarah Kerr	John Kaiser	
Tahir Maher	Dianne King	
Adrian Mather	Abdul Loyes	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Charles Margetts	
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	Ken Miall	
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	Stuart Munro	
Caroline Smith	Gregor Murray	
	Barrie Patman	
	Angus Ross	
	Daniel Sargeant	

	Wayne Smith	
	Bill Soane	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Simon Weeks	

The Mayor confirmed that the amendment was not approved.

The Council then moved to a vote on the recommendations relating to the Capital Programme and Strategy 2021/24,

Following a request from Andy Croy, recommendation 4 of the Capital Programme and Strategy report was considered separately.

Upon being put to the vote, the Mayor confirmed that recommendations 1 to 3 and recommendation 4 were approved.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approve:

- 1) the Capital Strategy for 2021/24 (Appendix A);
- 2) the three year Capital Programme for 2021/24 (Appendix B);
- 3) the draft Vision for Capital investment over the next five years (Appendix C);
- 4) the use of developer contribution funding (S106 and CIL) for Capital projects, as set out in Appendix D – approval up to the project budget.

#### **104.5 Treasury Management Strategy 2021-2024**

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/24, as set out at Agenda pages 97 to 142, be approved.

Following a request from Andy Croy, recommendation 3 of the Treasury Management Strategy report was considered separately.

Upon being put to the vote, the Mayor confirmed that recommendations 1 and 2 and recommendation 3 were approved.

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- 1) approve the Treasury Management Strategy, as set out in Appendix A, including the following additional Appendices:
  - Prudential Indicators (Appendix B);
  - Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 (Appendix C);
  - Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix D);
- 2) note that the Audit Committee agreed the Treasury Management Strategy on 3 February 2021;
- 3) note that the cumulative financial impact on the Council of its borrowing activities equates to a net credit to the General Fund for the taxpayer of £13.64 per Band D equivalent at the end of 2021/22, and that this credit increases to £62.86 at the end of

2023/24.

#### **104.6 Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-2024 - Revenue Budget Submission 2021/22**

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/24 Revenue Budget Submission 2021/22 be approved.

In line with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken.

Following a request from Andy Croy, recommendation 3 was considered separately.

The voting on recommendations 1 and 2 was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Parry Batth	Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker
Laura Blumenthal	Rachel Burgess	Rachel Bishop-Firth
Chris Bowring	Andy Croy	Prue Bray
Jenny Cheng	Carl Doran	Stephen Conway
UllaKarin Clark		Gary Cowan
Richard Dolinski		Lindsay Ferris
Michael Firmager		Paul Fishwick
Guy Grandison		Jim Frewin
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		Maria Gee
John Halsall		David Hare
Pauline Helliard-Symons		Clive Jones
Emma Hobbs		Sarah Kerr
Graham Howe		Tahir Maher
Pauline Jorgensen		Adrian Mather
John Kaiser		Andrew Mickleburgh
Dianne King		Malcolm Richards
Abdul Loyes		Imogen Shepherd-Dubey
Charles Margetts		Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey
Ken Miall		Caroline Smith
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Barrie Patman		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		

The voting on recommendation 3 was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Parry Batth		Keith Baker
Rachel Bishop-Firth		Malcolm Richards
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		

Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		
UllaKarin Clark		
Stephen Conway		
Gary Cowan		
Andy Croy		
Richard Dolinski		
Carl Doran		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliari-Symons		
Emma Hobbs		
Graham Howe		
Clive Jones		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Sarah Kerr		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Tahir Maher		
Charles Margetts		
Adrian Mather		
Ken Miall		
Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Barrie Patman		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		

Following the votes, the Mayor confirmed that recommendations 1 and 2 and recommendation 3 were approved.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approve:

- 1) the Medium term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/24, including the Budget submission for 2021/22;
- 2) the Statutory Resolution setting out 2021/22 Council Tax levels (Appendix A to the report);
- 3) that, in the event that there are any changes to the provisional precept of the Fire Authority or parishes, arising from their precept setting meetings being held before the end of February, the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) is delegated authority to enact all relevant changes to the MTFP, Statutory Resolution and Council Tax levels.

**Note:** The Statutory Resolution is attached as an appendix to the Council Minutes.

#### **105. EXTENSION OF THE MEETING**

At 10.02pm it was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Chris Bowring that, in line with Rule 4.2.8, the meeting be extended by an extra 30 minutes, up to 11.00pm.

Upon being put to the vote, the proposal was approved.

At 11.50pm it was proposed by Andy Croy and seconded by Chris Bowring that, in line with Rule 4.2.25.1, Council Rules of Procedure be suspended to allow the meeting to continue for a further hour, up to 12 midnight.

Upon being put to the vote, the proposal was approved.

#### **106. RE-DESIGNATION OF POLLING PLACES**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 157 to 166, which gave details of proposed alternative Polling Places to those places that were unavailable for elections due to be held in 2021.

It was proposed by John Kaiser and seconded by Wayne Smith that the proposals set out in the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That, for any elections held in 2021 the following be agreed:

- 1) the Baptist Church Hall, Fairmead Road, Shinfield be designated as the polling place for polling district SCW in Shinfield South Ward instead of Shinfield Parish Hall;
- 2) Wargrave Pavilion be designated as the polling place for polling district RBM in Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe Ward instead of Hare Hatch Village Hall;
- 3) St. John's Church, Woodley be designated as the polling place for polling district KCM in Coronation Ward instead of St John's Ambulance, HQ, Woodley;
- 4) Hurst Village Hall be designated as the polling place for Polling District HAM in Hurst Ward instead of the Mobile Unit at Warren Public House, Hurst;
- 5) the Cornerstone, Norreys Avenue Wokingham be designated as the polling place for polling districts WFW and WGW1 in Norreys Ward instead of Norreys Evangelical Church;

- 6) the Assistant Director, Governance be delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Ward Member(s), to re-designate any polling place in the Borough which becomes unavailable because of issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **107. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2020-21**

The Council considered the mid-year Treasury Management report for 2020/21, as set out at Agenda pages 147 to 156.

Maria Gee raised a point of order in relation to Paragraphs 4.4.4 and 4.4.4.1 of the Constitution and the provisions of the Local Code of Governance. The point of order related to the Constitutional role of the Audit Committee vis-a-vis the Executive in relation to the submission of Treasury Management reports to Council.

The Mayor confirmed that consideration of the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2020/21 would be deferred to the next meeting to enable investigation of the procedural points raised by Councillor Gee.

**RESOLVED:** That consideration of the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2020/21 be deferred to the next meeting of Council in March 2021.

#### **108. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 167 to 190, which gave details of proposed changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Monitoring Officer via the Constitution Review Working Group.

It was proposed by Stuart Munro and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Lindsay Ferris and Andy Croy requested a separate vote on recommendations 1), 2) and 3).

It was proposed by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Guy Grandison that recommendations 1), 2) and 3) in the report be referred back to the Constitution Review Working Group for further consideration, with recommendations 4), 5) and 6) to be voted on at this meeting.

Stuart Munro confirmed that this proposal was acceptable.

Upon being put to the vote, the Mayor confirmed that the proposal was approved, with recommendations 1 to 3 being referred back to the Constitution Review Working Group for further consideration.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) recommendations 1), 2) and 3) in the report be referred back to the Constitution Review Working Group for further consideration;
- 2) the following changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Constitution Review Working Group, be agreed:

- Section 12 Financial Regulations Appendix A – Statement of Material Decisions, be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- amendments be made to Section 13 Procurement and Contract Rules and Procedures, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- amendments be made to Section 13 Procurement and Contract Rules and Procedures, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

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