



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS
FOR THE PERIOD**

24 MAY 2021 to 28 JUNE 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage'.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 14 July 2021



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 24 MAY 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Guy Grandison (Chairman), Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Shirley Boyt, Anne Chadwick, Phil Cunnington, Paul Fishwick and Clive Jones

Executive Members in Attendance

Councillors: Parry Batth, Pauline Jorgensen and John Kaiser

Officers Present

Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 11 to 28, which set out the provisional Committee work programme for the year ahead and service priority lists from the Resources & Assets and Place & Growth Directorates.

John Kaiser (Executive Member for Finance and Housing), Parry Batth (Executive Member for Environment and Leisure) and Pauline Jorgensen (Executive Member for Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to provide service overviews and to answer Member questions.

John Kaiser stated that the Local Plan Update was ongoing, with a consultation due to go live in July or August of this year and the plan to be finalised by Christmas of 2021. There was an original commitment to deliver 1000 homes over 4 years via Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) owned housing companies. This strategy was now more ambitious, and included offering affordable rents rates of between 40 and 50 percent market rate, which was well below the normal rate of 80 percent of market rates offered across the country. In addition, 40 percent of all homes delivered in the Borough would be affordable, and WBC was exploring options to purchase S106 homes to enable them to be offered as affordable rent or shared ownership.

Parry Bath stated that the emerging revised Leisure Strategy was entering a consultation period, which would allow residents to have a say on what leisure offerings they wanted to see in the Borough going forwards. The Carnival Hub redevelopment was also underway, which would host both a brand new leisure centre and a library facility. Parry added that the Cantley park renovation was well underway, with a number of 3G pitches and cricket pitches ready to come online shortly, amongst a number of major improvements across the site. Consultations were underway with a developer in Arborfield to discuss whether the facilities in Arborfield Green could be turned into cricket pitches which would be approved by the English Cricket Board. 3G pitches were under construction at a number of sites across the Borough, including in Arborfield.

Pauline Jorgensen stated that the Highways programme would see a three-pronged approach in the coming year. Firstly, there would be major road programmes and road improvement programmes taking place across the Wokingham Borough. The second priority was related to drainage, including provision of additional SUDs across the Borough and a flood mitigation scheme on a section of the River Loddon. The third approach would be in relation to sustainable travel improvements, which would include improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure, a bus service improvement strategy and a low carbon travel strategy. Other priorities within the Service included improvements to parking services, which would include a parking strategy pilot in Twyford and the development of a Borough wide parking management plan.

During the ensuing discussions, Members raised the following points and queries:

- What were the approximate housing stock numbers owned by WBC? Executive Member response – There were approximately 2700 properties owned by WBC, however there were not many larger 4-bedroom property social homes.
- Where did upgrading WBC housing stock to achieve carbon neutrality sit within the Council's housing strategy plan? Executive Member response – Newly built homes would conform to standards, and WBC would work with residents wherever possible to facilitate these upgrades to existing homes. The most important priority was to ensure that homeless people were housed in good quality accommodation.
- What was the status of the self-building initiative? Executive Member response – This initiative had not been a great success to date, and the issue had been in finding a good partner to run the scheme with. The initiative was progressing, however not at any great rate.
- If the Local Plan Update dropped back by a month or two, would WBC still maintain a 5 year land supply? Executive Member response – WBC had an excellent track record of defending planning appeals, and hired the best barrister possible to facilitate this. WBC still had a Local Plan, and although older it still stood the Borough in good stead and it would be difficult for an Inspector to argue otherwise considering the national picture.
- Did WBC have a plan for where the 1000 Council developed homes would be placed within the Borough? Executive Member response – There was a list of 1352 homes within the programme, which would be used to progress the plan moving forwards.

- Were there any plans to develop a pool at the Ryeish Green Sports Hub? Executive Member response – If the community wanted a pool and there was sufficient demand for such a facility then this could be considered.
- How well advertised was the revised Leisure Strategy and associated consultation? Executive Member response – It had been well advertised on the WBC website, social media channels and in local newspapers. On suggestion from the Committee, the Executive Member agreed to push for the revised strategy and consultation to feature in the next edition of the Borough News.
- How was WBC's leisure provider, Places for People, coping in relation to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic? Executive Member response – WBC were supporting Places for People via provision of loss of income. Since reopening, our leisure facilities had coped well and were continuing to offer a great range of services for residents.
- When was it anticipated that the planning application would come forward for the proposed in-Borough crematorium? Executive Member response – This was still in the discussion and planning stage, however a planning application was anticipated for later in the year.
- What measures might be included within the Bus Service Improvement Plan? Executive Member response – There was a new Government announcement regarding bus partnerships, which would allow Local Authorities to partner with bus providers to improve local services. This was in very early stages, and more details would follow in time.
- Were there any updates relating to the flood alleviation scheme on the River Loddon? Executive Member response – Works relating to culverts had been completed, and flood monitoring of flow through those culverts and others would be put in place, which would allow action to be taken if needed. Officers could provide more detail regarding the flood alleviation scheme if required.
- Were the park and rides due to open in the order of Thames Valley Park, Winnersh Triangle and then Coppid Beech? Executive Member response – The Thames Valley park and ride had been affected by Covid-19 as all of the offices had been essentially closed. Works were beginning at both the Winnersh Triangle and Coppid Beech sites.
- Was there any strategy to get more residents to use train services? Executive Member response – The development of the Winnersh Triangle park and ride would promote increased train usage. Other opportunities needed to be explored, in addition to the creation of better pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure to and from railway stations.
- Why had the Low Emissions Transport Strategy been renamed to the Low Carbon Transport Strategy? Executive Member response – This was most likely an error, and would be changed back to its original name.
- Was there the potential for a partnership between WBC, Reading Borough Council and Bracknell Council in relation to Reading Buses? Executive Member response – A partnership had previously been suggested, and WBC would keep pushing to have a more active role and therefore have more influence over Reading Buses in order to protect residents of the Borough. Conversations had taken place with the new Managing Director about a closer working relationship.

- When would the active travel funding bid be finalised and chosen? Executive Member response – This was imminent, a consultation and evaluation of the three options had been carried out and a decision would be made very soon. All three options would go forward at some point in the future.
- Was there anything in the works for safer walking routes to and from school, to encourage sustainable travel for school children? Executive Member response – Safe crossing points were installed as part of new development costs. The LCWIP would be used to fill in the missing links to ensure safe walking routes for children to and from school.
- Were there any plans for additional motorcycle parking at Earley station? Executive Member response – This was a very small site, and suggestions from local Members and residents were welcome as to how this might be accommodated.
- What were the plans to provide a greater electric vehicle charging network? Executive Member response – In London, power from street lights was used to facilitate electric vehicle charging. LED lights had been moved to the interior of pavements for safety reasons which inhibited this strategy. There was an options consultation which was due to go live in October to gather opinions for the best way forward.
- Were there any plans to create more parking permit schemes for residential areas? Executive Member response – In general, residents were keen to have parking permit schemes until they were required to pay for them. The Service was happy to consult on specific roads, however these schemes sometimes moved the problem to other areas.
- Would the Borough Wide Parking Management plan come to Overview and Scrutiny prior to going out for consultation? Executive Member response – The Service would be happy to accommodate this. It was important to note that this could not really progress until the Borough was in a more normal state post pandemic. An update in December 2021 or January 2022 would be reasonable.
- Had there been any changes to the business and economic recovery plan? Executive Member response – A more detailed update would be provided to the June Committee meeting.
- Were there plans to regenerate the other Town centres? Executive Member response – Interest rates remained low and WBC were looking to invest where possible. Progress would be much further ahead if it had not been for the pandemic. It was hoped that the money generated from the Wokingham Town Centre regeneration could be used to invest in the other town centres within the Borough.
- Had options such as ping-pong parlours been considered for vacant shops in Wokingham, which would make use of empty space and develop interest in the sport? Executive Member response – This was a good idea, however Wokingham Town Centre was not in a position to offer this as there were no shops which were at risk of being empty for a long period of time.
- What was the Borough's position in terms of vacant office buildings? Executive Member response – There had been a lot of conversion to residential space in central

Wokingham, which had been good in some cases and bad in others. As a Council, WBC was fortunate to be in the retail sector and not so much in the office space sector. The Arborfield garrison had seen large amounts of business rates replaced by Council Tax over its redevelopment.

- Was there an update regarding the homeless accommodation strategy? Executive Member response – This would be more challenging going forwards, however the Housing Revenue Account could be used to assist. This was a complex area, and WBC was very hopeful not to lose any ground in this cause.

The Committee went on to discuss their work programme for their upcoming meetings.

It was agreed that the June Committee would consider the Community Safety Partnership, and update regarding business and economic recovery in the Borough as a result of the pandemic, an update regarding how WBC advertises planning applications, and a list of Service priorities from the Communities, Insight and Change Directorate.

It was agreed that an extraordinary meeting be arranged for the end of July, to consider the exit plan for the Public Protection Partnership and Building Control Solutions.

It was agreed that the September meeting receive an update on library provision and best practice, and a potential update on the implementation of the Arts and Culture strategy.

It was agreed that an update regarding the Borough Wide Parking Management Plan be considered by the Committee in January 2021.

It was agreed that an update regarding Flood Risk Management and an update from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service be considered in March 2021.

A number of other issues were discussed by the Committee, including the Sports and Leisure Strategy, the Bus Improvement Strategy, Broadband provision, the creation of a task and finish group regarding overgrown pavements, and Burial Ground Provision. It was agreed that these items and others discussed on the night be scheduled directly with the Directorates input to an appropriate meeting of the Committee.

The Committee, including the Chairman of Health Overview & Scrutiny, agreed to send work programme item 13 (public toilet provision) to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) John Kaiser, Parry Bath, and Pauline Jorgensen be thanked for attending the Committee;
- 2) The Low Carbon Transport Strategy revert to be named the Low Emissions Transport Strategy;
- 3) The Executive Member for Environment and Leisure look to advertise the revised Leisure Strategy and associated consultation in the Borough News;
- 4) The format of inviting Executive Members to the first meetings of the municipal year be continued in future;

- 5) The June Committee would consider the Community Safety Partnership, and update regarding business and economic recovery in the Borough as a result of the pandemic, an update regarding how WBC advertises planning applications, and a list of Service priorities from the Communities, Insight and Change Directorate;
- 6) An extraordinary meeting be arranged for the end of July, to consider the exit plan for the Public Protection Partnership and Building Control Solutions;
- 7) The September meeting receive an update on library provision and best practice, and a potential update on the implementation of the Arts and Culture strategy;
- 8) An update regarding the Borough Wide Parking Management Plan be considered by the Committee in January 2021;
- 9) An update regarding Flood Risk Management and an update from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service be considered in March 2021;
- 10) Other items of business discussed on the night be scheduled for an appropriate meeting following direct discussions between officers, the Directorates and the Chairman.

Decision made in the presence of:
 Marcia Head, Service Manager - Place & Growth
 Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

**INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER
 DECISION RECORD SHEET
 IMD 2021/16**

Title of the report	Response to government consultation on changes to permitted development rights for telecommunications infrastructure
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DECISION MADE BY Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Wayne Smith
ACTION BY Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
DECISION MADE ON 02 June 2021

Recommendation contained in the report

That the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement agrees that Wokingham Borough Council submit the comments contained in the ‘Analysis of Issues – suggested response’ table below as this Council’s formal response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government consultation ‘Changes to permitted development rights for electronic communications infrastructure: technical consultation’.

Decision

That the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement agreed that Wokingham Borough Council submit the comments contained in the ‘Analysis of Issues – suggested response’ table below as this Council’s formal response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government consultation ‘Changes to permitted development rights for electronic communications infrastructure: technical consultation’.

Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation

N/A

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

N/A

Summary of consultations undertaken

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Corporate Services	None
Monitoring Officer	None
Leader of the Council	None

Reasons why the report was deemed to have contained confidential or Exempt information (if applicable)

N/A

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member who is consulted by a Member which relates to the decision

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

PUBLISHED ON: 2 June 2021

EFFECTIVE ON: 10 June 2021

CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES: 9 June 2021

Agenda Item 3

Decision made in the presence of:
Marcia Head, Service Manager - Place & Growth
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION RECORD SHEET IMD 2021/17
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Title of the report	Local Validation List for Planning
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DECISION MADE BY Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Wayne Smith
ACTION BY Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
DECISION MADE ON 02 June 2021

Recommendation contained in the report

That the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement agrees that Wokingham Borough Council re-adopts and publishes Local Validation List contained in Appendix A to this report.

Decision

That the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement agreed that Wokingham Borough Council re-adopts and publishes Local Validation List contained in Appendix A to this report.

Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation

N/A

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

N/A

Summary of consultations undertaken

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	None
Monitoring Officer	None
Leader of the Council	None

Reasons why the report was deemed to have contained confidential or Exempt information (if applicable)

N/A

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member who is consulted by a Member which relates to the decision

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

PUBLISHED ON: 2 June 2021

EFFECTIVE ON: 10 June 2021

CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES: 9 June 2021

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 2 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Angus Ross, Daniel Sargeant (Chairman), Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Shahid Younis (Vice-Chairman), Abdul Loyes and Ian Shenton

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Prue Bray

Also Present

Helen Thompson, Ernst and Young
Stephan Van Der Merwe, Ernst & Young
Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Catherine Hickman, Lead Specialist, Audit and Investigation
Steve Moore, Interim Director Place and Growth
Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance
Bob Watson, Assistant Director Finance

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey declared a Personal Interest regarding Item 6 Wokingham Borough Council Outline Audit Plan year ended 31 March 2021 on the grounds that she had money in the Berkshire Pension Fund.

Councillor Daniel Sargeant declared a Personal Interest in Item 6 Wokingham Borough Council Outline Audit Plan year ended 31 March 2021 on the grounds that he was Non Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Limited and Berry Brook Homes.

Councillor Shahid Younis declared a Personal Interest in Item 6 Wokingham Borough Council Outline Audit Plan year ended 31 March 2021 on the grounds that he was a Non Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Limited and Berry Brook Homes.

Councillor Gee questioned whether it was appropriate that Audit Committee members were Non Executive Directors of subsidiary companies. The Chairman indicated that the Monitoring Officer had confirmed that it was not a Prejudicial Interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no Public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

**5.1 Prue Bray asked the Chairman of the Audit Committee the following question:
Question**

During the recent local elections, the Conservatives issued leaflets that said “Ernst & Young’s independent audit states WBC’s debt is £83 million”. Where can I find Ernst & Young’s report which shows this?

Answer

Thank you for your question.

Ernst & Young have confirmed that the assurance they provide the Council in their statutory role of external auditors does not include the quoted statement.

However, it is not within the remit of this Committee to comment on election literature produced by any political party.

Supplementary Question:

In my view this episode shows a woeful lack of understanding of Audit on the part of a number of Conservative councillors, some of whom are in senior roles, and at least one of whom I believe, calls himself an accountant. To prevent this kind of thing happening again, can a briefing note be sent to all councillors on the role of the external auditors and of the Audit Committee, including in it that the external auditors should not be dragged into party political campaigns, particularly when the claim being made about them is untrue?

Supplementary Answer:

Yes, I think that is probably a reasonable request. It is always good that councillors have an understanding of the role of the Audit Committee and the external auditors and how they interact with risk management in the Council. That will be fine, and we can arrange for that to take place.

6. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL OUTLINE AUDIT PLAN YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The Committee received an update on the Wokingham Borough Council Outline Audit Plan year ended 31 March 2021.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- Helen Thompson indicated that the 2019/20 audit was not yet completed but it was important that Members had sight of the risks that were considered relevant for the 2020/21 audit.
- Stephan Van Der Merwe indicated that the risks remained largely unchanged. The misstatement due to fraud and error and the risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition, were inherently fraud risks and would be audited as significant risks. The valuation of land and buildings remained a significant risk and E&Y would be focusing on the properties that were largely influenced by market conditions; properties that were carried at estimated useful value and the investment properties that were under fair value. Other properties carried at depreciated replacement cost and the Housing Revenue Account properties that were influenced to some degree by the market conditions, would be audited as an inherent risk and would be an area of audit focus.
- The pension liability remained an area of focus.
- The going concern disclosure remained an area of focus due to the ongoing market conditions because of Covid.

- Accounting for the Covid grant was a new area of focus due to the significant level of government funding received in relation to Covid.
- Accounting for Public Finance Initiative and Group Accounts were also highlighted.
- With regards to the value for money assessment, Helen Thompson informed Members that a new code of practice was in operation. There were now three specified reporting criteria instead of a single criterion. A more detailed initial risk assessment against each of these reporting criteria, was now required. Each criterion was broken down into a set of specific arrangements. From the risk assessment the external auditors could either identify a weakness in the proper arrangements or conclude that proper arrangements were in place for the criteria and the sub arrangements. More work was required if a significant weakness was identified. The risk assessment would be reported to the Committee at its July meeting. Members were informed that if EY were not satisfied that there were proper arrangements in place then this would be referred to by exception in the audit report.
- From the 2020/21 audit, an Annual Audit Letter would no longer be produced. An Annual Auditor report would be produced instead which would contain the reporting around the value for money.
- With regards to the Groups Accounts, Councillor Gee asked whether there was now greater standardisation of the accounting policies.
- With regards to assets at depreciated replacement costs, Councillor Gee asked if it was likely that there would be a difference in opinion regarding valuation costs. Helen Thompson explained that the risks attached to these assets were different to those valued at market value. Conversations would be had with officers to ensure that any issues were identified and addressed at the start of the audit.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey queried whether the former Marks and Spencer's building was considered Property, Plant and Equipment or Commercial Property. The Assistant Director Finance agreed to provide a written response. He believed that most of the regeneration work around Peach Place were still classed as assets under construction. Helen Thompson assured the Committee that no assets would fall outside of the audit remit.
- With regards to the changes in looking at the capital assets, Councillor Ross asked if there would be any changes where construction was underway at the end of the year. Helen Thompson explained that assets that were under construction would be considered under the audit as before.
- In response to a question from Councillor Gee, Helen Thompson explained the value for money work and how it was reflected in the audit fee.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Wokingham Borough Council Outline Audit Plan year ended 31 March 2021 be noted.

7. UPDATE ON CHANGES TO ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The Assistant Director Finance updated the Committee on changes to the accounting policies.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- It was best practice to bring changes to the accounting policies to the Audit Committee prior to the closure of accounts.
- There were two significant changes to the policies.
 - Revaluations policy – a new, 'basket of goods' approach would be taken. This would allow greater benchmarking within the asset class.

- Date assets valued at – going forwards valuations would be started earlier, with an aim to value as at 1 January of the year to which the accounts related.
- The changes had been discussed with the external auditors.
- Councillor Sargeant welcomed the new valuations approach which had been discussed by the Committee in the previous municipal year.
- Councillor Gee questioned what would happen should conditions change and a valuation had to be amended, and whether that would have an impact on the valuation of other assets within its class. The Assistant Director Finance commented that if there was significant change to an asset it would indicate that officers would either need to revalue the other assets within the class or to use the asset that was revalued as a proxy for a desktop revaluation of all the other assets in the class.
- In response to a question from Councillor Younis regarding the valuation classes, the Assistant Director Finance clarified that the designation of classes was under the CIPFA Code and the accounting policies was a decision of the council.

RESOLVED: That the revised Statement of Accounting Policies be approved for adoption and inclusion in the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.

8. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

The Committee considered the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- Members were reminded of the Committee's role in relation to the Annual Governance Statement (4.4.3.2.g of the Constitution).
- The action plan of the previous Annual Governance Statement had had six actions, five of which had been completed. The action relating to Human Resources had been carried forwards.
- Councillor Gee suggested that an action around the function of the Audit Committee be added to the action plan. The Assistant Director Governance agreed that it would help to add focus.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey asked if there was a service level agreement in place around the consideration of Member Code of Conduct complaints. She went on to state that the Equalities Sector Duty work was an ongoing process.
- With regards to Members Code of Conduct complaints, the Assistant Director Governance felt that it was important that it was part of the AGS. A piece of work would be going through the Standards Committee regarding the quick processing of any complaints. There had been some issues regarding capacity in the past. Equalities had been part of the 2019 action plan and was now being carried forwards. Following the agreement of the updated Equality Plan at Full Council in March 2021, it was time to bed in and implement the plan.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committee note the report and:-

- 1) Considers the draft 2020/21 AGS, identifying any specific matters which should be brought to the attention of Council or Executive;
- 2) Recommends the 2020/21 AGS to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive for signature and publication with the council's Statement of Accounts, subject to the amended action plan;

- 3) Requests that update reports be provided to the Audit Committee summarising progress in achieving the governance action plan on those areas identified as requiring action in the AGS Improvement Plan.

9. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee considered the Corporate Risk Register.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- The Committee was reminded that the focus should be on satisfying itself that the Council's process of risk identification and risk mitigation, was sound, as opposed to the detail of the individual risks.
- Some improvements had been made with regards to risk management but there was more work to be undertaken. The Corporate Leadership Team would be holding a workshop to consider how the risk management arrangements could be further developed.
- There were no new risks but the risks around the end of the EU transition and the elections had been removed. Members were informed that Overview and Scrutiny would receive an update on lessons learnt in relation to the elections.
- Changes to individual assessments to individual risks were highlighted.
- The Interim Director Place and Growth emphasised that the risk regarding the Local Plan had moved from red to amber status, primarily due to the fact that the Council now had a process to Regulation 18 stage by the autumn. The Council was within the timetable to seek examination of its Local Plan prior to the introduction of planning reform.
- Regular conversations took place with Housing Developments.
- The Interim Director Place and Growth highlighted the Climate Emergency risk. Work continued around the Action Plan which he felt to be very comprehensive. The review, progress and implementation of the plan would be monitored.
- The Interim Director Place and Growth highlighted the need for a smooth transition from the joint Public Protection Partnership to a standalone service.
- The Committee was informed that as more people worked from home, domestic waste disposal had increased.
- Councillor Ross questioned whether returning to physical meetings as the pandemic continued had an impact on governance. The Assistant Director Governance indicated that a lot of work had been undertaken in a very short timescale following the announcement that the virtual meeting regulations would cease in May. Contingency planning was in place around the July Council meeting. The Council had a good technology solution in place to enable hybrid meetings. The matter would be part of the Governance risk register.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey questioned whether the transition from the PPP should be included on the risk register. The Interim Director Place and Growth suggested that it would be included going forwards. He assured the Committee that it was being closely monitored and he met regularly with his counterparts in West Berkshire and Bracknell. Some project management expertise had also been recruited which reported directly to the Interim Assistant Director of Place.
- Councillor Gee questioned why Risk 4 was a medium risk and the inclusion of some of the existing controls for this risk. The Interim Director Place and Growth commented that conversations had been continuing with officers, looking at other sites' availability, which formed a new timetable, a local development scheme document, which was due to go to Executive in July.

- With regards to the Climate Emergency risk, Councillor Gee felt that the further action to mitigate risk concerning the internal audit, should be reworded. She also stated that it would be helpful to have an Executive Member with specific responsibility identified for Climate Emergency. The Assistant Director Governance explained that the audit of the Climate Emergency Action Plan was within the Internal Audit Plan and was scheduled for Quarter 1. A lot of work was being carried out to find the correct resources and expertise to deliver that. Some external expertise would be sourced to assist. The point regarding the clarity of lead Member responsibility would be taken forward.

RESOLVED: That the risks and mitigating actions of the Council's Corporate Risk Register be noted.

10. 2020-21 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION REPORT

The Committee received the 2020-21 Annual Internal Audit and Investigation Report.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- The original annual Audit and Investigation Plan had been agreed in February 2020 but due to the impact of Covid the Committee had later agreed to an in year review of the Plan. The revised Plan had been agreed in September 2020.
- As part of the review, new audit priorities had been agreed and the team's work had been refocused and reprioritised.
- The review had resulted in a number of audits being deferred. However, Internal Audit work had been enhanced in other areas. There had been a focus on areas that had previously attracted a Category 3 Internal Audit opinion, including debtors, housing rents and Public Health.
- A specific piece of work had been undertaken regarding risk management. Work had also increased in areas where there had been increased expenditure due to Covid or where there had been the payment of Government grants which had had to be paid within tight timescales.
- The Chief Audit Executive's opinion was that the governance, risk management and internal control framework was substantially complete and effective, but that there were some areas where improvement was required.
- Councillor Gee asked about conclusions reached with regards to the presentation of Treasury Management reports. The Lead Specialist Audit and Investigation agreed to feed back.
- Councillor Gee noted that Housing Rents had received a rating of 3 and had also been rated 3 the previous year. She questioned whether the same issues remained outstanding. The Lead Specialist Audit and Investigation indicated that the audit had had a different scope. It had improved to a Category 2 but because of the expanded scope and issues identified, it had moved to a Category 3 opinion.
- In response to a question from Councillor Loyes, the Lead Specialist Audit and Investigation indicated that there had been one audit that had been received a Category 1 opinion, the Payroll audit.
- The Assistant Director Governance reminded the Committee of the improvement actions around rents in the Annual Governance Statement.
- Councillor Ross commented that the work around the Covid grant fund was a good news story. The Lead Specialist Audit and Investigations indicated that the team had worked closely with the Revenues team to put controls in place to prevent fraud.
- It was noted that the table detailed in 4.2 was incorrect.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report, the Shared Audit and Investigation Service activity for the financial year ended 31 March 2021, and progress in achieving the 2020/21 Internal Audit and Investigation Plan.

11. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the forward programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey requested that there be training for the Committee and other Members on the role of the Audit Committee. It was suggested that an update be provided at the July meeting.
- The outcome of the internal audit of the Climate Emergency Action Plan would be reported within the relevant Internal Audit quarterly report.
- Members asked for an update on the accounts. The Assistant Director Finance commented that they were virtually completed. Councillor Gee asked for an update at the July meeting should the accounts not be complete at that stage.

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 9 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.38 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Chris Bowring (Chairman), Angus Ross (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Stephen Conway, Carl Doran, Pauline Jorgensen, Rebecca Margetts, Andrew Mickleburgh, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Bill Soane

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Sarah Kerr and Shirley Boyt

Councillors in Attendance

Councillors: Gary Cowan

Officers Present

Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor
Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Stefan Fludger
Benjamin Hindle
Baldeep Pulahi
Graham Vaughan
Adriana Gonzalez

1. APOLOGIES

Gary Cowan attended the meeting virtually, and was therefore marked as in attendance, and was not able to propose, second, or vote on items.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 2021, and the minutes of the extraordinary meetings of the Committee held on 24 March 2021 and 18 May 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Members wished to share their thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Simon Weeks, for his service and dedication to the Committee.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Angus Ross declared a personal interest in agenda item 5, on the grounds that he had worked as the liaison between Wokingham Borough Council and the Friends of Foxhill. Angus added that he had not been involved in this application and had not formed a view regarding it. Angus stated that he would take part in both the discussion and voting related to this item.

Andrew Mickleburgh declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 9, on the grounds that he was a member of the Earley Town Council Planning Committee which had made a recommendation of refusal. Andrew added that he had formed a view relating to this application, and would therefore take no part in the discussion or voting related to this item.

4. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

5. APPLICATION NO 203539 LAND OFF BEARWOOD ROAD, WOKINGHAM

Proposal: Full planning application for the change of use of 14.77ha from existing private woodland to informal recreational land and associated infrastructure including pedestrian and vehicle access, car parking and footpath network and landscaping.

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Pike

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 39 to 88.

The Committee were advised that there were updates within the supplementary planning agenda. However, the Committee were advised verbally on the night that the comments from Wokingham Town Council, contained on agenda page 46, were incorrect and related to a previous application at the site. Page 87 contained the correct response from Wokingham Town Council.

Tony Delliston, resident, commented on the application. Tony stated that the current footpath on the northern boundary was 0.6m wide, and a lot of removal of vegetation would have to occur to facilitate the path being made 2m wide. An alternative path was suggested in Tony's comments on the application, which would not have required the removal of trees. Tony was of the opinion that his suggestion should have been progressed and used. Tony felt that as this was not an application for a SANG, fencing may not be needed at all on site. Tony stated that barbeques should not be permitted on site, as the Fire Service were often required to attend fires as a result of barbeques. Tony commented that the applicant was a Wokingham Borough Council supplier, which could arise to a conflict of interest. As such, Tony felt that the comments made by the environmental health officer should be disregarded, and instead an independent noise assessment report should be commissioned.

Nicola Greenwood, BHS Access and Bridleways Officer, commented on the application. Nicola stated that the RG40, RG41, RG2 and RG6 postcodes covered the area in and the around Barkham and Wokingham parishes.

Nicola added that the new postcode figures provided by DEFRA dated April 2021 showed a 25% increase in horse ownership in these postcodes with a new total of 1,548 horses. These horses brought in excess of £8.5million per annum to the local economy, almost £3 million more than 9 years ago. Nicola attributed this increase in horse ownership to the large number of new houses that have been built in this area of Borough. Nicola stated that Foxhill had been enjoyed by horse riders for over 50 years. Nicola was of the opinion that in order to retain and increase rural job and business opportunities, off road horse rider access, close to where these people lived, needed to be increased and not decreased. Nicola asked that should this application be approved, access between Bearwood Road and Limmerhill Road be retained for horse rider use to ensure that riders who kept their horses in Limmerhill Road were not forced onto Barkham Road to get to the Coombes. Nicola concluded by asking that a circular bridleway be placed around the outside of the proposed site for recreational horse rider and cyclist use.

Emily Ford, agent, spoke in support of the application. Emily stated that the proposals sought full planning permission for 14.7 hectares of woodland to become informal

recreational land. Emily added that the proposal would regularise public use of the land whilst including new accessible recreational routes of up to 2.3km for use throughout the year. Emily stated that trees and protected species had been considered carefully throughout the preparation of this application. Emily added that the site would have five access points with kissing gates, and the site would have eighteen car parking spaces including three disabled spaces. The car park would be well screened and would also include cycle parking facilities. Emily concluded by stating that invasive vegetative species would be removed from the site, the overall proposals would increase the biodiversity on site, and if approved the proposals would allow public access to the site in a formal manner.

Tim Lloyd, Friends of Foxhill, spoke in support of the application. Tim stated that the residents of Woosehill had used this site for decades as a recreation space, many of whom had not realised that the site was privately owned. Tim added that the guarantee of public access was appreciated, as the site was well used. Tim asked that conditions be amended to facilitate meaningful consultation with the local community when detailed plans were being prepared, to alleviate concerns including potential flooding, wildlife conservation, and footpath layout.

Sarah Kerr, Ward Member, commented on the application. Sarah stated that the site was privately owned and had been enjoyed by the community for many years as a recreation space. Sarah asked that it be conditioned that the Friends of Foxhill be consulted on the detailed design stage, as a previous alternative footpath was suggested by the group and subsequently rejected for this scheme. Sarah asked that conditions regarding access to the site be updated to reflect that construction of the car park would facilitate new users, and existing users should not be denied access during construction of the car park. Sarah asked that a condition be added that dealt with the public right of way officer's request for a larger version of the kissing gates being added to allow for all sizes of motorised wheelchairs. Sarah asked that the Committee add a condition that removed the need for fencing on the northern boundary where residential fencing was already in situ, and access had been available for a considerable time. Sarah asked that the Committee add a condition which required suitable and safe walking and cycling infrastructure along Bearwood Road from Sindlesham to ensure the sustainability of the proposals. Sarah stated that there had already been a number of issues regarding woodland fires as a result of barbeques, and asked that a condition be added which banned their use on site. Sarah noted that the applicant owned the adjacent scrapyards, and asked that a condition be added which would require the applicant to install noise mitigation measures at the adjacent scrapyards site. Sarah was of the opinion that cyclists should not be prohibited to use the space, and asked that the Committee condition cycling to be allowed on site. Sarah asked that clarification regarding secure cycle storage be provided, as it was currently suggested to be situated solely in the proposed car parking. As many cyclists would access the site from a variety of entrances, Sarah asked that cycle storage be provided at all of the entrances to allow cyclists to store their bicycle safely if they then chose to walk the site.

Stefan Fludger, case officer, clarified a number of the points mentioned by the speakers. Stefan stated that the footpath along the northern boundary had been assessed largely in relation to Kent Close. This footpath was close to the existing footpath and there was not much of a level difference. Stefan confirmed that the closest path to a residential property was 12m away. Stefan commented that there would be removal of rhododendron on site, and there would be a considerable amount of vegetative screening on the edge of the site, and officers were content that there would be no significant overlooking from the pathways.

Stefan stated that the majority of the site would include post and rail type fencing, and the only substantive fencing would be adjacent to the WBC owned land which adjoined the open space, which went around the whole site apart from between it and the adjacent WBC owned land. Officers felt that the inclusion of these fencing proposals were not seen as harmful. Stefan confirmed that there had been no objection raised by Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Stefan stated that the noise related to the adjacent scrapyards was not considered to prevent the use of the site as an open space, and the environmental health officer had raised no objections. Relating to use of the site by horse riders and cyclists, Stefan stated that the increase of accessibility of the site via hard surfaces outweighed the negatives of not allowing access for horse riders or cyclists. Stefan stated that a number of issues would be resolved via conditions, including tree surveys, the final routing of the footpaths, and ecology surveys. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that the Chairman could request that some conditions were agreed in consultation with the Chair and another nominated Member. Stefan Fludger commented that the proposed kissing gates met British standards and allowed all but the largest motorised mobility vehicles access. Regarding the access to the site by neighbours on the northern boundary, Stefan stated that neighbours had built up direct access from their gardens directly in to the site over time, and in planning terms these neighbours had no rights to this access and officers felt there were no grounds to refuse this application based on loss of access from these properties. Stefan stated that there were no footpaths to Sindlesham, but this mirrored the current situation, and the fact that the highway was outside of the application meant that officers felt that this lack of access would not warrant a reason for refusal as there was good access from other areas including the Woollahill area. Stefan confirmed that this application could not be used to mitigate the noise at the adjacent scrapyards. Stefan added that no officers had objected to the proposed bicycle storage in the car park as users would need to get off of their bicycles to move through the kissing gates.

Chris Bowring queried whether amending elements of the scheme, such as larger kissing gates, would be a permissible amendment. Justin Turvey stated that Members could make a change such as this, and Members would need to consider whether the changes would be necessary and whether they would meet the planning conditions tests.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether there would be sufficient access for emergency vehicles such as fire engines in and out of the site, queried whether the access from Simon's Lane would be made permanent, queried whether any electric vehicle charging bays would be provided on site, queried whether this could be a precursor for a future housing application, queried why horse riders were now considered an issue whereas in the past they were not, and queried who would be responsible for maintenance of the site. Stefan Fludger clarified that the car park gate would be large enough to accommodate emergency vehicle access. Stefan clarified that Simon's Lane did not provide access to this part of Foxhill. Relating to electric vehicle charging, Stefan stated that there was no provision on site, and Highways officers had not recommended that any be provided. Stefan clarified that this was not an application for a SANG, and it was not related to any current housing application. Stefan stated that whilst horse riders would lose access to the site, the improvements in terms of making the site accessible to disabled users, or users using pushchairs, outweighed these negatives. In addition, some of the footpaths were relatively narrow and could create a conflict between horse riders and pedestrians. Stefan confirmed that the maintenance of the site would be the responsibility of the applicant, although this could change in the future.

Carl Doran queried what changes had been made to the car parking compared to the previously refused application, queried whether the Bearwood Road's 40MPH section could be extended as it could be quite dangerous, queried how the driving of the 20m wide pathways be managed and monitored, and queried how any future SANG assessment would be considered. Stefan Fludger stated that the car park was proposed to be in the same location, however the previous application lacked details relating to the strategy for removal of vegetation and trees, which was much more detailed within this application. Highways officers had not raised any objections related to the speed limit on the Bearwood Road, and it did not warrant a reason for refusal. Stefan commented that half of the site was classed as ancient woodland, and there was conflicting advice received. Natural England had not objected to the proposals, however the Woodland Trust had. Tree and ecology officers felt that the surfacing of the pathways would mitigate many of the issues involving people straying from pathways. Stefan stated that should the site be considered for a SANG at some point in the future, his understanding was that the current footfall of the site at that time would be assessed to ensure suitable capacity of the site.

Chris Bowring queried whether the removal of trees would be considerable, or un-substantial. Stefan Fludger confirmed that only a small number of trees were proposed to be removed. The number of trees to be removed would be determined after the removal of rhododendron, to allow the footpaths to be routed around the trees thereby minimising the amount which would be required to be removed.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried what would happen should the site not be finished or maintained, queried whether any modelling had been carried out relating to increased footfall on site in terms of additional noise or litter which could affect neighbouring amenity, queried whether there was any parking standard for this type of use as there was a concern that should on-site parking spaces not be sufficient this could cause issues on the already busy Bearwood Road, and queried whether there would be adequate conditions and safeguards to ensure a high standard on maintenance on site. Stefan Fludger stated that the site was privately owned, and the applicant could decide not to finish the development and close the site to public use. Stefan confirmed that there had been no modelling related to increased footfall, however environmental health officers had raised no objections, and the site had been informally used as an open space for some time with pathways in a similar layout to what was proposed. Stefan stated that the highways officer had considered 18 car parking spaces to be acceptable for this site to be used as an informal recreational space. Relating to maintenance of the site, as the site was privately owned no maintenance plan relating to maintenance of the footpaths or car park surfacing had been submitted, however a long term maintenance plan relating to biodiversity and creating a biodiversity net-gain would be submitted.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether a maintenance plan for the upkeep of the site could be conditioned. Justin Turvey stated that this would be a reasonable condition.

Pauline Jorgensen queried whether making a decision to restrict cyclist and horse rider access for this application could prejudice a decision to allow those use types if a future application was submitted, for example for SANG use. Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor, confirmed that a decision relating to this tonight would not prejudice allowing the use in a future application.

Stephen Conway stated that Members had to assess the application as presented. Stephen added that neighbours may be able to challenge the loss of access to the site from their gardens outside of the planning process, should they wish. Stephen queried

whether the proposed kissing gates would allow all wheelchair and mobility vehicles access to the site, and suggested that the routing of the paths be agreed in consultation with the Chairman and a local Ward Member. Stefan Fludger stated that the kissing gates would allow access for all but the largest mobility vehicle users, which complied with British standards. Stefan added that Members could condition larger kissing gates to be installed, if they felt that this met the planning tests. Justin Turvey stated that pathway routing could be agreed in consultation with the Chairman, and another Member.

Angus Ross welcomed the principle of the proposals. Angus stated that the Royal Borough Fire and Rescue Service had not submitted a no-objection comments, but instead had issued no comment.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that a maintenance plan for the site be conditioned. This was seconded by Stephen Conway, carried, and added to the list of conditions.

Stephen Conway asked that it be minuted that the path routing condition be determined via the Chairman, in consultation with the Committee and a local Ward Member.

Angus Ross proposed an informative, asking that WBC continue to search for safe pedestrian access from Sindlesham to the proposed car park. This was seconded by Chris Bowring, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Stephen Conway proposed that the condition relating to the kissing gates be revised, to allow use of the gates by all mobility vehicles, including the largest sizes of these vehicles. This was seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh, carried, and the condition subsequently revised.

Pauline Jorgensen took no part in the vote, as she had missed part of the officer presentation.

RESOLVED That application number 203539 be approved, subject to conditions as set out in agenda pages 40 to 44, additional condition related to the requirement of a maintenance plan as resolved by the Committee, additional informative related to the continued search for safe access to the car park from Sindlesham as resolved by the Committee, and revised condition related to wider kissing gates to allow mobility vehicles of all sizes access to the site as resolved by the Committee.

6. APPLICATION NO 202065 - 54 - 58 READING ROAD. WOKINGHAM

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 34 no. retirement living apartments including communal facilities and associated car parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing 3 no. dwellings.

Applicant: McCarthy & Stone

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 89 to 170.

The Committee were advised that the updates within the supplementary planning agenda included context and clarification regarding condition 18.

Ian Hann, agent, spoke in support of the application. Ian stated that this application would support people in living healthy and happy lives within the Wokingham Borough. Ian added

that the NPPF was clear that it was critical for this type of housing to be provided and prioritised. Ian stated that that the Wokingham Borough was seeing growth of elderly persons, which was predicted to rise above the national average going forwards. Ian added that no objections had been received from residents or the Town Council, and English Heritage and highways officers had also raised no objections. Ian commented that the site was well located within a sustainable area, within easy walking distance to shops and amenity facilities, with good transport links including buses and trains. Ian stated that the proposals would generate around £500,000 per year in increased spending for the local economy, in addition to affordable housing contributions and CIL payments. Ian concluded by stating that the proposals would combat loneliness and isolation within the elderly community by releasing under-used family houses which would be replaced by high quality retirement living accommodation.

Bill Soane commented that the application only provided 32 car parking spaces for 34 units. Bill stated that whilst this was marketed as a retirement facility, many of the residents would still be of working age when living in this accommodation. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, stated that this type of accommodation typically had a lower provision of parking spaces than regular market flats, due to the restricted age of potential occupants. Judy added that the site was in a sustainable location, and there was precedent for completely car free developments within the area. Judy stated that, on balance and within the age restricted context, the proposals were considered acceptable given that parking space provision was only 6 spaces lower than for a market development and a travel plan was conditioned which could be reviewed when required.

Graham Vaughan, case officer, commented that the average age of occupancy for developments such as this was typically above the age of 55.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether there was a specific car parking standard which applied to this type of accommodation, queried what the realistic age of occupants could be at this development, queried whether affordable housing could have instead been provided on site, and sought clarification that vehicles going along the reading road towards Wokingham could not turn right in to the proposed development. Judy Kelly confirmed that the requirement for this development was to provide 15 resident car parking spaces and 3 visitor spaces, whereas this site would provide 32 spaces total. Regarding the turning query, Judy confirmed that there would only be provision for a left hand turn into the site, and there would be curbing to prevent a right hand turn in to the site which was picked up at the stage one road safety audit. Graham Vaughan stated that the average age of occupancy would realistically be in the middle of the 70 to 80 year old age bracket. Regarding the affordable housing, officers had negotiated a much higher off-site contribution than was originally offered, and on-site provision was not a priority as these units were for retired persons.

Gary Cowan commented that planning permission had previously been granted to a similar development with limited parking, and the site could not get enough occupants within the age bracket. When the applicant then requested to market the flats as regular market properties, there was no option to expand the parking allocation. Judy Kelly stated that the site mentioned had been taken into account when considering this application, and there was a precedent for car free accommodation within the area. Gary Cowan requested a condition for this development to return to the Committee should they wish to offer the units on the open market with an unrestricted age profile. Graham Vaughan stated that a future application could not be prevented, however should such an application be submitted officers would assess the proposals and could send the item to Committee.

Stephen Conway commented that it would be useful to find space for additional car parking provision on site, to avoid complications in future. Stephen raised some concerns in relation to the listed building adjacent to the proposed development site, and asked whether any additional soft landscaping could be provided to soften the impact of the development. Graham Vaughan stated that the proposals were of a single footprint to provide step free access to the entire site. The conservation officer had not objected to the proposals, but had highlighted some harm which was deemed less than substantial. The NPPF stated that the level of harm and the significance of a historic asset had to be balanced against the benefits and suitability of proposed development. Graham added that condition 16 provided assurances that soft landscaping and tree planting would be carried out along the site boundary to protect the character of the adjacent heritage asset.

Carl Doran commented that officers had worked hard to achieve a much larger affordable housing contribution than originally offered.

RESOLVED That application number 202065 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 90 to 99.

7. APPLICATION NO 203460 - FROG HALL, FROG HALL DRIVE, WOKINGHAM

Proposal: Full application for the erection of fencing and hardstanding to form a bin store to serve the existing flats (Retrospective).

Applicant: Ms Sarah Cleaver

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 171 to 188.

The Committee were advised that the updates within the supplementary planning agenda included:

- Amending the word impending with impeding on agenda page 171;
- A consultation response had been received from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) advising that the Fire Authority had no issues regarding access to the houses along the road that followed the boundary of Frog Hall.

David Rowland, neighbour, spoke in objection to the application. David stated that this was a retrospective application which restricted the access for neighbouring properties, as had been happening over decades. The restricted access caused issues with delivery vehicles, and David felt that the concerns of residents should have been considered prior to construction. David stated that the storage area did not have any drainage, and was in a full sun position which led to smells and odours. David was of the opinion that the storage was an eyesore, but not for the residents of the flats. David felt that a private company had built the storage in the cheapest and most convenient location with no planning consent or consultation. David commented that there was a suitable storage area on the other side of the car park area which was near drainage, in a shaded area, and on a site with previous planning permission for garages. David was of the understanding that this application would not have been allowed should it have gone through the planning permission process, and it should not be allowed retrospectively.

Carole Allam, resident, spoke in support of the application. Carole clarified that the alternative site proposed by neighbours was not owned by the applicant. Carole stated that

residents believed that permitted development allowed for the application to progress, but once it was clarified that planning permission was required the applicant progressed with a retrospective planning application as soon as possible. Carole added that the access to neighbouring properties by emergency vehicles and delivery drivers had been clarified within the officer report, and the Fire Authority had confirmed that they had no issues regarding access to neighbouring properties.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey read out a statement on behalf of Ward Member Maria Gee. Maria stated that the approval of this planning application rested on the arguments about access and safety for residents at the lower end of Froghall Drive. Maria drew the Committee's attention to the arguments presented by residents objecting to the application regarding restricted access to their homes, and the accessibility for emergency vehicles. Maria asked that the Committee satisfy itself that access was not impeded, particularly from a fire safety perspective.

Adriana Gonzales, case officer, stated that the RBFRS had confirmed that they had no objection to the application, and clarified that they had access towards the properties at the end of the carriageway.

Angus Ross stated that he had seen the site, and saw no reason to refuse the application.

Stephen Conway stated that Wokingham Borough Council's waste guidelines required a gate or door around refuse storage, and queried whether this was possible on this site. Adriana Gonzalez stated the development on site had to be considered as presented, which did not have an access door. The waste guidelines were only guidelines, and placing a door could result in highways and access issues for properties at the end of the carriageway.

Chris Bowring queried whether there was any evidence of bad smells or odours. Adriana Gonzalez stated that on her site visit, there was no evidence of bad smells or odours and all of the bins had lids on them.

Bill Soane queried why this bin storage area did not have a wash down and drainage area. Adriana Gonzalez stated that a pipe for washing the bin store had been installed to the rear of the fencing. Justin Turvey stated that there was no planning requirement for a drain to be present. In essence, the Committee was considering an application for a hard standing surface and fencing. Storage of the bins on site did not require planning permission.

RESOLVED That application number 203460 be approved, subject to condition and informative as set out on agenda page 172.

8. APPLICATION NO 210805 - "DOLPHIN SCHOOL", WALTHAM ROAD, HURST, WOKINGHAM, RG10 0FR

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a two storey building to create additional classrooms, toilets and library facilities, with associated roof terrace.

Applicant: Mr Adam Hurst

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 189 to 214.

The Committee were advised that the updates within the supplementary planning agenda included additional details from the applicant which would result in fewer pre-commencement conditions. As such, conditions 2 through 7 had been slightly amended.

Stephen Conway stated that there was the issue of the listed building setting and historic wall, however the proposals were very effectively screened.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey sought confirmation that an informative had been added which asked that sprinklers be installed on site. Adriana Gonzalez, case officer, confirmed that informative 4 sought the inclusion of sprinklers.

RESOLVED That application number 210805 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 190 to 193, and amended conditions 2 through 7 as set out in the supplementary planning agenda.

9. APPLICATION NO 210448 - 57 CHILTERN CRESCENT, EARLEY, WOKINGHAM
Andrew Mickleburgh declared a prejudicial interest in this item and took no part in the discussion or vote.

Proposal: Householder application for the proposed loft conversion to create habitable accommodation with rear dormer extension, hip to gable conversion and the installation of 2no. roof lights.

Applicant: Mr M Mand

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 215 to 228.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates within the supplementary planning agenda.

Tim Marsh, ACER Residents' Association, spoke in objection to the application. Tim stated that large dormers were appearing frequently in the locality, and all such dormers would have been refused if they were required to go for planning permission instead of permitted development. Tim stated that there was still a clear character in the area of having semi-detached hip-ended properties. Tim added that once a third storey was placed on top of the property with windows in this manner overlooking became an issue, as a traditional smaller dormer had its windows set much further back. Tim stated that the concern from residents was that overlooking would occur from looking directly down from the third floor of the property. Tim stated that CP3 made it clear that development should be appropriate for the area where it is located. The principles of the Borough Design Guide referred to CP3, stating that developments should respond appropriately to the existing character of the area and relate well to neighbours. Tim felt that these proposals did not comply with CP3 or the Borough Design Guide, and the application should be refused.

Shirley Boyt, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Shirley stated that Chiltern Crescent was characterised by semi-detached properties with hip-ended roofs. The Borough Design Guide stated that developments should maintain the rhythm of the street scene, which these proposals would not in Shirley's opinion. Shirley added that there were only two examples similar to the proposals in the area, which did nothing to enhance the street scene. Shirley felt that officers should look for exemplary examples of extensions rather than referring to poorly designed outliers. Shirley felt that a small partial

hip joint would not impinge on the floor area and would only have a minor impact on the dormer, and should have been considered instead of the proposals.

Carl Doran queried what measurements were taken when assessing the dormer as subservient, queried how much of the development could be carried out under permitted development, and queried why examples of poorer design which were carried out under permitted development were being used as examples to promote this application. Benjamin Hindle, case officer, stated that the gross volume of the proposals were in keeping with permitted development and followed the Borough Design Guide advice. This application could have been carried out under permitted development, if not for a previously agreed planning application of which this application relied on part of that roof structure. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that the Borough Design Guide was a guide, and there were legitimate circumstances to permit more than the guide allowed for. Justin added that if not for the previous side extension, this application could have been carried out under permitted development. Carl Doran felt that the views of the Town Council, local residents, and local Ward Members should be carefully considered when determining such applications.

Stephen Conway commented that there was a gradual erosion of the character of the area, and permitted development made it difficult to refuse planning applications which were of similar design to works carried out under permitted development rights.

RESOLVED That application number 210448 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 216 to 217.

10. APPLICATION 210378 - BUILDINGS 4 AND 5 MICROSOFT CAMPUS, THAMES VALLEY BUSINESS PARK

Proposal: Full application for proposed alterations to external areas to provide improved landscaping, outdoor gym, amenity and presentation areas, plus erection of refuse store and reconfiguration of car parking.

Applicant: BREO TVP4 LTD & BREO TVP5 LTD

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 229 to 248.

The Committee were advised that the updates within the supplementary planning agenda included amendment to condition 4.

Carl Doran commented that this application would be an upgrade to the existing business park, which would hopefully lead to the creation of additional jobs in the local area.

RESOLVED That application number 210378 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 230 to 233, and amended condition 4 as set out in the supplementary planning agenda.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH WELLBEING BOARD
HELD ON 10 JUNE 2021 FROM 5.00 PM TO 6.00 PM**

Present

Charles Margetts	Wokingham Borough Council
Debbie Milligan	NHS Berkshire West CGC
Philip Bell	Voluntary Sector
Carol Cammiss	Director, Children's Services
Nick Fellows	Voluntary Sector
John Halsall	Wokingham Borough Council
David Hare	Wokingham Borough Council
Graham Howe	Wokingham Borough Council
Susan Parsonage	Chief Executive
Matt Pope	Director, Adult Social Care & Health
Katie Summers	Director of Operations, Berkshire West CCG
Jim Stockley	Healthwatch

Also Present:

Madeleine Shopland	Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Narinder Brar	Community Safety Manager
Phil Cunnington	
Ingrid Slade	Public Health Consultant
Lewis Willing	Head of Health and Social Care Integration

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Charles Margetts be elected as Chairman of the Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board for the 2021-22 municipal year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Dr Debbie Milligan be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board for the 2021-22 municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Steve Moore, Meradin Peachey and Martin Sloan.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 11 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

At the request of the Chairman, Ingrid Slade provided an update on Covid surge testing. The case rate for Wokingham was 91.7. The South East rate had increased to 33 and the England rate had increased above 50. The rate was also rising in Reading, Bracknell Forest and Slough. The positivity rate was also rising locally.

Following the identification of Delta variation cases not associated with travel, surge testing was being undertaken in Bulmershe and Whitegates, Norreys, Wescott and Evendons of all those over 12 years old who lived, worked or attended secondary school, in these wards. There was a postcode checker available on the Council's website for people to identify if this applied to them.

The Board was reminded that the PCR tests should be taken even if the individual was fully vaccinated or undertaking regular lateral flow tests. The testing sites were listed on the Council's website. Door knocking was being undertaken in the relevant wards to advise and encourage people to get tested. Tests were being distributed to all schools and businesses in the area and support was being provided to vulnerable residents within the surge testing areas. Uptake so far had been good. It was noted that clear variant results would not be seen for at least 2 weeks.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

8. STRATEGY INTO ACTION

The Board considered the Strategy into Action update.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- The existing Wokingham Wellbeing strategy needed to be rolled forwards for a couple of months. The Board was asked to note the proposed Berkshire West Strategy.
- It was proposed that a series of workshops be held throughout the summer to work through each of the priorities in more detail to produce a plan for Wokingham going forward. It was intended that this plan be signed off in September.
- Ingrid Slade commented that the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy was a high-level strategy across all three local authorities which highlighted 5 key priorities. It had been in development since April 2019. For each priority current work relating to the priority would be identified. Specific local priorities under the overarching strategic priority and key partners would also be identified.
- Ingrid Slade outlined the development plan.
- Partnerships would take ownership of the delivery of the priorities and would report bi-monthly on their progress to the Wellbeing Board. It was anticipated that relevant stakeholders would be involved in the delivery.
- Councillor Hare was pleased to note the exploration of a universal approach for children, and the importance of that in Early Years. He was also pleased to note the preventative work.
- Katie Summers questioned whether an Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken. The vaccination programme had identified some issues regarding how individuals from deprived areas, different ethnicities, those from the Gypsy and Romany traveller community, and those with disabilities, were supported. Ingrid

Slade commented that tackling health inequality was at the heart of what they did and needed to be a focus when looking at all the priorities.

- Katie Summers indicated that she had done some work on what the overarching population gross would be. There was likely to be a population gap in the 21-49 year olds so there also needed to be a focus on workforce and how new workforce could be brought in and the strategy delivered.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the development plan for the Strategy into Action section of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy be reviewed and noted.
- 2) further input from Board members on this development plan be invited.
- 3) Board members be invited to participate in the workshops as part of the development of the Strategy into Action.
- 4) the plan of reporting against the Wellbeing Board Strategic priorities be noted.
- 5) the current draft of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy be noted.

9. WOKINGHAM INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP UPDATE AND END OF YEAR BCF REPORTING

The Board were updated on the Wokingham Integrated Partnership and end of year reporting.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- Each year there was a requirement to report to NHS England with regards to the Better Care Fund. The Annual Return had been submitted but had been much shorter as this year did not have a formal submitted BCF Plan.
- A plan had been agreed locally and a Section 75 had been completed to appropriately share the funds between the Council and the CCG.
- It was noted that the national conditions had been met, income and expenditure targets had been matched and the programme had not overspent.
- A comment on three statements from NHS England had been required.
- Whilst many Integration Boards had not been meeting as frequently during the pandemic, the WIP had increased the frequency of meetings.
- The WIP had disagreed with the comment that 'Our BCF schemes were implemented as planned in 2020/21'. A very full programme had been planned, which had not all been delivered due to the pandemic.
- Lewis Willing outlined the challenges including supporting choice during the pandemic.
- The Board noted some of the work that had been delivered in 2020/21 and work undertaken so far in 2021/22.
- The Integration Team continued to support the WIP with the response to Covid, including undertaking a pilot to support the Council's Contract Tracers to contact people from Cohorts 1-9 who had not been vaccinated yet, which had had some success, increasing the uptake in this group by 26% for one GP practice.
- Councillor Margetts questioned when the MIND Service was likely to launch and was informed that work had already begun with a couple of practices so it was likely

to be the end of June/early July. Staff were currently going through their induction process.

RESOLVED: That the Wokingham Integrated Partnership Update and end of year BCF reporting be noted.

10. DRAFT WOKINGHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021-2024

The Board received the Draft Wokingham Community Safety Strategy 2021-24.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- The current Community Safety Strategy was due to finish at the end of June. The Community Safety Partnership had a statutory duty to produce a Strategy for the Borough which looked at all of the crime and disorder issues and how the key issues would be tackled, including anti social behaviour, drug and alcohol issues and domestic abuse.
- The Partnership had reviewed the available data considered by the different partners across the last 5 years and established the key priorities.
- The Board noted the three strategic themes; Listening to the needs and concerns of local residents and taking action; Intervening early and preventing issues escalating and; Working together to protect vulnerable residents.
- It was noted that different neighbourhoods had different needs and would potentially require different responses.
- Narinder Brar went on to outline the specific aims of the Strategy.
- Covid 19 had produced an exceptional set of circumstances and challenges. It had also resulted in dramatically changing and unusual trends. Notable trends had included a fall in burglary and vehicle crime offences and a rise in domestic violence and anti-social behaviour in residential estates and parks and green spaces. This would continue to be monitored.
- A good response had been received to the consultation on the Strategy.
- Councillor Margetts asked whether the amount of domestic abuses services and funding open to women would be the same or greater under the new contract. Narinder Brar indicated that due to an increased investment as a local authority the proportion available in terms of service amounts would have increased across the Borough. There would be a greater opportunity to respond to need.
- Katie Summers asked there had been a surge in the reporting of incidents following Covid. Narinder Brar stated that whilst it had been anticipated, there had not been a big increase in reporting. There had been a slight drop in the number of incidents reported to the Police. However, the level of service use remained consistent.
- Katie Summers asked if primary care was seeing an increase in those presenting with community safety and domestic abuse issues. Dr Milligan responded that early in the pandemic an increase in child abuse had been seen. She commented that sometimes adults found it difficult to view themselves as victims. There needed to be education and information available about accessing the relevant services, in the different communities. Narinder Brar indicated that the Domestic Abuse Act had come into force, bringing about a new definition of domestic abuse. Funding would allow an increase in communication, in different languages and different places. Covid had enabled the reassessment of social media platforms and accessing people via these means. Across Thames Valley training had been undertaken in supermarkets and pharmacies about recognising signs of abuse and safe spaces. Training and information would also be rolled out to hairdressers.

- Dr Milligan asked whether information from CAB was being used to better hear people's views. She was informed that during the first lockdown more information was being received from people who had phoned CAB on a different matter and had also revealed on the call that they were not in a safe position.
- Phil Cunnington requested whether a simple feedback summary could be provided to Neighbourhood Association Groups who had provided information regarding residents' concerns. This would help to reinforce the feeling of engagement.
- Councillor Halsall thanked the Officers for their hard work and outlined some of the improvements that had taken place in the community safety area.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Wokingham Community Safety Strategy 2021-24 be noted.

11. ANNUAL REPORT WOKINGHAM BOROUGH WELLBEING BOARD 2020-2021

The Board considered the Annual Report Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board 2020-21.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the annual Wellbeing Board report and achievements for 2020/21 be reviewed.
- 2) the establishment of the three Wellbeing Board Action Groups who will be support the Board to identify the ongoing priorities for 2021/22, be noted.
- 3) the report be recommended to Council to note.

12. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Board considered the forward programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

Board members were reminded of the informal workshops that would be held across the summer.

RESOLVED: The forward programme be noted.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Alison Swaddle (Chairman), Jackie Rance (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Jenny Cheng, Carl Doran, Michael Firmager, Clive Jones, Adrian Mather, Tahir Maher and Norman Jorgensen (substituting Barrie Patman)

Others Present

Jim Stockley, Healthwatch Wokingham Borough

Anne Chadwick

Morag Malvern

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Ingrid Slade, Public Health Consultant

Andy Fitton, Assistant Director of Joint Commissioning, NHS Berkshire West CCG

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Barrie Patman.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Cheng declared a Personal Interest in item 6 Updates on mental health support for vulnerable communities in Wokingham on the grounds that she was the Council's representative on Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Board of Governors.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. UPDATES ON MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN WOKINGHAM

Ingrid Slade, Consultant in Public Health and Andy Fitton, Assistant Director of Joint Commissioning, NHS Berkshire West CCG, provided an update on mental health support for vulnerable communities in Wokingham.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had submitted a number of questions previously around mental health and wellbeing.
- Nearly half of all mental health issues experienced in adulthood would have begun by the age of 15 and three quarters by the age of 18. Poor mental health in young people could impact on their life chances in the future.
- Ingrid Slade outlined the impact of Covid on the population mental health. The impact of Covid was still largely unknown. A significant negative impact on children and young people's emotional wellbeing was likely. Whilst there had been some research regarding the additional benefits of being at home with both parents, the

impact of missed education, social interaction and lockdown, meant that the impact was likely to be largely negative.

- There had been a self-reported survey published by Public Health England which had shown that health and wellbeing had worsened since the beginning of the pandemic and that there was high levels of anxiety and lower level of happiness following the first lockdown, which had endured. It was likely that trends in Wokingham would be similar.
- The Public Health team would be publishing a local mental health needs assessment which would cover the whole of the life course, by the end of the year, to help plan future services.
- Current services for children and young people included:
 - CAMHS Service (including the Berkshire Eating Disorder Service (BEDS). This was commissioned by the CCG and delivered by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT)
 - Mental Health Support Team (MHST) project for secondary schools.
 - A new 'Tier 2' offer to support emotional health and wellbeing in children and young people – jointly commissioned by the Council and the CCG and delivered by BHFT.
- Andy Fitton referred to specialist services for children and young people with an escalated condition, often around anxiety and depression.
- The mental health referrals into the Common Point of Entry (CPE) for Berkshire West had been affected by lockdown, from a low of 42 to a high of 336. Much of this related to lock down and access to professionals. Also, early in the pandemic, many people had withdrawn from accessing even primary care. Whilst numbers had reduced over the last few months it was not back down to the very low level.
- Andy Fitton highlighted the current number of those waiting for the Specialist CAMHS team and also the Anxiety and Depression team and the current wait times. Members asked if it was possible to have a break down of those receiving treatment in Wokingham. Andy Fitton agreed to feed back to the Committee.
- The BEDS team, the eating disorder team for those aged 8 to 18, had been established following a national drive to have a specific clinical input into this service. Numbers and the complexity of presentations had risen following the pandemic, which was in line with the national position. Both regionally and nationally, more children were requiring an inpatient service.
- Andy Fitton provided an overview of the Tier 2 service. A rethought and reshaped emotional wellbeing model had been redeveloped for children with mild to moderate mental health issues. It was a mixture of assessment and direct intervention, as well as training and support to providers such as schools.
- An Emotional Health Assessment and Triage Service (Emotional Wellbeing Hub) was being established that would act as the front door locally.
- Funding had been awarded a year and a half before, to set up the first Wokingham Mental Health Support team. It was a dedicated team supporting a cohort of schools totalling approximately 8,000 pupils, both secondary and primary. The team would include a range of specialists such as a Senior Educational Psychologist and a Senior Specialist CAMHS Practitioner, in addition to those trained via Reading University to become Educational Mental Health Practitioners. They would support and engage and provide direct intervention to children, particularly around anxiety and depression. Wokingham would require a minimum of three teams within 10 years. Given the level of housing development within the Borough it was possible that a fourth team would be required in the future. Work would continue with NHS England and when funding became available more teams would be established.

- Ingrid Slade referred to anxiety and depression data. The Committee has asked previously if prevalence data suggested issues amongst particular groups or not.
- Data around under 18's mental health disorders was unfortunately limited.
- Ingrid Slade referred to the Mental Health of Children and Young People in England survey which had been carried out in 2017. The survey had concluded that approximately 11.2% of 5-15 year olds had a mental health disorder (in its broadest terms). This would equate to around 3500 in Wokingham. The Survey had also found that at that time in 11-16 year olds, boys and girls were equally likely to have a mental health disorder. Nationally around 1 in 7 11-16 year olds had a mental health disorder. 1 in 6 17-19 year olds had a mental health disorder but females in this age bracket were twice as likely to have a mental health disorder.
- The data provided did not include those who had not been reported via primary care. It was possible that young men were more reluctant to present to their GP.
- There was an increase in anxiety and depression by age. An increase in diagnosis was expected in the following months as a result of Covid.
- The Committee had previously questioned what the current and planned activities were with regards to suicide prevention.
- Ingrid Slade indicated that this was an important part of the Public Health Team's efforts to promote good mental health and wellbeing. It was part of the multi-agency Berkshire Suicide Prevention Group which collaborated on surveillance initiatives to combat suicide.
- Overall suicide rates in Wokingham and neighbouring boroughs had not changed following Covid. Across Berkshire 61 suicides had been reported in 2020, 9 of which had been Wokingham residents and of these, 2 had been under 18.
- The Berkshire Suicide Prevention Group had looked at the surveillance data and a small spike in female suicides had been noted. A subgroup had been formed to look into this and had found that there was an over representation of health and social care workers and other supporting front line roles. BHFT was looking at how support could be improved for staff at times of high service level and demand.
- Andy Fitton provided an update on Willow House, the inpatient facility run by BHFT and commissioned by NHS England. Willow House used to be an inpatient facility for those aged 12-18 years old with severe mental health needs. It had been based in Wokingham Hospital. Since March 2021 it had been replaced by a new community based service. Members were informed that the new service could treat more young people at the same time. An inpatient facility would still be available for those that needed it.
- In response to a Member question regarding bids for further MHST's, Andy Fitton stated that Wokingham would not be getting further teams in the near future but they would continue to advocate for the area. NHS England asked that a bid be put together to think about where resource would next be put for the MHSTs across the Integrated Care System and where resource could best meet the need.
- Members asked about early results from the Mental Health Support Teams. Andy Fitton stated that they had only been running 6 months, so it was encouraging that 67 young people had already been referred to the service for support. Evidence based tools were being used so a scale of change would be expected. Work was also being done to support parents so that they had a better understanding of the issues that their child was facing. Members questioned whether people often came back to the service and were informed that it depended on the individual.
- A Member asked about whether anecdotal evidence suggested that eating disorders were increasing amongst boys and girls. Andy Fitton commented that historically there was a higher referral rate of females. Whilst numbers were

increasing, he did not believe that the proportionality was changing. He agreed to check this and feed back to the Committee.

- CAMHS waiting times were discussed. Members asked how those waiting were supported as they waited and what was being done to further reduce waiting lists. Andy Fitton commented that there would be increased investment in CAMHS over the next 3 years and support being offered, was being looked at.
- With regards to the Common Point of Entry, a Member questioned how many patients were currently receiving the service, and was referred to the case load figures for the Specialist CAMHS team (477 at the end of March in Berkshire West) and the Anxiety and Depression team (279 at the end of March for Berkshire West). In addition, some were going through specialist assessments. Andy Fitton agreed to provide the Committee with discharge figures – not all those referred via the CPE would need to be referred to specialist CAMHS services.
- A Member referred to the increased development in the Borough and the likelihood of a fourth MHST being required in the future. Andy Fitton emphasised that the single indicator used for the MHSTs was approximately 1 per 8,000 pupils.
- In response to a Member question, Andy Fitton clarified that funding for the MHST was guaranteed for a least 3 years. Not all posts within the team were full time.
- The Committee sought clarification as to why there had been a spike in suicides in health and social care and other front-line workers. Ingrid Slade stated that these were often high stress jobs and the impact of Covid was still being seen.
- A Member asked whether the Council had had an input into the decision around Willow House and was informed that the decision had been taken by NHS England and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. The outcome of this decision would take some time to be fully seen.

RESOLVED: That the updates on mental health support for vulnerable communities in Wokingham, be noted.

7. UPDATE ON ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRIORITIES

This item was deferred.

8. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF HEALTHWATCH WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

Jim Stockley provided an update on the work of Healthwatch Wokingham.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made;

- He referred to the insight into action report and referred to the emphasis on the information on vaccinations and services, provided to residents.
- Some residents continued to have issues accessing dental appointments, although some dental practices had started to offer more appointments in the evenings and weekends.
- Healthwatch continued to take calls and signpost to services. The team had helped at an event at the Aisha Mosque, highlighting available services to residents.
- The Carer's experience during Covid report was being finalised.
- Healthwatch Wokingham continued to look for a further Non-Executive Director.
- Jim Stockley indicated that he was the Chair of More Arts and referred to the importance of the arts in improving mental health and wellbeing.
- A Member referred to the case studies highlighted within the insight into action report and asked how Healthwatch made sure that they did not happen again. Jim Stockley commented that they would approach the service providers to raise concern and could also highlight issues to organisations such as the CQC.

- Members praised Healthwatch Wokingham's good work during the pandemic and noted its increased online reach.
- A Member referred to a case study relating to Do Not Resuscitate. He questioned whether Healthwatch would support a communication piece on this, and was informed that they would.
- In response to a question as to whether Healthwatch had received information from residents seeking face to face GP appointments but who had been given phone or video appointments, Jim Stockley agreed to feed back to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the update on the work of Healthwatch Wokingham be noted.

9. HEALTH SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS ACROSS BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE AND BERKSHIRE WEST INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM

This item was deferred.

10. FORWARD PROGRAMME 2021-22

The Committee considered the forward programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- The items on the Adult Social Care priorities and the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been deferred to the July meeting.
- The Chairman requested that the Adult Social Care KPIs be a standing item going forwards.
- The Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had referred the matter of public toilet provision across the Borough. This was scheduled for the September meeting.
- Members requested an update from the Royal Berkshire Hospital regarding its remodelling proposals. It was suggested that this be scheduled for November.
- A Member requested that David Birch from Optalis be invited to speak to the Committee regarding forthcoming changes to Optalis, at the Committee's September meeting.
- A Member indicated that he would like a briefing on the ambulance service, having received concerns from residents regarding operational efficiency. It was suggested that this be tabled for the Committee's January meeting.
- A Member stated that it was important to keep apprised of items of interest on the other BOB health overview and scrutiny committees' agendas.
- It was agreed that an update on GP practice provision be scheduled for November and an update on dentistry be scheduled for September.

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.09 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons (Chairman), Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Rachel Burgess, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Guy Grandison, Norman Jorgensen, Sarah Kerr, Rebecca Margetts, Jackie Rance and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: John Halsall and Gregor Murray

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Rhian Hayes, Interim Assistant Director Housing and Place
Will Roper, Customer Insight Analyst and Performance Manager
Diana Tovar, Climate Emergency Manager

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. QUARTER 4 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 11 to 52, which gave details of Council performance during Quarter 4 of 2020/21 (January to March 2021).

Will Roper, Customer Insight Analyst and Performance Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report stated that each quarter of 2020/21 had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the significant impacts of Covid-19 and the Council's focus on response and recovery, performance at the end of Quarter 4 remained positive across the majority of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). 80% of KPIs reported achieved the target (Green) or were near target (Amber). Only six KPIs were reported Red at the end of the quarter.

In order to focus the report on key issues a summary page was included for each department setting out the top three wins over the quarter, the top three opportunities and the key challenges.

The report stated that, over the 2020/21 Municipal Year:

- 37 KPIs had improved performance;
- 8 KPIs had maintained performance;
- 11 KPIs performed worse at the end of the year;
- 5 KPIs had no direction of travel (not available);
- 3 KPIs were awaiting data (pending).

Appended to the report was a detailed breakdown of the KPIs for each department, including service narrative and direction of travel.

During the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

CIC 16 – Stage 1 complaints per 100k population - provides data on Stage 1 complaints. Can Members see data on Stage 2 and Ombudsman complaints?

CIC 8 – number of fly tipping incidents – fly tipping has increased substantially in recent years – the target does not indicate a route to previous levels. Can the target plot a path back to fly tipping levels from three years ago? Should this be a Green RAG status?

CIC9 – Number of resident subscribers to Wokingham Borough Connect – needs a SMART target.

CIC10 – WBC social media impressions engagement and followers – needs a SMART target.

CS2 - % of child protection visits completed within 10 days – 10 day target is non-statutory – does this KPI focus on speed, impact or quality?

CS5 – % of former care leavers (up to age 21) in Education, Employment or Training - should the KPI refer to care leavers up to the age of 25? What is the basis for this KPI?

PG15 – Proportion of adults who do any walking or cycling, for any purpose, at least once per week - what is the relevance of this data? Are we reporting on people who walk for leisure rather than people who walk instead of travelling by car? This is a national indicator – can we provide data for the Borough?

PG16 – enabling sustainable travel: length of greenways and cycleways delivered - again this records leisure travel. Can we find a measure that records modal shift from car journeys to cycling?

PG22 – Carbon Footprint of Wokingham Borough. Could we see the carbon reduction target broken down annually over the next nine years to enable clarity on progress up to 2030?

PG25 – Carbon offsetting for Wokingham Borough – this refers to offsetting. This should be sequestration.

PG26 – Air Quality – the data should reflect the average of all the air monitors rather than a single monitor.

PG3 – PG4 – how are these targets set? Are they SMART Targets?

PG3 – Local Plan Update - bearing in mind the lack of progress on the Local Plan Update, should this be Green?

PG8 – Planning applications are higher. Can we see a breakdown of different types, e.g. new houses v house extensions?

RA5a – % of successful homeless preventions - what is the impact of the Government ban on evictions?

Emerging Planning Reform which is unclear as to how it will affect the Council's ability to retain control of local development post 2024 – the Queen's Speech gave some indication on the shape of the planning reforms.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Will Roper be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions on the Performance Management report for Q4 2020/21;
- 2) further responses be circulated on the specific KPI issues raised by Members;
- 3) a further report be submitted on proposals to make the performance reports more effective and timely, including an explanation on the process for setting targets and Red/Amber/Green (RAG) thresholds.

7. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN - HIGHLIGHT REPORT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 11 to 52, which gave details of progress relating to the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) for the period January to March 2021.

Gregor Murray, Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions attended the meeting to answer Member questions. Rhian Hayes, Interim Assistant Director Housing and Place and Diana Tovar, Climate Emergency Manager also attended the meeting.

Gregor Murray addressed the Committee and gave details of progress against key targets in the CEAP, as follows:

- Over £1.5m in additional funding, e.g. Active Travel, Defra, Salix (Energy Efficiency), Woodland Trust (tree planting).
- Commencement of work on two Park and Ride sites.
- EV Charging Strategy Survey informing work on a new strategy.
- Defra funding from Air Quality Action Fund (WBC officer).
- Joined air quality project run by Reading University.
- Planning application submitted for solar farm in Barkham.
- Established the Climate Emergency Fund (first meeting to be held shortly).
- Eco funding had led to improvements at 428 homes (cavity wall/loft insulation).
- Retrofitted schools across the Borough, e.g. added solar PV to Addington school.
- Full retrofit for home in Riseley as a pilot.
- Work started on new Waste Strategy.
- Climate Emergency drop in session for Town and Parish Councils.

- Climate conversations with local businesses.

In the ensuing discussion Members raised the following points.

Park and Ride Projects – were the Park and Ride projects leading to the redistribution of existing traffic rather than traffic reduction?

If vehicles used the new Park and Ride in Norreys, what would be the impact on car parking in the town centre? Would there be a town centre parking review as a result?

Gregor Murray stated that Highways questions would be submitted to the WBC Highways team for a detailed response. In relation to behaviour change the Council needed to understand the reasons for local journeys across the Borough and develop alternative solutions. Park and Ride was one of these options.

There was a lot of engagement going on with local communities and schools. How were businesses being engaged? Gregor gave details of the Climate Conversations with local businesses. It was clear that many businesses were working on sustainability initiatives. WBC could play a role in supporting these initiatives, thereby helping businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. The aim was to speak to all businesses in the Borough during 2021/22.

The Council had delivered a significant increase in recycling over the past year. What work was taking place to deliver further improvements? Gregor commented that more work was needed to reach the 70% recycling target. It was also important to focus on reducing the amount of waste generated through a focus on reduce, reuse, recycle. Re3 would be a key partner in this process.

When would work start on the Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride? The impact of the pandemic over the past year (reduced traffic) should have provided a good opportunity to progress the park and ride. Gregor confirmed that this point would be referred to the Highways team for a response.

The report provided a lot of information on specific initiatives. However, it did not provide details of the carbon reduction arising. Nor did it set out the magnitude of carbon reduction from each initiative, so it was difficult to assess overall progress against the 2030 target. As an example, the stalling of the Green Bank project resulted in a significant gap in the CEAP. Gregor commented that the Government data used to measure progress was published two years in arrears. Big projects in the CEAP also took time to come on line and start to deliver carbon savings. Gregor would meet with officers to consider specific comments on the CEAP including any double-counting issues. The annual update on the CEAP would be submitted to Council in July. This would include greater detail on specific targets and the level of carbon reduction arising.

AS reported in the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group's reports, there was a significant gap between the CEAP and the Net Zero target. Furthermore, the assumptions in the CEAP on the impact of national policy meant that 24% of the Borough's emissions did not have any mitigation assigned to them. What measures were being assigned to these emissions? Gregor stated that further details would be included when projects began to deliver carbon reductions. Gregor confirmed that there was a significant gap in the CEAP, but this reflected its status as a living document. The situation would continue

to change as the CEAP rolled forwards to 2030. Changes in national policy would bring significant carbon reductions which benefitted the Borough.

What was the latest position relating to local deliberative processes? Gregor commented that research had been carried out into a wide range of potential processes from climate assemblies to focus groups and online forums. A report would be submitted to the Executive with a business case for adopting a specific process. Gregor was happy to bring the report to the Management Committee before it went to the Executive. This was consistent with a recommendation from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group.

The impact of the Barkham solar farm would be to save 1% of the Borough's carbon footprint, so was it worth building? Gregor commented that the solar farm was a useful project as it would deliver green energy for the Borough and would demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackle the Climate Emergency.

As discussed earlier, the KPIs relating to Climate Emergency needed to provide more clarity on the current position of individual projects. Gregor confirmed that he would be happy to talk to Members about any of the KPIs relating to Climate Emergency.

In relation to the new green recycling sacks, the sacks could not cope with large cardboard boxes. This resulted in more cardboard being taken to supermarket recycling sites – with additional car journeys. What was being done to ensure that large cardboard pieces could be collected at the kerbside? Gregor commented that the Council would collect large items, including large cardboard boxes by appointment.

Motion 420 to Council (September 2019) related to a strategy to deliver lower transport emissions. This included emission of carbon, carbon monoxide, particulates and nitrogen oxides. The CEAP update referred to a Low Carbon Transport Strategy. Was this consistent with the original Council Motion? Gregor commented that the Motion agreed by Council had led to the development of this strategy, which would be submitted to the Council shortly.

Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) Fund – what progress was there in relation to a partnership bid with local bus operators and other stakeholders?

Increasing the uptake of cycling from local businesses by promoting the Love to Ride programme – was this comparing data from 2020 or 2019? Can metric measurement be used in future? Are these new cyclists or existing cyclists? What proportion of journeys relate to the switch from cars to cycling?

Completion of the Cross-Berkshire Cycle Route – the A329 cycle route is a poor scheme and is not complete. It is not suitable for inexperienced cyclists.

London Road Corridor – adaptive traffic management corridor. What carbon savings were identified in the March 2021 report? What is the forecast future saving as increasing network capacity has increased?

Speed management programme – why was the RAG Green when Phase 2 had not been finished and the A/B Road report had not been published? Gregor stated that the Highways queries would be submitted to the Highways team for comment.

Local deliberative processes – would the evaluation of deliberative processes be submitted to the Management Committee in line with the Task and Finish Group recommendation? Gregor confirmed that this would happen.

What progress was there in putting solar PV on all WBC buildings? Gregor stated that WBC had committed to putting solar PV on schools and work was under way to assess the suitability of rooftops, which had to be strong enough to support the equipment. Safety was the number one priority. Officers could confirm progress relating to specific schools.

What facilities were situated at 12 Rectory Road and 75 London Road? Gregor confirmed that 12 Rectory Road hosted a community contact support centre. 75 London Road was a social housing project.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Gregor Murray, Rhian Hayes and Diana Tovar be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;
- 2) further responses be circulated to the specific issues raised by Members;
- 3) progress on the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan be noted;
- 4) a further progress report be submitted to the Committee at its meeting in October 2021.

8. CLIMATE EMERGENCY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT 2021

The Committee considered the 2021 report of the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group, as set out at Agenda pages 125 to 166.

The Task and Finish Group had focussed on transport, homes, renewable energy and behaviour change. The Group's proposed 2021 recommendations to the Council's Executive were:

Transport

- i) Ensure that the transport hierarchy set out in the Group's report is embedded into all highways and development planning and decisions. This includes ensuring that the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) and all subsequent iterations of the LTP are consistent with the CEAP and reflect the proposed transport hierarchy. Different highways teams must work collaboratively on this basis.
- ii) Review the road building proposals and measures for tackling congestion in the Medium Term Financial Plan (2021-24) to ensure that they are consistent with the CEAP and the transport hierarchy set out in the report and do not generate induced demand.
- iii) Undertake a Borough-wide Journey Needs Assessment, including consultation with key stakeholders, and use it to assess the viability of "green" transport options. In addition to walking, cycling and public transport, options should include electric bikes and scooters, autonomous guided pods (similar to the Heathrow Pod system), electric taxis and electric "last mile" delivery fulfilment.

- iv) Review and adjust the CEAP targets to reflect the Government's announcement that the sale of new petrol/diesel cars and vans will end in 2030. Alongside this, develop a communication campaign and series of events to normalise the use of electric vehicles (EVs), linking with the strategy to provide the necessary EV charging infrastructure (this will include working with vendors).
- v) Ensure that the Bus Service Improvement Plan reflects the Group's recommended transport hierarchy, identifies barriers to increased bus usage (including affordability) and addresses the following issues:
 - Improving access to bus services through additional/enhanced routes;
 - Increasing public awareness through improved advertising, enhanced bus shelters with digital displays and greater connectivity with train services;
 - Pilot schemes for subsidised fares on specific routes to generate data on impact, cost and customer satisfaction.
- vi) Review the approved plans for the South Wokingham Distributor Road and ensure that this and future road schemes (including schemes currently in the design phase) provide safe cycle routes, segregated from both road traffic and pedestrians, in line with the recommendations in LTN1/20.
- vii) Use planning powers and funding opportunities to encourage the maximum roll-out of home, workplace, community-based (e.g. supermarkets) and on-street EV charging points across the Borough.
- viii) Explore the potential for introducing clean air zones at Twyford crossroads and Wokingham town centre in order to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions.

Homes

- i) Following the scrapping of the Government's Green Home Grant scheme and the Council's Green Bank scheme, urgently consider any new measures to address the additional carbon and funding gap that this creates for the CEAP.
- ii) Introduce a Supplementary Planning Document linked to the current Local Plan to ensure that, whilst we wait for the new Local Plan Update to be completed, any new homes are built as close to carbon neutral as possible.
- iii) Engage proactively and work together with housing developers, planning to build in the Borough, to clarify the Council's position on Climate Emergency and explain the planning and building control requirements arising out of the CEAP.
- iv) Develop a Retrofit Strategy for the Borough. Consider a pilot Energiesprong (or similar) retrofit scheme in order to assess deliverability, generate performance data and customer satisfaction feedback.
- v) Recognise the barriers to "greener" homes and tackle the skills gap by developing a skilled workforce in liaison with colleges/universities and other partners. This will include use of the WBC housing companies to "pump-prime" training opportunities and skills development for local workers and businesses.

- vi) Use the Council's housing companies to showcase the highest standards of energy efficiency in any future developments. These standards may surpass standards set in the new Local Plan.

Renewable Energy

- i) Confirm that net WBC income generated from solar farms and other renewable energy schemes will be reinvested in the Borough via the CEAP.
- ii) Recognise the importance of decentralised power generation (on individual properties) and dual use sites (such as car parks) and work with partners to develop a strategy which enables the uptake of renewable energy opportunities across the Borough for all domestic and private properties.
- iii) Work with partners to deliver a Borough-wide campaign to improve energy efficiency knowledge and behaviour in every household and business.
- iv) Confirm that renewable initiatives will fully consider the impact on biodiversity.

Behaviour Change

- i) Adopt behaviour change science as a golden thread throughout the whole CEAP, rather than a stand-alone action, to ensure that for every action, consideration is given as to how we will help enable people to adapt.
- ii) Recognise that lack of familiarity with new technology is a significant barrier to take-up and tackle this through short-term displays in empty shops (or pop-up facilities) in town centres and community locations. The displays to include workshops and demonstrations. Recruit, develop and support community champions to engage with local communities.
- iii) Submit the findings of the evaluation of potential deliberative processes to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for evaluation and scrutiny prior to implementation. Publish updates and incorporate findings from the chosen deliberative process into the annual CEAP update.

Other Priorities

- i) Provide regular training for Members, staff and partners to enable them to support the targets in the CEAP. Ensure integration between departments and that Climate Emergency awareness is embedded into every service and key decision.
- ii) As part of the annual service/budget planning process, carry out reviews to ensure that policy, spending and functions align with the CEAP, identify any contradictions, then implement mitigation plans.
- iii) Develop project and financial appraisal systems that include CO2 emissions and climate impacts.
- iv) Review the following CEAP projections and targets:

- the projected future reduction in CO2 from national initiatives (currently based on carrying forward historic rates of CO2 reduction) to reflect projections from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS);
- the CO2 savings associated with CEAP target 17 (20% of all homes to be retrofitted by 2030) as the funding for this work is uncertain;
- the relationship between CEAP targets 2, 3 and 4 – reduction in private car and van use (targets 3 and 4) will require far more than the proposed doubling of public transport use (target 2).

The Committee considered the recommendations and agreed the following changes:

Transport – recommendation vi) be amended to read:

“Review plans for future road schemes (including schemes currently in the design phase) to ensure the provision of safe cycle routes in line with the recommendations in LTN1/20”.

Note: Sarah Kerr requested that her opposition to this amendment be recorded in the Minutes.

The Task and Finish Group report state that the “initial” Climate Emergency Action Plan was published in January 2020.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group report, as amended, be submitted to the Council’s Executive for consideration;
- 2) the evaluation report on deliberative processes be submitted to the July 2021 meeting of the Management Committee, prior to consideration by the Executive;
- 3) the Committee monitor the implementation of the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations during 2021/22.

9. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 167 to 171, which set out the items for inclusion in the Committee’s work programme for 2021/22, as agreed at the meeting on 23 March 2021.

Members considered the list of items and made an initial allocation to the forthcoming meetings in 2021/22, as follows:

7 July 2021:

- Discussions with the Council Leader and Chief Executive on Council priorities for 2021/22;
- Evaluation of potential Climate Emergency Deliberative Processes;
- Quarterly Performance Management reports – options for improvement;
- WBC Waste Strategy;
- Establishment of the Tree and Biodiversity Protection Task and Finish Group (report by November 2021).

20 September 2021:

- WBC Response to the Covid-19 pandemic – Recovery Plan, Green Recovery and co-produced Anti-Poverty Strategy;
- Q1 2021/22 Performance Management report;
- WBC Website improvement plan and improvement plans for service delivery channels and customer service.

18 October 2021:

- Climate Emergency Action Plan Update;
- Local Plan Update and Five Year Land Supply;
- Delivery of Affordable Housing across the Borough.

17 November 2021:

- Unauthorised Traveller Encampments and delivery of transit sites;
- Emerging WBC Tree Strategy;
- WBC Continuous Improvement Programme;
- Q2 2021/22 Performance Management Report.

11 January 2022:

- WBC compliance with the Equality Act – WBC Equality Plan;
- Consultation on O&S Work Programmes for 2022/23.

23 February 2022:

- Air Quality management (joint item with HOSC);
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

17 March 2022:

- Confirmation of O&S Work Programmes for 2022/23;
- Progress against actions agreed in Council Motions;
- Approval of the annual O&S reports to Council;
- O&S Member training programme for 2022/23.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the initial allocation of items to the Committee's 2021/22 meetings be approved;
- 2) further items be added to the work programme, as necessary, during the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

10. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION FORWARD PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme and Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programme, as set out on Agenda pages 173 to 180.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Executive and Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programmes be noted;
- 2) clarification be sought on the emerging WBC Procurement Strategy.

11. ACTION TRACKER REPORT

The Committee considered the Action Tracker report, set out at Agenda pages 181 to 182.

RESOLVED: That the Action Tracker report be noted.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.28 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Prue Bray, Anne Chadwick, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Norman Jorgensen (Chairman), Rebecca Margetts (Vice-Chairman), Andrew Mickleburgh, Morag Malvern and Jackie Rance

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Graham Howe

Officers Present

Sudeshna Banerjee, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact
Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services
Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools
Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help
Jo Jolly, Acting Service Manager Children's Services Programme Implementation
Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director Learning Achievement and Partnerships

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Bray suggested that an effort be made to fill the parent governor representative vacancies on the Committee. The Chairman agreed to write to Chairs of Governors in an attempt to fill the vacancies.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was submitted from Councillor Bray on the basis that she was a Governor for the Forest School.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 March were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

Councillor Mickleburgh made the following comments:

- He asked for an update on permanent exclusions data;
- He asked that a report on the effect of the pandemic on children's development, including the national picture, be brought to the Committee when this information becomes available; and
- He asked for an update on the Committee's request to influence new policies and strategies through pre-scrutiny of draft proposals relating to Children's Services.

Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director for Learning and Partnerships agreed to circulate information about permanent exclusions. He stated that the data/analysis relating to the impact of the pandemic on children was not yet available. However, he would provide a report when possible.

Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services stated that draft policies would be added to the forward plan, as agreed with the Chairman.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help and Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director for Learning and Partnerships presented the report.

Adam Davis stated that during the pandemic the service had to adapt to continue the delivery of its statutory duties. He highlighted the following:

- Front door contacts continued to be reviewed throughout the year, there was an increase in activity (7%) in March. However, the total number of referrals and the number of Looked After Children (LAC) remained relatively stable;
- The service provided to Children In Care (CIC) and Care Leavers had continued as it had been prior to the pandemic;
- The Fostering Team provided support to foster carers through various initiatives, as listed in the report;
- Bridges, the respite and residential care for children with disabilities remained opened, with reduced capacity and adjustments;
- The Early Help service, which is not statutory, continued to provide support to families via telephone and online communication during the pandemic;
- Supervised contact with birth parents for LAC was sustained during the pandemic. A new contact centre for LAC in the town centre had recently opened.

Sal Thirlway highlighted the following:

- The service continued to provide support to schools and early years settings, including guiding them through the new legislation;
- Weekly meetings were held with headteachers and senior leaders to provide advice and guidance and share experience;
- Additional guidance was provided to early years settings in relation to Covid risk assessments;
- The Education Welfare Service, which was normally a traded service, was provided for free during the pandemic;
- School attendance remained good in the Borough;
- All schools and early years settings in the affected wards had been engaged with the surge testing arrangements;
- There was a holistic approach to provide mental health and emotional wellbeing support to children and young people, the service worked with Social Care, Health and other professionals to provide a joined up offer. This included Kooth and mental health support teams to schools.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Councillor Helliard-Symonds made reference to a recent national report which had identified failures in early help to families during Covid. She was interested to know how the service remained its focus in early help to families in need. Adam Davis stated that Wokingham had a very well established early help service, and this had continued throughout the pandemic;
- Councillor Margetts asked for more information about how the offer of mental health and wellbeing hub was going to be communicated. Adam Davis stated that the work had involved schools, school governors and campaigns to share information with parents;
- Councillor Bray asked if the contract for Kooth was going to be renewed and about the option of extending the offer to 25 year olds. Carol Cammiss, stated that the Kooth contract had been extended for a further year, there had been a slight increase in cost which was going to be absorbed by Children's Services. She would look at the possibility of extending the age range of the offer;
- Councillor Chadwick asked if the Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) covered the whole Borough. Sal Thirlway stated that the MHST was part of a national programme which the local authority had bid to, at this stage the project involved 12 schools in the Borough. It was hoped that the project would, in time, expand to all schools in the Borough;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked if there had been unexpected concerns during this period and how the service was responding to these concerns. Adam Davis stated that initially there had been concerns over children who were not in contact with any professionals. As the pandemic progressed, nationally there was growing concern over the risk around the non-mobile, under 2 year olds cohort of children. In Wokingham, the service had carried out a review of cases that had been closed, recent cases, and an officer undertook targeted work with the under 5 year old cohort;
- Sal Thirlway stated that the Education Welfare Service had provided support with school attendance;
- Adam Davis stated that in Wokingham those children considered most at risk with Child Protection Plans, had continued to have their visits, with 95% completion during the pandemic period; even where legislation had allowed for flexibility;
- Carol Cammiss stated that the service had made contact with all young carers to ensure they were supported during the pandemic;
- Adam Davis stated that social workers had been able to use technology to engage young people, this had been positive and some young people preferred this method of communication;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that the traded service arrangements were regularly reviewed, and the provision of the Education Welfare service was dependent on capacity.

Members wished to express gratitude to Officers for the work undertaken during the pandemic. Members were also appreciative of the work undertaken in preparation for this meeting, given the fact that the service was undergoing an Ofsted inspection at this time.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Sudeshna Banerjee, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact presented the report.

Sudeshna Banerjee went through each indicator outlining the findings contained on the report. During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Councillor Bray asked if the timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) issued within 20 weeks of referral could be sustained. Sal Thirlway stated that the previous dip in timeliness had been due to staff churn. Currently, the workforce was more stable and more permanent staff were being recruited, therefore he was confident that the timeliness could be sustained. There was also a programme of improvement and innovation in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) offer within the Borough;
- Carol Cammiss stated that there was now a tracker in place to monitor the timeliness of all partners, to ensure timescales were being met. Also, families were being informed when and why there were delays;
- In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that there was a lot of information about all the children with EHCP. She offered to answer specific questions via email on request;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked what was being done to address the anxiety expressed by parents over the length of time to complete the EHCP process. Sal Thirlway recognised that there had been issues with timeliness in the past, but these had now been improved and the vast majority of plans were being issued within the statutory 20 week timescale;
- Councillor Chadwick expressed concern about the number of Care Leavers who were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and asked for the narrative around the figure. Adam Davis stated that there could be various reasons why care leavers may be NEET, they could be parents themselves or between jobs. He stated that the number was in line with other local authorities. Wokingham had recently changed the virtual school offer to extend it to working with care leavers;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked if there was a timeframe showing how long care leavers were NEET. Adam Davis agreed to look into providing this information;
- Councillor Malvern asked for more information about children missing from home/care. Adam Davis stated that when a child went missing from home a return interview was carried out to try and understand the reason for that occurrence. The service looked at themes or patterns to address any issues;
- Councillor Bray expressed concern that the children/young people who were avoiding the return interview might be the ones who needed it the most. Adam Davis stated that the services also looked at contacting other adults and professionals involved with the child to find the best way to reach them;
- Councillor Mickleburgh was concerned that children missing from home may be at risk of exploitation and suggested that a more detailed report be brought to the Committee in a part 2 session.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

8. UNICEF APPLICATION

Jo Jolly, Acting Service Manager, Children's Services Programme Implementation shared a presentation about the Unicef application.

Some of the points highlighted are listed below:

- Wokingham Borough Council was applying to be part of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme, this programme worked with councils to put children's rights into practice;
- The programme aimed to give all children a chance to have their voice heard;
- In the UK there were seven cities/communities that were either already part of the programme or in the process of applying;

- Unicef had been particularly interested in working with Wokingham because of its unique demographics, being a wealthy Borough with significant pockets of deprivation;
- This initiative was part of an ambitious improvement programme in Children's Services;
- Wokingham had been working on the application with partners in across the area;
- The result of the application would be known in August and if successful it would start to be implemented in September;
- The programme was split into four sections:
 - Discovery – 6 months
 - Development – 2 to 3 months
 - Delivery – 2 to 4 years
 - Recognition – 3 years
- Unicef set out badges to work towards;
- Councillors were encouraged to get involved in the discovery and implantation phases.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Councillor Margetts asked how Councillors could get involved in the programme. Jo Jolly stated that the programme would be child led, so the involvement of Councillors would be based on what the children/young people decided;
- Carol Cammiss stated that as part of the work that had already been undertaken, the child friendly Officers had already started to ascertain what the priorities for young people were. An event with the Youth Council was going to take place on 6 July, where a Unicef person was going to attend. The Youth Council was going to be consulted on the direction of travel of the programme;
- Carol Cammiss stated that communication would be sent to Councillors with opportunities for engagement;
- In response to a question Jo Jolly stated that the programme was for all children that lived or attended school in the Borough;
- In response to a question Jo Jolly stated that the service was looking for guidance from Unicef into how best to engage with children for this programme, in addition to the forums that were already being used;
- Councillor Helliard-Symonds stated that Councillor Batth was already undertaking a piece of work to engage with young people and suggested that he be contacted to work together on this programme;
- In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that this programme was very broad and would be part of various strategies and policies within the service;
- Councillor Bray asked if the equalities agenda was being considered. Jo Jolly stated that equalities had already been identified as a priority for young people.

Councillor Bray asked how Members could be involved in the 6 July meeting. Carol Cammiss stated that the agenda was being drawn up with young people, she would let them know that Members were interested in taking part and communicate with Members accordingly.

Members commended the work being undertaken to take part in this project.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS

Gillian Cole, Service Manager for school presented the School Performance Indicators and Ofsted reports item.

Gillian Cole highlighted the following points:

- Ofsted had suspended its inspections at the beginning of the pandemic, they decided to visit schools in the Autumn to undertake research and evidence gathering activity;
- Section 8 survey visits resulted in a letter which was posted on the school's Ofsted outcomes page, however no judgement was made as they were research visits;
- One school in the Borough had been subject to a Section 8 visit, this was St Crispin's School;
- During the Autumn term the School Improvement Team visited virtually all the schools and asked the same questions that Ofsted had used in its research visits;
- The research undertaken showed that the local provision mirrored the national provision;
- From the start of the Spring term 2021 Ofsted changed focus and undertook remote monitoring visits to schools, based on priority order in relation to current Ofsted grades. These were non-graded visits;
- Initially, there had been a focus on the quality of remote learning, this moved onto the curriculum and how schools were preparing to move back to face-to-face education;
- Two schools in the Borough had experienced the virtual visits, these were the Forest School and Gorse Ride Junior. Both were considered to be providing effective education;
- Section 8 visits were continuing in the Summer term and would take place on site;
- In response to the pandemic, significant changes were made to the operation of schools and examinations;
- The Department for Education (DfE) removed the testing requirements in respect of all reportable statutory outcomes for 2020, all the statutory testing and reporting for 2021 has also been cancelled;
- The DfE have indicated that all performance tables are suspended and no data from 2020 outcomes will be used to judge school performance. This means that there will be no Analyse School Performance (ASP) reports issued by the DfE and no local statistics for 2020 are available;
- There has been a removal of all statutory testing processes in KS1 and KS2 and a switch to Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) for GCSE and A Level students;
- The DfE confirmed that all performance tables remain suspended and no data from 2021 outcomes will be used to judge performance. Ofsted will be using 2019 published data as the start point for any future judgement-based inspection activities;
- The TAG process is completely different from the process used last year, this process is complex and has added to the teachers' workload.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Councillor Bray stated that, as a Governor, she had been involved in the Section 8 inspection at the Forest School. She reported that there had been questions that had prompted the school to think about its arrangements going forward. For example, changing from having a two year KS3 and a three year KS4 to having a three year KS3 and a two year KS4, in recognition of the fact that learning was disturbed and children in KS3 had not been taught the whole curriculum as they would have been in a normal year;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked if the TAG process was addressing some of the issues encountered last year. Gillian Cole stated that algorithms were not being used this year, the responsibility of grading the students was now with the school. She felt confident that schools were being able to achieve a fair assessment of their pupils.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

10. FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan for the Committee was considered and the dates of meetings were noted.

Sal Thirlway agreed to include the planning of pre-school provision with the Early Years' Service Review in the 10 January 2022 meeting.

In relation to the Youth Centre item, Carol Cammiss sought direction from the Committee as to what was expected. She stated that there was no Youth Service in Wokingham and offered to provide a report on the general offer for young people.

Councillor Bray suggested that more thought be given to determine what the Committee would like to receive in relation to youth services.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Act as appropriate.

12. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN – PART 2

The report was discussed in a part 2 session.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.45 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Guy Grandison (Chairman), Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Sam Akhtar, Shirley Boyt, Anne Chadwick, Phil Cunnington, Paul Fishwick and Clive Jones

Executive and Deputy-Executive Members in Attendance

Councillors: Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane and Shahid Younis

Officers Present

Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist), Narinder Brar (Community Safety Manager), Felicity Parker (Superintendent, Bracknell and Wokingham Local Police Area), Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Keeley Clements (Director - Communities, Insight, and Change), Rhian Hayes (Interim Assistant Director Housing and Place), Marcia Head (Service Manager - Place and Growth) and Simon Price (Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Communities)

7. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

8. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following minor amendments.

Agenda page 9: “2) **It be recommended that** the Low Carbon transport Strategy revert to be named the Low Emissions Transport Strategy”

Agenda page 10: “8) An update regarding the Borough Wide Parking Management Plan be considered by the Committee in March 2022.”

Agenda page 10: “9) An update regarding Flood Risk Management and an update from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service be considered in March 2022.”

9. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

A pecuniary and prejudicial declaration of interest was submitted from Paul Fishwick relating to agenda item 15, on the grounds that he was the owner of a business which had received a grant from the Council in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Paul added that he would leave the room for this item, and take no part in any discussions or votes related to the item.

10. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

11. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

12. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 11 to 36, which provided an annual update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The report outlined an overall reduction in crime offences of 9.9% across the Wokingham Borough in the last 12 months. Incidents which had seen an overall reduction included burglary, vehicle crime, and drugs possession offences. As a result of the pandemic, there were a number of areas of concern including car meets in Council car parks and open spaces, and domestic abuse. The community safety team have lead a tri-Borough operational based response with local service providers and key stakeholders to adapt services for victims of domestic abuse. The CSP had 4 key priorities which came to an end on 1st June 2021, which included addressing violence against women and girls, tackling anti-social behaviour; harmful behaviour and organised crime, reduction and prevention of exploitation and and address the needs of vulnerable victims and offenders, and empowering and enabling the resilience of local communities.

Bill Soane (Executive Member for Neighbourhood and Communities), Narinder Brah (CSP Manager) and Felicity Parker (Superintendent, Bracknell and Wokingham Local Police Area) attended the meeting to answer Member questions.

During the ensuing discussions, Members raised the following points and queries:

- Were there any specific statistics relating to cybercrime within the Borough? Officer response – Cybercrime was a key area which had been highlighted within the strategic assessment. There had not been any local increase in this area, and Action Fraud was an agency which helped victims deal with cybercrime. The CSP was also supported through colleagues within the Public Protection Partnership, who had noticed personal protection equipment and vaccination fraud offences. In the future, additional details relating to cybercrime within the Borough would be added to the annual update report.
- The data on agenda page 14 related to anti-social behaviour was absent from the report, and it was believed that this was previously provided by the Thames Valley Police (TVP). What were the current figures and how did they impact on the overall crime figures? Police response – The data was available, but not to hand, and would be circulated to the Committee.
- There had been decrease in areas such as burglary incidents and domestic abuse. There was a concern that less instances of domestic abuse may have been reported because of victims being in lockdown with their abusers. What could be done to ensure the safety of those at risk? Police response – There had been a significant decrease in burglary incidents, which was something that the CSP was proud of and they were awaiting to see if this trend continued post Covid-19 (C-19). During the first lockdown, visits were made to medium and repeat risk victims of domestic abuse to ensure that they were being provided the best service possible.
- Agenda page 27 had indicated an overall reduction of CSP funding of around £1000. What effect would this have on service delivery? Officer response - This funding was based on a historical formula. This issue had been flagged internally and would be picked up, and conversations would occur with the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner.
- What did the MARAC team consider? Officer response – The MARAC team only dealt with cases which had been professionally risk assessed as being high risk.

- Agenda page 23 indicated a reduction in attendance of Kicks sessions from 25 attendees last year to just 5.5 this year. Could this be clarified? Officer response – Clarification would be provided to the Committee.
- The precept for the PCC had increased for the current financial year, yet the funding for the CSP had reduced. What was the rationale behind this? Police response – The PCC precept went some way towards the CSP, however it also funded other services such as Victims First.
- What were the details of the new five-year domestic abuse contract? Office response – The CSP would continue to work closely with Berkshire Women’s Aid, however the new contract had been awarded to Cranstoun who would provide a 24/7 victims helpline, close working with victims to reduce risks to them and their family, in addition to offering refuge provision. The contract also provided for work with schools for young people who were victims of domestic abuse or who had witnessed domestic abuse. An update could be provided for the March Committee to update on the progress of the contract in its first six months.
- Did the substance misuse service work with those who had misused in the past and had changed their ways? Officer response – The CSP worked with a number of agencies and contract providers, and it was recognised that an experienced person was beneficial and could help others with recovery. There was a new contract in place which attracted additional funding, and had allowed for a specific young people service (Here 4 You) to be created.
- How effectively was the local Prevent service working? Officer response – There were good and robust local processes in place to safeguard individuals. This was about partners communicating with each other clearly and flagging up concerns. Concerns were then flagged up to the “Channel Panel”. Locally, Prevent heard of a lot of cases of concerns and acted accordingly.
- Were operations still carried out to target shops who were selling alcohol to underage persons? Police response – This process was still carried out, however it required cadets to carry out the process. Due to C-19, cadets were unable to come on-board, however as soon as they returned then spot checks would be carried out. Trading standards and the police took “secret shopper” exercises very seriously.
- Were food delivery firms checking the age of recipients on delivery of alcohol? Executive member response – Delivery drivers were required to check the age of the person opening the door if the order included alcohol, and were instructed to remove items of alcohol and refund if the person could not prove that they were over 21 years old. Some firm’s drivers were not checking however.
- What work was being done to promote preventative measures against antisocial behaviour? Police response – There was a joint piece of work with the CSP which was looking how young people could be prevented at the earliest possible stage from engaging in serious violence.
- How was engagement with housing associations being improved? Police response – There was a strategic group set up to work with housing associations, which had a similar stock to that of WBC. Members could raise concerns where they knew of examples of housing associations not dealing with instances of anti-social behaviour.

The CSP worked with a number of housing associations on a strategic level on a number of issues including anti-social behaviour.

- The domestic abuse bill broadened the definition of domestic abuse, what strategy was in place to deal with any increase in service requests? Officer response – Officers were in the process of ensuring that the service was compliant with the new domestic abuse bill, including bringing website content up to date, including information about safe spaces.
- Would the healthy relationship course be opened to all schools? Officer response – The CSP was working with children in all schools, and various pathways were being looked at to provide the best support for children within the Borough. There was a very detailed piece of work taking place under housing needs assessments to work with the victims of domestic abuse, both children's and adults, to ensure that their housing needs were met.
- The Committee were keen to hear from the “voice of a child”, and to have a report sent back to Committee.
- What were the CSP and EMRAC doing in relation to county lines? Police response – There were a number of operations underway to combat county lines, however the rates in the Wokingham Borough were much lower than in other areas.
- What were the thoughts on how the Borough worked with the CSP? Police response – It had been an interesting year which was hard to qualify, however the police had been hugely impressed by the work of the Narinder Brah and Simon Price. There were a number of sub-groups which needed sufficient levels of response, and the CSP needed to see how they could make the services provided as best as possible.
- Effective data sharing was key between different organisations, was this being carried out effectively and in a timely fashion? Officer and Police response – Thames Valley police had a considerable amount of data, and shared what they felt was useful with the CSP on a quarterly basis. Additional data could be provided upon request. The creation of the violence reduction dashboard would use Thames Valley Police data and data from Local Authorities, and in future data from Health Services would be added. Data ensured that projects and funding were being put in the right places, whilst looking at new and existing trends.
- Was there an opportunity to send a police officer into schools to talk about substance misuse? Officer and police response – Each school had a liaison officer assigned to them. When a drug incident happened at a school, the police were often led by the school to make contact prior to the police responding. There had been a national increase in cannabis use, not just locally. The new contract would allow for additional offers for children and young people, including increased education around substance misuse.
- How was knife crime reduction being targeted and achieved? Police response – There was a new strategic partnership which looked at serious crime including knife crime. The partnership was looking at identifying pupils at risk, and where a high risk individual was identified then this would be escalated to the multi-agency team.

- Were there any areas of the Borough which would benefit from a neighbourhood action group? Police response – If there were any gaps which the community would like filled, the police would be happy to facilitate this process. This could involve setting up a new group, or involving the nearest group and expanding it.
- The Committee thanked the police and the CSP for keeping crime levels low despite cuts to their budget from Central Government over a period of time.
- Was there any data relating to prosecutions of race related crimes? Police response – There were small but still unacceptable numbers of race crime within the Borough, which were increasing. This was a difficult crime to detect as it could happen in the street, with the perpetrators moving on very quickly. The police and CSP wanted more people to feel confident about coming forward and reporting these crimes, and as such if reported crime figures went up then this would be a good thing.
- Had there been increased engagement between the community and PCSOs? Police response – Neighbourhood policing was difficult last year due to keeping the community safe from C-19. There would be two neighbourhood teams from August, including one problem solving team, which would provide effective engagement and give people confidence.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Bill Soane, Felicity Parker, and Narinder Brah be thanked for attending the Committee;
- 2) Additional details relating to cybercrime statistics be added to future update reports;
- 3) Data relating to anti-social behaviour be circulated to the Committee;
- 4) Clarification regarding attendance at Kicks sessions be provided to the Committee;
- 5) An update on the first 6-months of the new domestic abuse contract be provided to the Committee at their March 2022 meeting;
- 6) An update report relating to the “voice of a child” be provided to the Committee;
- 7) An annual update on the work of CSP return to the Committee in the months’ time.

13. COMMUNITIES, INSIGHT, AND CHANGE DIRECTORATE PRIORITIES

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 37 to 42, which outlined the directorate priorities for the Communities, Insight, and Change Directorate.

The report outlined a number of areas of work for the year ahead, including providing IT capabilities and resilience, launching the business change strategy and embedding the change framework methodology into the organisation, tracking of customer satisfaction through various channels, ensuring that services were open to everyone by minimising any barriers or equality issues, maintenance of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) housing stock in addition to increasing customer satisfaction to 90%, and supporting communities to be clean and safe.

Gregor Murray (Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions), Shahid Younis (Deputy Executive Member for Corporate Strategy, Insight &

Change), Keeley Clements (Director – Communities, Insight, and Change), and Simon Price (Assistant Director – Neighbourhood and Communities), attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

During the ensuing discussions, Members raised the following points and queries:

- What was the satisfaction rate of Council tenants currently? Director response – At a low point, satisfaction reached 76%. Currently, satisfaction levels were around 88%, and the service was looking to improve this level further.
- What preparation had been done in anticipation of the eviction ban coming to an end? Director and officer response – The Council’s “all in” policy had been very successful at keeping people off of the street during the Covid-19 (C-19) pandemic. WBC was expecting landlords to look to sell some properties due to changes in their circumstances, and WBC would need to review the overall position in the coming months. Due to the court backlog and a possible extension to the eviction ban, evictions may not take place for three to four months.
- Could some clarity be provided relating to the proposed strategic use of the HRA? Director and officer response – Officers were looking at unlocking the HRA to understand the borrowing capacity to be able to contribute to strategic projects. The aim was to buy some of the newly developed S106 properties, in addition to redeveloping and buying speculatively where appropriate.
- What was being done to improve the customer experience, including action tracking? Director response – Workflow tracking was planned in the medium term, and the service already knew of 5 to 6 areas where customers were more engaged. Where customers had queries, WBC needed to respond appropriately and in a timely fashion. A website UX UI Specialist had been hired to streamline the WBC website and reduce “clicks” needed to reach useful information.
- What was the strategy for taking graduates on board at WBC? Director response – A cohort of graduates had been taken in under change management for rotation around the organisation, to build their depth and breadth of knowledge and skills.
- What was the Insight Strategy? Director response – There was a difference between data and insight, as insight was about contextualising and understanding what the data was telling us. As a Council, we needed to build up and connect our datasets to allow us to understand what the insight was telling us, which would allow better customer interactions and enable us to progress as an organisation.
- Were there any developments relating to investigating fly tipping in the Borough? Director response – A lot of work had been done in this area and the overall situation had improved as a result of additional cameras and communications efforts. C-19 had definitely had an impact on fly tipping, and plans were in place to continue enforcement efforts going forwards. Communications relating to Christmas waste had helped over the festive period. Recently, some officers had been redeployed to help with surge testing and surge vaccinations. There was a working group which was looking at this overall issue, and WBC was working with the police to check vehicle licence plates when transporting and dropping of waste, to ensure that they were registered waste disposal businesses. Where breaches were found, fixed penalty notices were being issued.

- How were equality assessments being made a key priority in everything we do? Director response – An equalities impact assessment was required for any change in service or proposition, and it was the responsibility of each directorate to carry this out for each change within their area. The equalities plan sat within the Communities, Insight, and Change Directorate, and this was about how an overall strategy could be developed for the Borough, whilst being a dynamic policy.
- The 21st Century reorganisation strove for all customer contacts to be done digitally wherever possible. After the C-19 pandemic, was it possible that a surge of people would want face to face interactions, and if so was WBC prepared? Director response – This reorganisation was carried out before this Directorate, or Director, formed part of WBC. Every customer should be able to engage in the best way for them personally, and if there was an uptake in demand for face to face interactions, then customer services would support this.
- When was the poverty strategy expected to come forward? Director response – This was hoped to come forward as soon as possible, however the manager of the strategy and planning area had recently left WBC, who needed replacing. There were five blocks of work which needed actions, one of which was the voice of the customer which had recently been carried out, and had provided some very useful insight for the organisation.
- Did the Directorate have enough staff to fulfil its ambitious programme? Director response – A number of inherited areas of the Directorate had been looked at, with a number of areas such as accounts payable being moved to a more appropriate Directorate to increase response times. There were some vacant posts which did cause strains on existing staff who had to fill in the gaps, and there was some work to do to fill some of the key roles within the Directorate.
- What was WBC doing to protect itself from cyberware and ransomware attacks? Director response – This could be picked up with Members separately.
- Could highways issues tracking be prioritised, as Members were pushing residents to report directly to WBC rather than having to go through their local ward member. Director response – There was a piece of work looking at priority areas where residents engaged most with the organisation, which would allow resources to be targeted in streamlining the customer experience in these high contact areas initially.
- The report made mention of 1000 planned library events due to take place, in a normal year would 1000 events take place? Officer response – The libraries team was continually engaging with younger communities, including online book clubs and other online events. Details could be shared with the Committee at a future meeting.
- How was customer feedback captured, including conversational feedback? Director response – “Gov Metrics” had been deployed across the WBC website, and options were being explored to expand this to phone and email interactions. There was a cultural change required to log any comment of dissatisfaction as a complaint, which would enable the voice of the customer to feed into the organisation’s central thinking.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Gregor Murray, Shahid Younis, Keeley Clements and Simon Price be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Information related to the Council's strategy to protect against cyberware and ransomware attacks be provided to Members confidentially where requested;
- 3) Additional information relating to library services return to a future meeting of the Committee;
- 4) A number of key priorities from the Communities, Insight, and Change Directorate return to the Committee during the current municipal year, after discussion between the Chairman and the Director.

14. PLANNING APPLICATION CONSULTATION - COMMITTEE REQUEST

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 43 to 46, which gave an update on how Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) consulted on planning applications.

The report outlined that WBC followed the statutory obligation to either display a notice on the site for no less than 21 days, or by serving a notice to any adjoining owner or occupier. WBC chose to serve notices to neighbours, and also ask that applicants voluntarily display a site notice which was provided to them. This approach was set out within the statement of community involvement. There were additional requirements for major applications within the Borough.

Wayne Smith (Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement) and Marcia Head (Service Manager – Place and Growth) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

During the ensuing discussions, Members raised the following points and queries:

- Some residents had reported that they had not received notices of nearby planning applications. Whilst most objections to applications did not lead to refusals, residents wanted to be consulted and ward members wanted to ensure that residents were engaged and consulted. What exactly was sent out to residents? Officer response – An A5 postcard was sent out with the WBC crest printed on the top of the card. The postcard was not sent in an envelope, and had the planning application details written on it. If there was a sensitive application, then more houses would usually be informed. Residents did not have to be consulted to comment on an application, and many residents spoke to each other about applications which usually led to a comments being left via the WBC planning section on the website for that specific application.
- The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement commented that in addition to neighbours being consulted, Town and Parish Councils and local ward members were informed of every planning application in their area. 26,000 postcards had been sent out over the past year, and Covid-19 (C-19) had not slowed the planning process.
- Had there been a change in the average number of postcards sent out for each application? Officer response – The average was 6 as a usual residential property consulted with three properties, adjoining neighbours and the property to the rear, however larger or more sensitive applications attracted far more postcards which took the average to 6.

- Was 26,000 postcards per year sufficient to ensure that residents were aware of local planning applications? Officer response – WBC received tens of thousands of comments on planning applications per year. Planning was a balance, where objections had to be weighed up against planning law. Even where an application received no objections, officers still weighed up the impact of the development on the local community.
- Could the notification system be modernised, via sending consultations digitally? Officer response – This had been looked at in the past via an account system where you could opt-in to receiving digital notifications, however if the homeowner moved then WBC would not be fulfilling their duty to notify immediate neighbours about a planning application. A two-tiered system would be required, which would be a big IT change.
- Had consultations always been sent out as a postcard? Officer response – Some years ago, letters were sent out within an envelope which was addressed to “The Occupier”. Some people were confused why the letter was not addressed to them, and the letter was then changed to a postcard. Members and Town and parish Councils could ask local applicants to voluntarily place notices on their sites to increase engagement.
- It was noted that there was a general reluctance for residents to send in comments directly, rather than through a ward member or a Town or Parish Council.
- Was their scope for a communications exercise, such as within the Borough News, outlining different types of planning applications and what grounds objections could be raised on? Executive Member response – Training had occurred over the past couple of years, and was also planned for this year, around planning and enforcement. Information had also been provided within the Borough news in the past, as well as at Borough events. A piece was planned in the borough news regarding development of one and two bedroom properties within the Borough, and further pieces could also be included, for example relating to HMOs or permitted development rights.
- As more people were at home over the last year, could this have accounted for more people noticing development and planning applications? Executive Member and officer response – WBC had seen an increase of 89% increase in householder planning applications in the first 5 months of this year compared to last year, and there had also been a significant increase in requests to the planning enforcement teams. Fifty percent of contacts with the planning enforcement teams were not a breach of planning control, but still required a member of the team to visit the site and interact with the landowner. Many residents were seeing buildings being developed and fences being erected, thinking that they all required planning permission. A piece regarding what does and does not require planning permission could be included within WBC’s communications approach.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Wayne Smith and Marcia Head be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) This issue be raised with the Borough Parish Liaison Forum, with the Chairman of the Committee being invited to the Forum meeting where the issue was to be discussed. This item could then return to the Committee at a later date if required.

15. COVID-19 - BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOVERY UPDATE

Guy Grandison proposed an extension to the meeting by a maximum of 30 minutes. This was seconded by Alison Swaddle and subsequently carried.

The Committee considered a report, set out in supplementary agenda pages 3 to 12, which gave an overview of the Council's ongoing business and economic development recovery from the Covid-19 (C-19) pandemic.

The report stated that whilst most of the work to date has been reactive, there was now a transition into the recovery phase for the Borough's economy and businesses. Over the coming year, the plan was to speak to all of Wokingham's businesses to develop a strong lasting relationship with the business community.

Stuart Munro (Executive Member for Business and Economic Development) and Rhian Hayes (Interim Assistant Director Housing and Place) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, Member raised the following points and queries:

- Members commented that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) had gone above and beyond in being a supportive organisation throughout the pandemic for businesses across the Borough.
- Were there any statistics on the numbers of new businesses that had popped up during the pandemic, and how WBC might be able to support them going forwards? Officer response – This was typically a statistic which had a large time lag, however this information would be available in the future, and WBC was keen to support emerging businesses.
- The Committee wished to extend their thanks to all those who enabled such a thorough response in such a difficult period of time.
- What was the key to the successful deployment of business grants? Officer response – WBC staff delivered for our residents, and in particular Andrew Kupusarevic and the business rates team worked incredibly hard to ensure smooth delivery of business grant payments on or before time.
- How long would the Covid Marshals be kept on for? Officer response – The opening up fund would enable the tenure of the marshals to be extended for another couple of months.
- How was WBC planning to engage with all of the businesses across the Borough, and identify their needs properly? Officer response – Businesses had a wide range of varying needs. WBC was planning to speak to each business to understand their specific needs.
- It was noted that there was still a strong demand for commercial space within the Borough.

- Were companies letting us know if they planned on letting staff go after the furlough scheme ended? Officer response – Whilst there was no requirement for businesses to do so, WBC would seek to capture this information wherever possible.
- Was there any update on the claimant count within the Borough? Officer response – The current rate was 3.3%, down from 3.5%, and officer were watching this rate to see which direction it would go.
- How many Borough residents had been furloughed in the Borough? Officer response – 10,900 people, or 13 percent of total jobs, had been furloughed within the Borough.
- The business change survey had identified a number of businesses that were struggling and were not likely to continue trading. Was there an update on these businesses? Officer response – All responding businesses would be called, which had not occurred yet due to officers being involved in surge testing. Officers would be looking to see whether there was anything that WBC or another agency could do to support these businesses.
- How had the £300,000 grant related to the public realm been spent? Officer response – This grant had been used to purchase signage around social distancing, providing information leaflets regarding legislation and advice, and to employ some of the Covid marshals.
- What could be done to achieve a better response from future surveys to businesses? Officer response – This was difficult at businesses received a large amount of surveys. The next survey was planned for about six months' time, and more face to face contact was planned.
- Were the Covid marshals being considered for different roles within WBC once their contracts expired? Officer response – These staff had done an excellent job, and WBC always looked to retain skilled staff where possible and appropriate.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Stuart Munro and Rhian Hayes be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) All staff and Members involved in the business response to the pandemic be thanked for their hard work during a difficult time.

16. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME/MEETING SCHEDULE

The Committee considered the provisional list of items scheduled for upcoming meetings, including the extraordinary meeting scheduled for 21 July. Officers commented that further items would be scheduled for future meetings once discussions with the appropriate Executive members, Directors, and officers had been achieved.

RESOLVED That the work programme be noted.

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Decision made in the presence of:
Martin Forster, Lead Specialist Repairs and Maintenance
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION RECORD SHEET IMD 2021/18
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Title of the report	Disposal of land between 14 & 15 Yeosfield Riseley Swallowfield RG7 1SG
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DECISION MADE BY Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser
ACTION BY Director, Communities, Insight and Change - Keeley Clements
DECISION MADE ON 23 June 2021

Recommendation contained in the report

That the Executive Member for Finance and Housing approves the disposal of; Land between 14 & 15 Yeosfield Riseley Swallowfield RG7 1SG.

Decision

That the Executive Member for Finance and Housing approved the disposal of; Land between 14 & 15 Yeosfield Riseley Swallowfield RG7 1SG.

Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation

N/A

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comments
Monitoring Officer	No comments
Leader of the Council	No comments

Reasons why the report was deemed to have contained confidential or Exempt information (if applicable)

N/A

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member who is consulted by a Member which relates to the decision

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

Background papers

Plan of the site

PUBLISHED ON: 23 June 2021

EFFECTIVE ON: 1 July 2021

CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES: 30 June 2021

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LICENSING AND APPEALS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 23 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.52 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Chris Bowring, Parry Batth, Rachel Burgess, Peter Dennis, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, Sarah Kerr, Barrie Patman (Chairman), Jackie Rance, Ian Shenton, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Bill Soane and Shahid Younis (Vice-Chairman)

Committee Members in Attendance

Councillor: Abdul Loyes

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Moira Fraser, Policy and Governance Officer
Julia O'Brien, Principle Officer Compliance and Enforcement

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. DRAFT STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES

The Draft Statement of Gambling Principles report was presented by David Lucas, Legal Consultant.

David Lucas made the following points:

- Appendix A which contained the list of consultees was missing from the report, this would be rectified and inserted in the report;
- Section 1.6 – Interested Parties, was updated, in particular in relation to business interests;
- In relation to 1.9 Local risk assessments, it was recommended that local area profiles are not included as it was not a statutory requirement and it was onerous to keep it up to date;
- Additional information was added to 2.5 Licensing conditions, in particular in relation to door supervisors at gambling premises;
- A description of gambling facilities available for each type of premises was included in the policy;
- It was suggested that the reference of no casino resolution be taken out. There was no possibility of having a casino in the area because the Gambling Act did not allow it.

There were only a total of 16 casinos areas allowed in the whole of the UK, and those casinos areas had already been determined and it did not include Wokingham;

- A section on small society lotteries was included as a new one;
- The scheme of delegation was extended and updated.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Councillor Kerr asked how the consultation was going to be promoted. She also asked for confirmation of who would be consulted, she was concerned that there was no mention of members of the public and elected Members in the consultee's list;
- Councillor Kerr stated that the policy was difficult to find on the website, and asked that this be made more easily accessible for the public;
- Councillor Kerr was of the opinion that the Scheme of Delegations was not very clear and that the previous version was better laid out;
- Councillor Kerr expressed concern in relation to the change in Section 1.6 Interested parties. She stated that elected Members sometimes acted as representatives to interested parties and it was unhelpful that the draft stated that evidence of identity was going to be requested (differing from the current policy which explicitly allowed democratically elected councillors to make representations without evidence of being asked);
- Councillor Kerr expressed concern in relation to 1.7 Information exchange in that it omitted information about people's details being made public;
- David Lucas stated that the Act provided a list of statutory consultees, as listed in the report. However, this could be extended by the local authority;
- Moira Fraser, Policy and Governance Officer stated that she would investigate a way to make the policy more accessible on the website. In relation to the consultation, she stated that this was going to be advertised on the newspaper and the listed consultees would be contacted in writing. There would be a link to the consultation on the PPP and Wokingham's website. She agreed to extend the consultation as directed by the Committee;
- David Lucas agreed to amend appendix C to make it more user friendly;
- In relation to 1.6 Interested parties, David Lucas stated that the wording meant that it was at the discretion of the local authority to ask for evidence or not, it was not mandatory. However, he agreed to amend it at the Committee's request;
- In relation to 1.7 Information exchange, David Lucas agreed to include wording to make it clearer about contact details being made public;
- Councillor Burgess asked if any risks had been identified in the last three years, and she referenced the three core gambling aims;
- David Lucas stated that the gambling aims had not changed and remained the foundation for the drafting of the policy;
- David Lucas stated that the draft policy had been drawn up with the intention of promoting the core aims, within the constraints of the legislation;
- Councillor Fishwick was interested to know what the impact of casinos closure and the lack of a casino resolution was in the policy;
- David Lucas stated that all the designated areas had undergone a complex convoluted bidding process to acquire the casino licence. He stated that a no casino resolution could be taken at any point in the future, however he believed that there was no need to include it in the policy now;
- For clarification, David Lucas stated that not all 16 areas had operational casinos;
- Councillor Patman stated that historically, there had never been any attempt to have a casino in this area, mainly due to its proximity to Reading;

- Councillor Firmager stated that the policy could be reviewed at any point in time if necessary. He was interested to know what was the mechanism for review;
- David Lucas stated that a review process would be exactly the same as the one being undertaken now, it would start with a submission to Licensing and Appeals Committee, a consultation and final approval by Council;
- Councillor Ferris asked what would happen if residents were not happy with the number of bookmakers in a particular area;
- David Lucas stated that the local authority had to operate within the constraints of the Act. Any objections to new premises or variations had to be based on the three objectives, so it was difficult to limit the number of bookmakers based on the Gambling Act. The number of bookmakers on the high street had started to decline as a result of changes introduced a couple of years ago;
- Councillor Younis stated that the consultation process should be improved, both in relation to the communication of it and the list of consultees;
- Moira Fraser stated that the consultation would run for 12 weeks and that every effort would be made to publicise the consultation.

Councillor Kerr proposed to amend the wording of recommendation number three to read:

3. That the parties as set out in paragraph 9 and appendix A of the report, as well as elected Members and the wider public be consulted.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Fishwick and upon being put to the vote was supported by the Committee.

The Chairman asked that the amendments discussed during the meeting be included in the revised draft.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The amendments proposed by Members during discussions be included in the revised draft;
- 2) The draft revised Statement of Gambling Principles prepared under Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 as appended to the report be approved for consultation;
- 3) The Public Protection Manager is authorised to proceed with formal consultation for the 12 week period between 7 July 2021 and 29 September 2021;
- 4) The parties as set out in paragraph 9 and Appendix A of the report, as well as elected Members and the wider public be consulted; and
- 5) Any comments on the revised Statement be brought to the 20 October 2021 Licensing and Appeals Committee meeting for discussion prior to the report being formally presented for adoption at the 18 November 2021 Council meeting.

7. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCE FEES CONSULTATION RESPONSES REPORT

Moira Fraser, Policy and Governance Officer presented the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licence Fees Consultation Responses report.

Moira Fraser stated that the report was in response to a request at the last meeting to find out what support had already been given to the taxi trade in relation to the pandemic. The Committee had requested this information in order to make an informed decision in respect to any further subsidies.

Councillor Burgess stated that it was now known that 98 taxi drivers had received a Covid related grant. This represented less than a third of total number of taxi drivers. She continued to support the view that there should be no increase in fees this year due to the difficulties that had been faced during the period. She pointed out that this subsidy would not be material to the Council's budget but it would certainly be material to taxi drivers.

Councillor Burgess proposed that fees for private hire vehicles and hackney carriage vehicles be held at 2021 levels. She was seconded by Councillor Kerr.

Councillor Kerr expressed concern that the report lacked the detail requested by the Committee.

Councillor Ferris stated that taxi drivers had seen a significant reduction in their income, and not all taxi drivers had received a grant. He felt it was inappropriate to increase the fees at this time.

Councillor Kerr proposed to refund the fees to those that had already paid them.

Councillor Bowring was interested to know the cost of this proposal. Julia O'Brien, Principal Officer Compliance and Enforcement state that the figure would be around £9k.

Upon being put the vote Members voted in favour of Councillor Burgess' proposal.

RESOLVED That: The fees for private hire vehicles and hackney carriage vehicles will be held at 2021 levels and any fees already paid will be refunded.

8. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the Committee was considered and Members were invited to comment.

Members asked to be kept informed on the plans for the exit process from the PPP.

Councillor Bowring stated that the Committee was autonomous from the PPP and that it agreed its own policies independently from the other local authorities.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 24 JUNE 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.35 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser, Parry Batth, Pauline Jorgensen, Charles Margetts, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray, Wayne Smith and Bill Soane

Other Councillors Present

Gary Cowan
Lindsay Ferris
Michael Firmager
Sarah Kerr
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Graham Howe.

2. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

The Leader of Council made the following statement:

Good evening and welcome to the first Executive meeting of the municipal year.

We are now in the sixteenth month of Covid, and things are now inexorably returning to normal.

We are also a year away from the horrific murders of James Furlong, Joe Ritchie-Bennett and David Wails in Forbury Gardens Reading.

Please join me in a moment's silence for them and for those who have died during this dreadful pandemic in Wokingham, the UK, and all around the world, and those who have suffered not just the effect of the virus itself, but the problems which have accompanied it.

As you are aware we have had an increase in Corona cases of the delta variety. We responded with surge testing and surge vaccinations. A truly magnificent effort mounted at very short notice, and all credit to our Officers. As of lunchtime today we have had 3,288 jabs done at Bulmershe, 17,544 PCR tests, including residents, schools and businesses, which have resulted in 46 positive cases who were people without symptoms. These individuals are now isolating. 14,441 doors were knocked on in four wards and 1,000 vulnerable adults supported with testing. 33 families were visited by Children's Services and 931 businesses contacted. Case rates peaked at 96.4 on the 7th June and is now down to 74.8 on the 18th June. It is difficult to know what the rates would have been if we not undertaken all this work but the upward trajectory we were on was alarming to say the least; so without doubt it made a significant impact.

Since the last Executive we have had local elections and they were a demonstration of our residents' faith in this Conservative administration. Our majority has stayed the same, despite the opposition's confident predictions of no overall control.

We won a larger share of the vote than any other party and our share went up! So how does the expression go "...aaaah....Conservatives are winning here! "

I am delighted to see that we are now not only the healthiest local authority but also the most prosperous, having for a long time been one of the most desirable places to live. This is despite being the lowest funded with the lowest level of deprivation. A huge testament to this administration but not a moment for complacency. Whilst I am Leader of the Council, the Executive will strive every day to make this Borough the greatest, safest and happiest place to live, work and bring up a family.

This is a wonderful Borough with a great future. We have some of the finest Officers and Directors, well led by the Chief Executive.

We have a huge, ambitious and detailed programme to deliver for our residents and I wish to highlight just one in this preamble, the local plan.

I imagine the flawed but persistent public criticism of our finances was to ensure that on gaining control the opposition could disingenuously claim that magically our finances had been instantaneously fixed. Let me repeat there is nothing to fix! Our finances are strong, transparent and in rude health as you will see later on this evening.

I am a great believer in democracy which needs to have an administration, an opposition and a free press.

Ideally, the administration must:

- have a track record of delivering;
- be solid in a crisis, like the pandemic;
- be stable;
- have a great plan for the future;
- be experienced and professional,

We are blessed in having such an administration.

The opposition does not have to have, nor does it have any of these attributes; they can look both ways at the same time. We are blessed in having such an opposition.

We are also blessed in having a vibrant press.

Some roles are semi-judicial. Recently Members appear to have taken a political stance rather than a judicial one. Members of the Planning Committee must decide. This will not please everybody and may not please anybody, but they need to do so. Abstentions on party lines make a mockery of the process much to the distain of the public.

Nationally, both the Liberal Democrats and the Tories committed to building 300,000 homes per year in their 2019 manifestos. It is disingenuous to pretend that this is a new Conservative policy. The Labour Party committed to “regenerate housing” and building one million new homes, which is more or less the same as the other parties.

There is a consensus within the Borough Council that whilst we note Parliament’s apparently settled view the minimum of these new homes should be in Wokingham Borough consistent with our need to provide more affordable housing and social housing.

There is no conflict between the climate emergency agenda and the housing agenda, we must do both.

The administration has recently published its housing and its 1-4-5 plus 100 strategies. We also worked very hard last year to successfully dissuade the Government from a housing number which would have been more than 1,600 per annum to a more reasonable number between 600-800. We are still working on whittling down this number.

Being the healthiest and most prosperous local authority, with the lowest deprivation and great schools is a great success; a testament to nineteen years of Conservative administration. However, there is a downside which is that it is a very desirable place to live. I doubt that there is a square inch of the Borough which does not have a developer's option on it. To counter the threat of unrestrained speculative development, we cannot just say we won't allow it as this position will be overturned.

We must have a current local plan which conforms to the criteria of the time. We will be presenting one in the Autumn. We will engage in a "community-led approach, putting local residents at the heart of the system where residents are taken notice of and listened to, not taken for granted or even worse simply ignored and certainly not a free for all for landowners and developers."; I quote.

Opposition to this plan will be support for unrestricted development, which is entirely irresponsible and will be a developer's charter. Local authorities who have taken a different view (mostly Lib Dems) have found that their planning decisions have been taken out of their local authority hands and placed with the MHCLG and speculative development has been permitted by the planning inspectorate in the absence of a local plan.

Failure to develop a local plan as the opposition suggest will ensure that decisions are not made by local residents and communities but by developers, the planning inspectorate and the MHCLG.

WBC's opposition Leader will ensure "that homes will be dumped near you".

3. STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, WELLBEING AND ADULT SERVICES

Just wanted to really pick up a couple of points. I mean John has been over the key statistics which are very impressive and a testament to all the hard work that has gone on here. It is worth remembering it is only Monday 7th June that surge testing started in Wokingham. On that day we wrote to the CCG and the Regional Director of the NHS. Then we had surge testing and it was now time for surge vaccination. The Friday of that week surge vaccination was approved. The Tuesday we had our surge vaccination centre open and jabbed around 300 people. This has been an incredible effort by all staff connected to the Council, our partners in the NHS, and all those people who have worked with us. I want to extend my real thanks for this co-operation.

The vaccination centre, as John said, has jabbed so far 3,288 people. We saw some data from the NHS which showed the real difference that this has meant in the wards where Covid was strongest. Which is that vaccination rates in the 18-24 age group have gone up from around 16-17% to over 50% in two weeks, which is real evidence on the ground, as we know that the only way to defeat this is vaccinations. It is real evidence of the concrete progress this has made.

Our surge testing programme has found 46 positive cases. I think it is worth noting again the importance of surge testing. This means that there were 46 people in the Borough

carrying Covid who did not necessarily know they had it and each one of those could have spread it to 2, 3, possibly more people. Thanks to this we have managed to identify these people and they are now isolating. We wish them a speedy recovery.

The other side of the coin though is that with nearly 18,000 tests back and only 46 cases it means we do not have an uncontrolled runaway situation here. The case rate is beginning to come down. We must remain watchful and cautious going forward but the situation is coming under control.

Obviously finding these 46 cases means the case rate over the next week or two may rise slightly as they work through the figures, but this is not a cause for alarm.

I think in summary I would say again my thanks to all the partners who worked with us to deliver this and any advice we can give to people, which will be familiar to many in the Borough already, to stop the spread of Covid is take a lateral flow test twice a week at home, which will be familiar to anyone who has got children at secondary school. Get vaccinated as soon as you can. If you are offered the opportunity, go and get the vaccine, it is the only defence and if you are asked to isolate please do it properly.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Executive held on 18 March 2021 and the Executive meeting held on 25 March 2021 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Leader of Council.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor John Halsall declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7, Revenue Monitoring 2020/21 – Outturn, by virtue of the fact that he was the Treasurer of Thames Rowing Club which had received Covid support from the Council. Councillor Halsall took part in discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillor John Kaiser declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7, Revenue Monitoring 2020/21 – Outturn, by virtue of the fact that he was a remunerated Non-Executive Director of WBC (Holdings) Ltd, Wokingham Housing Ltd and Berry Brook Homes Ltd. Councillor Kaiser took part in discussions and voted on the matter.

Councillors Stuart Munro and Wayne Smith declared personal interests in Agenda Item 7, Revenue Monitoring 2020/21 – Outturn, by virtue of the fact that they were Non-Executive Directors of WBC (Holdings) Ltd. Councillors Munro and Smith took part in discussions and voted on the matter.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

6.1 Daniel Hinton asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

Like many interested parties across the Borough The members and followers of Greener Wokingham are looking forward to WBC running one, or more local deliberative processes. Can you tell residents what progress has been made in determining which LDP are right for our Climate Emergency and what the likely topics of the LDPs will be?

Answer

Local deliberative processes aim to help us better understand the views of our residents and community groups on the Council's response to climate change.

Tackling the climate emergency in Wokingham will require active participation from our residents, all of whom have a big part to play in delivering the big changes that are needed on our journey to decarbonisation.

Through the right consultative and participation methods, the Council will be able to hear their voices, collect their views and gather insight to inform future decisions.

To advise on which deliberative processes to use, significant research and consultation have been undertaken both internally and externally.

Fifteen community engagement options recently used for climate emergency were reviewed and scored based on the policy stage, length of the process, number of participants, participant selection, delivery form and cost. These include crowd sourcing, citizen's assemblies, juries and panels, advisory groups, polling e-panels, to name but a few.

This comparison not only highlights the breadth of options available but also enables us to identify the most suitable solutions to use to engage the community with the different aspects of our climate emergency agenda.

Successful case studies from other local authorities engaging residents with climate emergency were sourced to demonstrate the potential effectiveness of these approaches.

These examples vary in terms of the number of residents involved, the length of process and the cost of delivery. They also produce similar results on engaging the community, producing recommendations and actions and informing the climate emergency panels.

Following this research, a detailed proposal to deliver community deliberative processes is being developed, which will come towards this Executive in the coming months, to provide comprehensive information on how these methods will be set up and delivered.

Some of the potential topics for discussion will reflect the behaviour change needed to achieve net zero, and this includes:

- Our vision for future living across Wokingham Borough;
- modal shift in transport;
- reducing energy consumption through behaviour, technology and home improvements;
- reducing the amount of waste we generate and improving our recycling behaviours;
- reducing food waste and supporting sustainable consumption; and also
- Conscious consumption. So shopping local, using less plastic, avoiding fast fashions and taking staycations.

This process will involve a diverse and unbiased range of participants to obtain the best quality feedback from balanced discussions. The results will then be openly fed back into the Council and also back to the community.

Supplementary Question

Can I put a request in that we look at how we can increase biodiversity in the Borough and see if we can get this as one of the subjects of the early LDPs as you go forward?

Supplementary Answer

Yes, I can certainly confirm that we can do that. I think it is a great thing to add to our list of local deliberative processes for the future. Increasing biodiversity is really important to us as a Council.

Yes, absolutely I think getting our residents' views and opinions on how we do that would be very valuable to our community and our climate emergency going forward.

6.2 Nick Dyer had asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question but as he was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided:

Question

Since 2013 the monthly membership fee (currently £30 per month/£360 p.a.) has allowed squash players to book off-peak courts at no additional cost. On 11th May 2021, without prior consultation, members were advised that with effect from 1st June that IN ADDITION to the monthly fee, a charge of £5.50 would be levied for every off-peak booking.

This means ADDITIONAL COST as follows:

- 1 court booking per week = £286 p.a.
- 2 court bookings per week = £572 p.a.
- 3 court bookings per week = £858 p.a.
- 4 court bookings per week = £1144 p.a.

Not many people play 4 times a week, but I and a number of others do (we were described by PFP as "abnormal members"!) but the impact on us is huge. The group I represent are mainly senior citizens for whom this is our main source of exercise which is now being discouraged. We believe some members will cancel and the rest of us will significantly reduce usage emerging from a pandemic.

I would like to know what impact analysis on INDIVIDUALS was carried out by the Council before they sanctioned these draconian price increases by Places for People and how they can be justified.

Answer

Within the existing terms and conditions for those that hold a membership with Places Leisure (PFP), changes can be made to memberships and at this point members will be notified and consulted prior to any changes and can, if they wish, cancel their membership.

Proposed price changes that are not deemed core pricing sessions (which are increased yearly as per inflation and agreed with the Sport and Leisure team) are put forward for discussion and review and once agreed PFP will initiate the changes in line with their terms and conditions.

Background and supporting details for the change by PFP:

Place Leisure inherited the previous contractor's membership and racket sport pricing structures in May 2018 and not a current membership option that PFP offer within their pricing structure. The legacy memberships were honoured for over three years whilst refurbishment & improvement works were carried out across all Wokingham sites.

The membership implemented for those that were on a legacy 1Life membership is not a rackets membership, as mentioned above there is no such membership that PFP offer. The implemented membership is excellent value when combined with usage of the gym, fitness classes, swimming & 50% off racket sports usage.

Racket Sport hire price has not increased from 1st June 2019, instead the booking structure for members has been reviewed and amended in June 2021, the headline membership rate of £41 a month unlimited use has not been increased this year, and there are no plans to review this until 2022. On average, members book a racket court 1-2 times weekly. This frequency of use ensures their membership is still excellent value.

After consultation, Mr Dyer was immediately transferred to a more suitable senior (over 60's) membership, benefiting from unlimited access to the gym, group exercise classes along with the 50% reduction on courts at St Crispin's LC for £29.00 a month.

Recommendations are also encouraged that members split the price of a squash court with their playing partner, rather than paying for the court in full themselves, reducing the racket usage costs by half.

The over 60's membership reduction also supports all those residents that Mr Dyer mentions, supporting and encouraging older residents within the Borough an affordable membership option for all activities offered.

Places Leisure pricing remains extremely competitive and in many areas versus other like-for-like leisure providers in the local area (e.g. Everyone Active in Bracknell and GLL in Reading) and provides excellent value for money in which we encourage for the residents of Wokingham.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

7.1 Gary Cowan asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

I participated in a workshop recently which looked at building over 4,500 houses, 3 schools, community centres, new roads etc at Hall Farm stretching to and including parts of Winnersh.

When asked a senior Officer at the workshop suggested that the evolving local plan was to provide 700 to 750 houses a year until 2036 but in the local Wokingham Paper you are quoted as stating the number each year would be in the region of 14,000 plus a year to 2036.

Was the 700 to 750 the housing number the Council would like to put in the Hall Farm Arborfield to Winnersh and the 14,000 plus the number for the Borough as a whole?

Can the Leader of the Council update me on the actual or approximate housing numbers the Council are planning for the Borough in the evolving housing plan to 2036?

Answer

First of all I would just like to point out Gary that I cannot be responsible for what is printed in the press.

As the mastermind behind the current plan, you are well aware what the paradigms around a local plan process are. Indeed, you were the Executive Member to whom could be attributed the four SDLs and all the development for the last decade. I can therefore assume that you are familiar with the process.

You are also correct in describing the local plan as evolving.

Government policy requires all local authorities to set out plans to deliver new housing, and Wokingham Borough Council is no different. This is a central issue to be grappled with through the new local plan.

Unfortunately, due to the change in the emergency planning arrangements around AWE Burghfield we are no longer able to rely on providing for most of the new housing need through the creation of the Grazeley garden town, as proposed in the Draft Local Plan consultation last year, and we are having to review alternative possible approaches. The meeting you attended is part of an evidence gathering exercise, considering how development might be managed on a strategic scale, should this approach be taken. Information on this process is available on our website.

I should stress at this juncture that no decisions have been made as to what the alternative approach will be recommended for consultations and all options remain on the table.

Returning to your question, the figures you quote are confusing the amount of housing the Government requires to be built each year within Wokingham Borough with the amount of housing that needs to be managed by the local plan over its entire period.

You will recall that last year the Government White Paper proposals were that Wokingham Borough would have to provide in excess of 1,600 per annum, which with buffers would have been around 2,000 per annum. You were sceptical that this would and could be eased. But a Conservative administration is capable of having a dialogue with a Conservative Government and I can say without fear of contradiction that the policy was abandoned because of our opposition. At the time it was said that I was notorious in Whitehall.

The applicable Government policy calculates the amount of housing a local authority needs to enable through a standard method. For Wokingham Borough, the standard method currently calculates the housing need as 768 dwellings per year. This figure is recalculated each year as you know but it has generally been in the range of 760-820 dwellings.

You may recall that when you were Lead Member for Planning at the time the 2010 Local Plan was accepted with a figure of 623 new homes per year.

The Draft Local Plan we consulted on last year covered the period 2018 to 2035/36, an 18-year period. 768 dwellings per year for 18 years is just under 14,000 dwellings. There is no requirement to provide 14,000 dwellings each year.

For completeness, much of the required 14,000 dwellings will be met from sites which already have planning permission. For example 9,000 dwellings have already been completed, are under construction or have planning permission as part of the four Strategic Development Locations defined by your adopted Core Strategy local plan In 2010, on which you were instrumental.

I am in discussions with MHCLG to ameliorate the requirement by seeking clarification on exceptional circumstances and the five year land supply.

Consultation on the new local plan is anticipated in the autumn.

Supplementary Question

I was looking at the Wokingham Borough Council Managing Development Local Plan Document, which was adopted in February 2014 and was signed off by the then Executive Member for Planning, which was Councillor Keith Baker. Looking at Appendix 14 it makes reference to South Wokingham SDL and the requirement to build 2,490 houses by 2026, which is the end of the Plan. I think the same line would apply to all four SDLs. I attended a planning meeting briefing on South Wokingham and its evolution fairly recently and in that the developers and Officers said that once planning permission had been granted for the remainder of the work it would take at least 10 years to complete the project. If all of those houses are supposed to be built by 2026, 10 years on takes it up into 2030, 31, 32 and this really will apply, I would think, to all the SDLs.

So my concern is, and the question is, if you lump the incomplete houses in the existing Local Plan will they be added to the numbers that you will be agreeing in the new Local Plan and so whatever the number will be it will be plus all of the incomplete ones in the existing Local Plan?

Supplementary Answer

I think you are assuming parts of the evolving Local Plan which are yet to evolve and I think you will have to wait for that position unless Wayne can provide anything further.

Councillor Wayne Smith provided the following response:

I think you are right Gary. I think the issue we have had in South Wokingham is the delay in getting the scheme off the ground. So, I think you are right but it will not be in addition to, they will be negative numbers off the overall plan.

7.2 Imogen Shepherd DuBey asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

Having looked at the Recovery Strategy document, I am having trouble seeing what WBC are doing, over and above the business-as-usual items that are mentioned in this document. This document seems to cover the work that WBC would be doing anyway, but it does not demonstrate what additional funding is being made available to help local Businesses recover and how it might be used. Even Wokingham Town Council has

managed to find funding for advertising and banners promoting businesses in Wokingham Town Centre, but at this critical time, we have seen no wider help at all from WBC.

Please can you identify what additional funding is being allocated to business recovery and how is going to be used?

Answer

In sending you our proposed Recovery Strategy earlier than the usual date of distribution, I was hoping you would come up with something useful that we could expand on the comprehensive Recovery Strategy we already have in place. Sadly, you have not but it is really good to have Wokingham Town Council coming to the party, albeit late in the day.

Taking your specific point regarding Wokingham Town. Rather than just hang up some bunting and banners we will continue to regenerate the Town Centre in the context of Business Recovery at a total investment of approximately £150m. This will involve working hard with our resources to bring in attractive retailers by encouraging them that this is a great place to come and set up a business. We have already been successful in doing this during the pandemic. We will continue to administer support schemes available to businesses and ensure our businesses across the whole Borough receive any restart support available in addition to the £66m support we have already distributed. Additional staffing resources have been secured to reach out to our businesses in this regard.

We know that one of the best ways to bounce back is to create vibrancy within the Town, which we will do through attracting desirable retailers as I have previously mentioned, creating the right environment and facilitating events to draw people in.

Our regeneration activity will include the completion and sale of the homes we are building around Elms Field and surrounding areas, a new hub for leisure, swimming and other events, including a new library. You will also be aware from this agenda that we are even investing sizeably in a boxing hub in the town centre, which we are expecting to be of great appeal across age ranges and genders.

All of this considerable investment and resource will be directed into; building out the town centre assets and facilities to create an attractive business environment; supporting current businesses to bounce back; attracting desirable retailers and facilitating the environment and events to draw people into the town. These endeavours stretch into the 100s of million pounds and are without a doubt on top of business as usual for any local authority. But we know this is the right thing to do as our businesses deserve every opportunity to rise and thrive following such a difficult time. Who knows, we might also put up a bit of bunting.

Supplementary Question

Your answer doesn't really answer my question. There was no budget line in the budget meeting that we had in February to talk about recovery at all. I know that there has been grant funding from central Government and that has been distributed and that is great. But I want to know what additional costs the Covid recovery is having on Wokingham and I don't see any sign of that in this report. Also, I wasn't aware that we were allowed to comment on this report as it seemed to have got dumped on us. So, this is why we are asking the question now.

Aside from the grants that central Government has given us what funding has come from Wokingham Borough Council? How much money has it cost us for this Covid recovery plan because it was not in the budget for this year?

Supplementary Answer

I correct you it is all in the budget. We have been working on the recovery plan for the last 12 months and it is all encompassed in the MTFP.

As I said I am delighted to hear that Wokingham Town Council is finally coming to the party.

As far as I can tell both Wokingham and Earley Town Councils have slept for sixteen months, having delegated all the functions to the Officers. There is no evidence that either body has done anything material in that time. Whilst not doing anything it has kept all the Officers on full pay at the residents' cost. No identifiable furlough has occurred and no recovery plan has been published.

It is appalling that Earley Town Council have not in two years been able to finish the transfer of Sibley Park Woods and grass areas from Persimmon Homes whilst suggesting that they should be custodians of more land.

If my memory serves me correctly the Lib Dems were against developing Elms Field which is now and has been throughout the pandemic a centre of vibrant activity. Any day it is literally full reflecting the popularity of the facility.

Our regeneration of the Wokingham town centre has kept it alive free of the voids which other town centres have suffered. Again, if my memory serves me correctly your former Leader and your party was against redevelopment but proposed no shops but a dark warehouse from which goods could be collected.

£150m has been spent in the town centre providing a cinema, car parking, a swimming pool, new shops, a hotel, a leisure centre, a theatre, etc, etc. We Conservatives have led in Wokingham Town, Woodley, Earley and Twyford. Every improvement has been opposed by the Lib Dems who after the event have claimed responsibility.

The Twyford library was completely devoid of any Lib Dem involvement, it is a Tory achievement of which I am proud.

Oh no, I do you a misjustice the Lib Dem Leader is very concerned about spending and would wish to curtail presumably cancelling the library, Carnival Pool etc etc. Central to your question was increasing spending. The Lib Dems only see issues in terms of spending and every proposal made increases it.

Wokingham Town, despite Covid, is vibrant and I entreat Wokingham Town Council to welcome shoppers and visitors to use it. You should be doing all in your power to revitalise this wonderful asset that the Tory Borough Council has developed. The residents expect it.

It is truly good for our residents that the Lib Dems are in opposition. I concur with the assertion that Lib Dem questions are whatever they are.

7.3 Shahid Younis had asked the Deputy Executive Member for Equalities, Poverty, the Arts and Climate Emergency a question which was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

**7.4 Lindsay Ferris asked the Leader of the Council the following question:
Question**

When you gave your Budget Speech in February this year, there was no mention of a Recovery Plan, something, you may remember I commented on in my speech in response to your proposals. I have been through the current proposals and I can still see no Budget commitments within the Document, only a broad comment about working within the financial restrictions of the Council. That seems to confirm no specific financial allowance has been made to perform any of the proposals, such as they are, mentioned within the Document.

Is this document nothing more than an after-thought?

Answer

It is true about the Lib Dem questions. Thank you Lindsay for your question. It will obviously surprise you to know that we have been working with our Officers since the early months of lockdown in March 2020 on the Council's response to recovery. This predates your rhetoric at Council in February 2021 by about 10 months. Although, quite rightly, our primary attention during the pandemic has been on our response and saving lives, there has been 'shadow' Gold meetings chaired by our Deputy Chief Executive which has focused on recovery. Work has been going on across the Council for over a year and this document simply brings this together in a formal way. The only way in which I would refer to this document and the huge work that sits beside it, as an after-thought, is that throughout the pandemic it has been the thought that we have been saving lives, communities and businesses.

As for budgets for recovery, here are some financial commitments that were incorporated in the MTFP in February 2021:

- completion of £150m investment in Wokingham Town Centre regeneration and recovery;
- climate emergency investment in seeking to become carbon neutral as part of recovery £71m over 3 years;
- investing in our contain and outbreak management plan to enable recovery over £2m;
- £250k as an initial pilot to support those with low level mental health issues, to help those who need it recover from the impact of the pandemic;
- £160k over the next 2 years to enhance our approach to domestic abuse which is another area which will need greater support as a result of the pandemic.

As I said these are just some, there are plenty more that I could cite. However more significantly you are missing the fundamental point of this Strategy. All of the Council's resources will be utilised with these Pillars in mind as these Pillars are considered to be the most significant areas that need attending to in delivering successfully on our Council Plan.

The Recovery Strategy is also clear on its status as being a flexible, dynamic, evolving strategy, informed by the data and insight we gather along the way. No one can know all the specific issues and challenges our community will face over the next five years. You

will be aware from the approach that we have taken to the pandemic; we will act clearly and decisively to do what needs to be done, we will target Council resources to where it is most important and will not be shy in seeking additional budgetary resources if and where it is needed.

Supplementary Question

I think I can make a similar comment about responses to questions as well as you made earlier. I think you have missed the point of what we have been saying particularly the Covid recovery plan because what you have mentioned mostly this evening is our activities which have been going on for 3, 4, 5 years. We as a result of the problem with Covid have had a significant number of businesses struggling, a lot of people being laid off and at the Community and Corporate O&S meeting you admitted that it was a reaction to the situation.

What are you actually doing to deal with the extra requirements associated with having a Covid problem? We have all those extra problems. What is it extra that you are doing as a result of Covid?

Supplementary Answer

We generally live within the budget that we set in the MTFP and that is good financial management. I have always been rather appalled by the financial literacy of the opposition. We will come back to the Executive or Council if we need further budgetary additions to that envelope. So, we will live within that envelope.

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

Question

Who was involved in the decision-making process for the price increases at St Crispin's Leisure Centre that has led to in some cases, a 4-fold increase in cost for some users?

Answer

Within the existing terms and conditions for those that hold a membership with Places Leisure (or PFP for short), changes can be made to memberships and at this point members will be notified prior to any changes and can, if they wish, review their membership options or cancel their membership.

Proposed price changes that are not deemed core pricing sessions (which are increased yearly as per inflation and agreed with the Sport and Leisure Team) are put forward for discussion and review and once agreed PFP will initiate the changes in line with their terms and conditions.

The change in cost relates to a legacy membership inherited by PFP from the previous contractors in May 2018 and not a current membership option that PFP offer within their pricing structure. The legacy memberships were honoured for over three years whilst refurbishment and improvement works were carried out across all Wokingham sites.

The membership implemented for those that were on a legacy 1Life membership is not a rackets membership, as mentioned above and there is no such membership that PFP offer. The implemented membership is excellent value when combined with usage of the gym, fitness classes, swimming and 50% off racket sports usage.

Racket sport hire prices have not increased since 1st June 2019, instead the booking structure for members has been reviewed and amended in June 2021, the headline membership rate is £41 a month unlimited use and has not been increased this year, and there are no plans to review it until next year. On average, members book a racket court once or twice a week. The frequency of use ensures that membership is still excellent value.

The members that were affected and have raised concerns and are eligible were immediately transferred to a more suitable senior (over 60's) membership, benefiting from unlimited access to the gym, group exercise and classes along with the 50% reduction on courts at St Crispin's Leisure Centre and for only £29.00 a month.

Recommendations are also encouraged that those members split the price of a squash court with their playing partner, rather than paying for it themselves, therefore reducing the racket usage by half.

Places Leisure pricing remains extremely competitive and in many areas versus other like-for-like leisure providers in the local area (for instance Everyone Active in Bracknell and GLL in Reading) and we provide excellent value for money in which we encourage the residents of Wokingham to use these fantastic facilities and they are of the best in the country..

Supplementary Question

I am quite surprised by your answer. I mean you have already highlighted that these price increases particularly affect squash players as you are aware. We have actually crunched the numbers and it is more expensive now to use the squash courts at St Crispin's than Wellington Health and Fitness Club.

A much better facility at Wellington Health and Fitness Club is actually cheaper than St Crispin's. St Crispin's is a Council owned facility.

My question is how are you intending to fulfil the Council's Leisure Strategy, of increasing participation in sports and leisure activities, when you price people out of using facilities run supposedly for public benefit?

Supplementary Answer

I think that I did explain that these were legacy charges which were not there, people enjoyed free sessions off-peak and those sessions have lasted for three years and we do not intend to carry these on. The PFP have implemented a price for those off-peak sessions. Squash is a fantastic game unfortunately we have to be competitive.

As you are aware Sarah Wokingham Borough Council is the lowest funded authority in the Country and we rely solely on the increased income that we get through our council tax paid by our fantastic residents. We want to use these funds wisely to provide our sports and facilities which are the best in the country and as such all of our residents to enjoy these facilities through paying appropriate and competitive prices.

So, I do not know where you are going to get your forward price increases and really I am at a loss to understand that.

7.6 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Relating to Revenue Monitoring 2020/21 – Outturn: The report shows that there were real pressures placed on the Council's finances last year, which we nonetheless were able to handle successfully due to strong financial management. Can you tell me what the plans are for progress on the Local Plan this year and how this will affect the current budget in light of continuing COVID pressures?

Answer

A review of the adopted plans is being undertaken to ensure that the Council's planning policies continue to be effective in managing decisions on development proposals.

The Council is currently involved in the process of preparing two local plans: the Central and East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan; and the Local Plan Update.

The Central and East Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan is being undertaken in partnership with Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Plan was submitted for examination in February and we are awaiting the programme from the appointed Inspector.

The programme for the Local Plan Update has unfortunately needed to be changed. This reflects the need to revisit and consult on a revised strategy to manage the growth following the extension of the emergency planning arrangements around AWE Burghfield in 2020. This change in circumstances meant that the strategy outlined in the Draft Local Plan from February last year is no longer practically achievable.

Consultation on a revised strategy for the Local Plan will be held this autumn. This will formally be set out in an update and the Local Development Scheme due for consideration by the Executive in July, next month.

We all recognise the importance of preparing new local plans to ensure we continue to have effective planning policies. Budgets already exist for both plans which are sufficient to cover the costs of their preparation, including procuring all the evidence.

8. WBC RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report setting out a proposed strategy for the Council that addresses the key issues arising from the pandemic and attends to 'recovery' in the context of delivering the Corporate Plan.

The Leader of Council introduced the report and advised that the Recovery Strategy had been worked up during the pandemic and most of the financial consequences set out in the Strategy had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan. If additional funding was required then proposals would be brought back to the Executive in the form of supplementary estimates.

Whilst the Council could never have predicted the course of the pandemic, it was clear that it would do damage to the Borough and its economy therefore whilst there was a team within the Council dealing with the requirements of the pandemic there was also a team working on the aftermath.

Councillor Halsall advised that the pandemic had been approached in three phases: response, recovery, and reorientation. He also highlighted and provided additional detail on the nine key pillars and the three key principles, as set out in the Strategy.

Gregor Murray stated that given that Covid had brought with it a reduction in the particulates that adversely affected our air and also an increase in home working, which provided benefits for the environment, he was pleased to see that the Strategy included an additional focus on maintaining the lower particulate rate and also working with residents and local businesses to maintain some of that home working which had a great carbon benefit. Councillor Murray also welcomed the fact that the Council was making investments in mental health as it was known that this was going to be an area of concern for a lot of residents post Covid.

RESOLVED that the Wokingham Borough Council Recovery Strategy be approved and the challenges of recovery in a changing landscape and the need to be agile in approach be noted.

9. REVENUE MONITORING 2020/21 - OUTTURN

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

The Executive considered a report setting out the revenue outturn position of the Council for the 20/21 financial year.

During his introduction, the Executive Member for Finance and Housing reminded the meeting that the Council was the lowest funded unitary council in the UK with regards to Government grants. This had meant that over the past 10 years the Council had to reduce its spending in real terms by around £35m, however it had managed to continue offering high levels of service and end up with a general reserve balance which at the start of the pandemic was £12.4m. Councillor Kaiser went into detail on the programmes that had been embarked upon during this time which included the setting up of the Council owned housing companies, which not only delivered affordable homes but also made a profit to be reinvested back into services, investing in Wokingham town centre, and commercial investments which were performing well.

Councillor Kaiser further highlighted some of the projects that had been completed as part of the capital programme. This included five new primary schools, one new secondary school and six major road projects. The road projects consisted of Arborfield relief road, which was delivered on time, the new bridge at Barkham, relief roads in Winnersh and Shinfield, the start of the new southern and northern relief roads as well as the new station and new station link roads. He went on to mention the 700 new affordable and social homes that had been completed over the last two years and the regeneration and replacement of Gorse Ride in Finchampstead which would deliver over 200 new homes.

Councillor Kaiser went on to inform the meeting about the work that had been carried out to ensure that during the pandemic those who were homeless were looked after and taken off the streets as well as providing information on the action and support that had been provided to the poorest and most vulnerable in the Borough and to businesses.

As set out in the report Councillor Kaiser highlighted that despite the challenges that had been faced during the pandemic the Council had come in under budget for the 20/21 financial year both on business as usual (£1.2m) and overall including Covid 19 costs in the sum of £800k. The HRA was showing a surplus of £1.4m and general reserves were

standing at £10.4m. The only area where an increase of costs was showing was the Dedicated School Grant which was due to the increase in costs for children with special needs. The Council had been working with the DfE to address this issue and had plans to deliver additional in-Borough provision to arrest these costs going forward.

Councillor Kaiser paid tribute to the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer, the senior management and the commitment of all staff to deliver services on time and on or in some cases below budget with no reduction in the quality of services to residents. He also thanked the charity sector for their contribution.

Following a query by Councillor Jorgensen it was confirmed that the Council's net debt was £131m.

Councillor Margetts highlighted that the actions taken during the pandemic all cost money eg purchasing PPE privately when it was not available from central Government, setting up vaccination centres, etc, and these had only been possible because of the strong financial position of the Council.

With regard to the carry forward requests, amounting to £7.4m, Councillor Kaiser clarified that the budget for these had been approved in the 2020/21 budget agreed by Council therefore they would not create any additional pressure on the 2021/22 budgets.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the outturn position of the revenue budget and the level of balances in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Schools Block be noted;
- 2) the General Fund carry forward requests of £7,464,939, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be agreed;
- 3) a supplementary estimate of £16,000 for the Digital Infrastructure Group be approved.

10. CAPITAL OUTTURN 2020/2021

The Executive considered a report setting out the Capital Programme outturn for 2020/2021.

In addition to the information provided during the revenue monitoring outturn item the Executive Member for Finance and Housing drew Members' attention to the fact that the Council had managed to spend £171m during the year, which was only £3m below target and which was a major achievement given the pandemic.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the outturn position of the capital programme for 2020/21, as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in Appendix A, be noted;
- 2) the proposed fourth quarter carry forwards into the 2021/22 Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix B, be noted and approved;
- 3) the Quarter 4 budget adjustments to the 2020/21 capital programme which include:

- a. £4.22m of ringfenced funded capital budget provisionally programmed for 2021/22 is brought forward into the current year (2020/21), for the acceleration of the delivery of the SCAPE – Road Infrastructure project;
- b. Reduction in capital programme budget of £114k across schools devolved programme, due to the reduction in the funding from the devolved schools grant; be noted and approved.

11. IMPLEMENTING THE LEISURE STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report which proposed two new leisure developments which would take forward the draft Leisure Strategy by further enhancing the Council's facilities to increase physical activity and improve wellbeing.

The Executive Member for Environment and Leisure introduced the report and highlighted the proposal for a boxing fitness hub. He advised that local research had shown that combat sports and fitness sessions attendances were on the rise. In line with the town centre regeneration an opportunity for a high-end fitness studio with classes as its main attraction had become available. Focus would be on combat exercise classes and fee-box sessions for training and exercise purposes.

Councillor Batth went on to provide information on the proposal for a 3G pitch and additional car parking at Laurel Park. It was noted that data from the current Playing Pitch Strategy showed that Wokingham had over 540 football teams and there was a need for additional 3G pitches. Laurel Park's pitches were rated as 'poor' within the Strategy and maintenance work is being carried out on the pitches to improve them. Installing a new 3G pitch and additional parking would mean that players would not have to travel outside the Borough.

Councillor Jorgensen was pleased to see the proposal for a 3G pitch at Laurel Park as there were issues with the current pitches on that site. She highlighted that local residents had problems with people parking and the traffic on matchday so asked if a solution to this issue could be considered whilst building the 3G pitch.

Due to the shortage of cricket pitches in the area Councillor Jorgensen asked if consideration could also be given to the inclusion of an astroturf cricket square at Laurel Park. Councillor Batth welcomed these suggestions and advised that between 40-50 parking bays were being proposed at Laurel Park, subject to planning permission, which should assist with the issues local residents were facing. He agreed to look at the possibility of including a cricket square.

Given the physical and mental health benefits of boxing Councillor Murray welcomed the proposal of setting up a boxing fitness hub into the community and particularly the introduction of self-defence classes for women. He asked that a commitment be made that these classes would be prioritised as part of the club's activities and that they would be well promoted and publicised, particularly in schools, and run at various times of the day to make sure that anybody who wanted to attend was able to do so. Councillor Batth confirmed his commitment and support for Councillor Murray requests.

RESOLVED that the following be approved:

- 1) a new boxing fitness hub based in a first floor unit in Peach Place, Wokingham. This is to be managed by WBC Sport and Leisure Team and approval for all associated fees and charges to be agreed for the hub as set in Schedule 1;

- 2) the borrowing of £630k for the hub which will be funded by income from the activities, resulting in a surplus after all costs on average of £80k p.a.;
- 3) a new 3G pitch and additional car parking located at Laurel Park, subject to funding and planning, and borrowing of £300k to be self-financed by project.

12. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021-2024

The Executive considered a report setting out a proposed Community Safety Partnership Strategy and priorities covering the period 2021-2024.

The Leader of Council highlighted the work that was being carried out to address residents' safety and their environment. This included appointing a Community Safety Manager, a Domestic Violence Manager and an Anti-Social Behaviour Manager.

In addition, environmental health, trading standards and licensing, together with more than 150 pieces of legislation, were being brought back under the Council's control. The Licensing and Appeals Committee, which would be renamed the Licensing, Trading Standards and Appeals Committee, and would develop, over a number of years, a Wokingham Borough Council policy for each of these services.

Councillor Halsall advised the meeting of the work that would be carried out by the Community Safety Partnership, environmental health, trading standards, licensing with health partners and towns and parishes to provide a consistent and joined up approach and also the creation of a responsive and out of hours service.

With regard to the Community Safety Strategy Councillor Halsall drew Members' attention to the priorities for the Community Safety Partnership and the five delivery areas as set out in the report.

The Executive Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods advised the meeting that the Community Safety Strategy was deferred from the previous Executive meeting in order that additional public and stakeholder consultation could be undertaken. The current Strategy and priorities came to an end in March 2021 and legislation states that the Community Safety Partnership must have in place:

- a strategy for crime and disorder, including anti-social behaviour, combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area;
- a strategy for the reduction of re-offending in Wokingham Borough; and
- a system for monitoring the strategy for effectiveness and make any changes where necessary and expedient.

With regard to the development of the Strategy Councillor Soane highlighted the workshop that had taken place on 10th December 2020, as set out in Appendix 2, the consultation that had been carried out over a period of five weeks in February/March with residents and stakeholders and the input of Members and Officers of the Council. It was noted that although the Strategy had an end date of 2024 it would be reviewed annually.

RESOLVED: That the Community Safety Partnership Strategy and new priorities for 2021-2024 be endorsed for implementation on 1 July 2021.

13. COMMERCIAL HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITY FOR DINTON PASTURES COUNTRY PARK

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposal to commence a contract opportunity for the provision of hospitality services at Dinton Pastures Country Park.

The Executive Member for Environment and Leisure explained that the intention was that the contracted hospitality services would provide an outstanding customer experience, innovative food/drinks offer and increased income for the Council. The expectation was that the contract would commence on April 2022 and would be based on a five-year term with the possibility of a five-year extension. There was currently only one café at Dinton Pastures and one upcoming café which would form part of the new Activity Centre.

Councillor Batth went through the various stages of the tender process which included giving the shortlisted candidates the opportunity to pitch their business cases to a panel. This was an exciting opportunity to develop and realise the Council's commercial ambitions whilst delivering excellent customer service for the thousands of visitors who attend the Country Park annually.

Following a query by Councillor Jorgensen it was confirmed that the official opening of the Activity Centre would be 11 September however a soft opening was proposed at the end of July.

Councillor Kaiser queried whether there was an opportunity to open a restaurant for use in the evenings as he felt that would be very successful. Councillor Batth confirmed that the proposal was for a café upstairs in the activity centre and a high class restaurant on the site which was currently occupied by the Dragonfly café.

RESOLVED: That the commencement of the procurement process to select a contractor who will provide outstanding hospitality services at Dinton Pastures Country Park (i.e. the Dragonfly Café and new Dinton Activity Centre Café) from April 2022 be approved.

14. ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposed establishment of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) under the Bus Services Act 2017.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport introduced the report and explained that the proposal was intended to improve the Council's working relationships with the various local transport operators, including commercial, community and voluntary, in the Borough. Councillor Jorgensen clarified that the first stage of the process was merely to give notice of the Council's intention to establish an Enhanced Partnership which was not legally binding. The Enhanced Partnership agreement, which would be legally binding, would be brought back to the Executive once the working party had agreed the key requirements for the bus service improvement plan and the EP agreement and discussions had been held with the local transport operators.

Given that bus services had been significantly impacted by Covid and a shift towards public transport was necessary to meet climate aims Councillor Murray queried what would happen if the Council did not sign up to the Enhanced Partnership and what opportunities would be provided if it did sign up over and above those that were currently available? Councillor Jorgensen stated that the Council would lose its Covid bus funding if it did not, at least, give notice of its intention to form an Enhanced Partnership. Signing up would give the opportunity to have more influence on the bus providers and therefore the

bus routes, both commercial and subsidised and also hopefully lead to a better relationship with the major bus companies in the area. It was hoped that this would also give the Council more negotiating power in the rural areas.

RESOLVED: That it be agreed that Wokingham Borough Council give notice to establishing an Enhanced Partnership under the Bus Services Act 2017.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERSONNEL BOARD
HELD ON 28 JUNE 2021 FROM 6.00 PM TO 6.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Halsall (Chairman), John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman), Lindsay Ferris, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Clive Jones, Simon Weeks and Rachel Bishop-Firth

Officers Present

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

Joelle Cooper, HR

Jon Forde, HR

Christine Bennett, Interim Assistant Director HR

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. ANNUAL PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021

Joelle Cooper, HR presented the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2021.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- An improved methodology had been applied for that year, in that the full time equivalent salary had been used for the purposes of data comparison, ensuring a more robust and accurate method for like for like salary comparison between officer pay.
- This year a new baseline had been set for data analysis that could be used as a comparator for future years.
- The gap between the highest paid officer and the lowest paid officer continued to diminish, primarily through changes applied to the National Minimum Wage each year.
- The mean salary continued to change. This could be attributed to changes in general recruitment and retention movement throughout the year. Covid response and recruitment requirements had also contributed to changes, as well as general organisational structures.
- The essence of the Pay Policy remained unchanged from the previous year.
- There would be more of a focus on the Council's general approach to pay and reward strategy to ensure that the Council best supported and underpinned its best ability to deliver against the Corporate Delivery Plan and the People Strategy.

- With regards to managers having discretion to appoint new staff at a level above the minimum salary and managers having discretion to withhold incremental increases in the event of unsatisfactory performance, Councillor Weeks questioned how often this took place and at what level of staff. Joelle Cooper indicated that she would feed back to the Board. Members were reminded that managers would be operating within set pay bands.
- In response to a question from Councillor Kaiser, Joelle Cooper indicated that the full time equivalent salary was used in the preparation of the Gender Pay Gap Report.
- Councillor Bishop-Firth asked how much support and control there was for managers exercising their discretion in either appointing at above the minimum level or withholding incremental increases. Joelle Cooper indicated that it was managers discretion as to which entry point within the pay band that they appointed to. However, the withholding of increments would be discussed with HR and would be aligned with a performance management process.
- Councillor Bishop-Firth sought clarification regarding redundancy pay. Joelle Cooper agreed to feed back.

RESOLVED: That the Personnel Board approve the Pay Policy Statement 2021 and recommend its agreement to Full Council on 22 July 2021.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

8. AGENCY WORKER USAGE - QUARTER 4

The Board received the Agency Worker Usage Quarter 4 report.

RESOLVED: that the Agency Worker Usage Quarter 4 report be noted.