



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS  
FOR THE PERIOD**

**28 July 2021 to 1 September 2021**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage  
Chief Executive  
Published on 13 September 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  
AUDIT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 28 JULY 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.15 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**Also Present**

Helen Thompson, Ernst and Young  
Stephan Van Der Merwe, Ernst & Young  
Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist  
Michael Bateman, Children's Services Complaints Manager  
Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance  
Daneet Penny, Customer Delivery Officer  
Jackie Whitney, Service Manager Customer Services Operations  
Bob Watson, Assistant Director Finance

**12. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Maria Gee.

**13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Gee in the attendance record.

Councillor Shepherd-DuBey commented that she had asked a question regarding the former Marks and Spencer's building was considered Property, Plant and Equipment or Commercial Property and that the Assistant Director Finance was yet to provide a written response. The Assistant Director Finance agreed to follow this up.

**14. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey declared a Personal Interest regarding Item 17 EY-verbal update on 2019/20 and 2020/21 audit on the grounds that she had money in the Berkshire Pension Fund.

**15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no Public questions.

**16. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

**17. EY - VERBAL UPDATE ON 2019/20 AND 2020/21 AUDITS**

The Committee received an update on the EY 2019/20 and 2020/21 audits.

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

- Helen Thompson indicated that the 2019/20 audit was close to being finalised and published by the end of the month. Reasons for the delay had included the change in accounting policies to incorporate the Group Accounts, and the delay in the receipt of the pension assessment to enable the formation of an audit opinion.

- With regards to the delay to the completion of the Berkshire Pension Fund, Members were advised that EY had received the relevant letter in May. Differences had been identified in the pension membership data as of 31 March and 1 April. EY had to be satisfied that the differences would not have a material impact. The Assistant Director Finance added that taking time to ensure that the accounts were fully correct provided a sense of reassurance.
- The final audit results report would be circulated to the Committee. It was noted that the Annual Audit Letter would be presented at the September Committee meeting.
- Councillor Loyes asked for a precise date for when the accounts would be finalised. Officers indicated that they would be finalised by the end of the month, but they could not provide a precise date.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey sought reassurance that there would not be similar delays in future. The Assistant Director Finance indicated that an audit plan beginning September had been produced. Assurances had been provided with regards to the pension fund element. As the pandemic was still ongoing there was potential for timescales to slip, however, it was anticipated that the draft 2020/21 accounts would be available for November.
- Councillor Sargeant asked whether the delay regarding the Berkshire Pension Fund element had impacted the production of the accounts of the other Berkshire authorities. Helen Thompson indicated that it had for those authorities whose audits were conducted by EY.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey commented that Slough Council had issued a Section 114 notice and asked what impact this would have on Wokingham. Helen Thompson commented that EY did not have significant concerns over the Council's arrangements with regards to Value for Money. The Assistant Director Finance indicated that he had produced a briefing note for the Chief Financial Officer to provide assurance that Wokingham was not in a similar situation. Members asked that this be shared with the Committee if possible.

**RESOLVED:** That the update on the EY 2019/20 and 2021 audits be noted.

## **18. ANNUAL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS REPORT 2020 - 21 WOKINGHAM**

The Committee received the Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2020-21.

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

- Covid had had an impact on the number and type of complaints received. Many of the issues raised were familiar, but may have been made worse by the pandemic (e.g. maintenance repairs).
- There had been an upward trend in the number of complaints resolved early.
- Key learnings included the importance of clear communication. Customers regularly felt that responses received lacked clarity, for instance, overusing technical jargon. This had been discussed by the Complaints Focus Group.
- The Committee noted a breakdown of formal complaints received at each stage and when they had been submitted. In Quarter 1 there had been less received than in previous years for this quarter. Numbers had increased sharply and then evened out by Quarter 4, resulting in a 16% increase in complaints. Improved complaints reporting and co-ordinated responses had impacted on this. The volume of customer interactions and work levels had increased, particularly in areas where complaints had increased such as housing maintenance and adult social care.

However, comparatively speaking formal complaints had not increased significantly. This mirrored the national picture.

- The 16% increase came in the main from customers wishing to escalate to Stage 2 and also included those that had not gone on to proceed to a Stage 2 investigation. Members were informed that the rise in complaints was something to be monitored rather than worried about.
- Members noted a breakdown of complaints by Directorate. Housing maintenance repairs continued to make up a significant proportion of complaints. This work had proved more challenging with Covid and social distancing requirements. Complaints in Resources and Assets had decreased whilst they had increased in Communities, Insight and Change. This could be partially attributed to the move of Housing Services from Resources and Assets to Communities, Insight and Change. Aside from this, the distribution of complaints was consistent with previous years.
- Members were updated with regards to complaints considered under the Children's Social Care complaints process. There had been an increase in the number of complaints resolved at early resolution stage. There had been a reduction in the number of Stage 1 complaints compared with the previous two years (down 37% compared to 2019/20). There had been a small increase in escalations to Stage 2. A case-by-case review would be carried out to identify if anything more could have been done to resolve the case any earlier. A further three cases had been escalated to Stage 3 panel, two of which had been resolved. Reasons for complaints included alleged inaccuracies in assessments, dissatisfaction with assessment reports or perceived poor attitude or conduct of staff.
- Key learnings from complaints considered under the Children's Social Care complaints process, included that some parents felt that they had not been kept sufficiently involved in the process or that there was bias in favour of the other parent. Practice consultants had been running bite sized training for social care staff around issues of consent, use and tone of language in assessments and evidence-based assessments. This would continue over the next financial year.
- Members were updated on corporate complaints regarding Children's Services. There had a slight increase in the number of formally recorded complaints.
- Members noted a sample of compliments received across the year. A Customer Feedback Survey specifically for complaints had been developed. This would gather feedback following complaint resolution. Customers would be asked to give feedback and an overall rating of their experience and for their views on how their complaint had been dealt with. Customers would be asked how easy it had been to submit a complaint and for feedback on those who had dealt with the complaint.
- The Complaints Focus Group looked at how the Council could improve the way it dealt with complaints. The Complaints Policy had been rebranded and awareness raised across the Council around the Complaints Policy. Complaints training was being developed and an online complaints form had been launched.
- Councillor Shenton asked whether the number of complaints escalated above Stage 1 varied or was fairly static. He was informed that it did vary but levels had been fairly static for the last few years. With regards to Children's Social Care complaints, if a customer complaint was dealt with at Stage 1 and the customer felt that their complaint had not been satisfactorily resolved, it could be escalated to Stage 2.
- Councillor Loyes commented that the number of complaints received in Quarter 3 seemed high and asked whether policies needed to change. He was informed that the Council was trying to give clearer, simpler responses to complaints, across the Council.

- Councillor Ross asked if it was possible to analyse the complaints given the unusual situation of Covid. He also asked how the Complaints Team were made aware of what was considered jargon. The Service Manager Customer Services Operations commented that people had been home more because of Covid and had noticed more issues. There had been a number of complaints around housing maintenance which had had to reduce its activities because of Covid restrictions. It was important to manage expectations around timescales. In addition, the Ombudsman had closed from March-July which had had an impact on the number of complaints dealt with. With regards to jargon, a Learning and Development Plan was being developed which would detail how to write and convey responses to complaints.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey commented that she was hearing a lot of dissatisfaction regarding grass cutting and questioned when information regarding these complaints would be available. She was informed that the cut off for the annual report had been March, so grass cutting reports would likely appear in the next quarter report.

**RESOLVED:** That the Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2020-21 be noted.

## **19. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

The Committee considered the Corporate Risk Register.

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

- Since the Committee's previous meeting, Directors and Assistant Directors had reviewed their directorate risk registers and considered whether any new risks had emerged. Changes made since the last meeting fall into the category of either presentational or new/removed risks.
- No risks had been removed since the previous update to the Committee.
- The Assistant Director Governance outlined the changes made to headline assessments of existing risks. He referred to the self-assessment undertaken to ensure that the Council was in a good place financially and had controls in place to ensure that a similar situation to that of Slough Council did not occur. The risk register had been updated to reflect internal controls to manage the 'Budgeting and financial management risk.' It was noted that strategies around procurement and commercialisation were being presented to the Executive that week.
- With regards to Corporate Governance, an internal audit of this area had been planned in this quarter. There would also be a Local Government Association Peer Review in October.
- With regards to the Local Plan risk, the Executive was receiving a report on the Local Development scheme which would set out the timetable for the adoption of the Plan, giving more clarity and certainty around managing that particular risk.
- Risk 8 had been broadened to include cyber security.
- More work was expected through the Corporate Risk Management Group over the coming months.
- It was noted that the Committee was due to look at the Risk Management Policy at its September meeting and would be able to assure themselves that the policy remained effective.
- Training around strategic risk management had been proposed.
- Councillor Shenton commented that whilst he was not surprised that the Public Protection Partnership had been added as a risk, he was surprised that it had not been scored higher. The Assistant Director Governance agreed to feed this back.

He commented that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had received a detailed update at their previous meeting on the matter.

- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey commented that the new domestic abuse service provider currently did not have a refuge provision in place and questioned whether this should be included on the Corporate Risk Register. The Assistant Director Governance agreed to feed this back.

**RESOLVED:** That the risks and mitigating actions of the Council's corporate risks as detailed in the Corporate Risk Register, be noted.

## **20. 2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION QUARTER 2 WORK PROGRAMME AND QUARTER 1 PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Assistant Director Governance presented the 2021/22 Internal Audit and Investigation Quarter 2 Work Programme and Quarter 1 Progress Update.

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

- The report detailed the Quarter 2 report July to September. More details of the outcomes of the work undertaken by the team would be presented at the September and November meetings.
- The links between the planned work for internal audit and the Corporate Risk Register were being reinforced.
- Members were informed that the Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead Council had given notice that they intended to leave the Shared Service from 1 April 2022 and the transition process was being moved through. Councillor Shepherd-DuBey questioned why notice had been given on the Shared Service and what RBWM intended to do instead. The Assistant Director Governance stated that a report would be going to their September Audit Committee meeting. No indication had been given with regards to any direct dissatisfaction with the Shared Service itself.
- Councillor Loyes asked about the financial impact of the dissolution of the Shared Service and was informed this was still being considered. The team was clear about its focus on Wokingham and working towards Wokingham's internal audit plan. Members were reminded that the team also provided audit services for a number of other councils.
- Councillor Ross questioned whether the separation of the Shared Service would cost money.
- Councillor Shenton queried whether the Public Protection Partnership transition could be scheduled in the Internal Audit Plan. It was suggested that it could be built into the Quarter 3 plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the 2021/22 Internal Audit and Investigation Quarter 2 Work Programme be approved and the progress of work against the Quarter 1 Work Programme be noted.

## **21. AUDIT COMMITTEE TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

The Audit Committee considered a proposed training programme.

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

- A mixed approach towards training and development was detailed within the report. A series of training sessions or briefings were proposed an hour before the committee meetings, or on a separate day, as was preferred by the Committee.

- Members would continue to be sent the quarterly CIPFA bulletins.
- An Audit Committee self-assessment would be presented at the next committee meeting. The Chairman indicated that further training requirements may be identified via the self-assessment.
- Councillor Shepherd-DuBey commented that many Members outside of the Committee were unaware of its role. The Assistant Director Governance suggested raising awareness via the annual report to Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the proposed training programme be agreed.

## **22. FORWARD PROGRAMME**

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

It was confirmed that the September Committee had moved to 15 September.

**RESOLVED:** That the forward programme be noted.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 29 JULY 2021 FROM 8.25 AM TO 8.28 AM**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**33. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**34. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**35. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

**36. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions received.

**37. FEES AND CHARGES FOR FIT AND PROPER TESTS FOR MOBILE HOME SITE OWNERS/MANAGERS**

The Executive considered a report relating to the setting of fees associated with The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure explained the requirements of the new legislation, which required all authorities to appoint a 'fit and proper person' at each of its mobile home sites. It was noted that there were 19 mobile home sites within the Borough and there would also need to be an annual test of each 'fit and proper person', which was intended to improve the standard of management of mobile home sites.

Councillor Batth also advised that the legislation also required that each of the 19 sites needed to apply for assessment of their 'fit and proper person' between 1 July 2021-1 October 2021, which was why the report had come forward to this Extraordinary Executive. Each authority was allowed to charge fees, both for assessing applications and the annual check, to cover their costs. It was noted that the current hourly rate of £59 had been agreed by the Joint Public Protection Committee.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the fees associated with The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020, which are based on the Councils existing framework of Fees and Charges for the Public Protection Service. be approved;

- 2) the Application fee is set at a two hour set fee based on existing hourly rate (currently £59), plus hourly rate for each hour or part thereof should the application determination go over the 2 hours;
- 3) the fee for annual checking is directly cost recovery and will therefore be based on the hourly rate (currently £59) and time taken.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 29 JULY 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.23 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**Other Councillors Present**

Rachel Bishop-Firth  
Prue Bray  
Gary Cowan  
Sarah Kerr  
Jackie Rance

**15. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 24 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Leader of Council.

**17. STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF COUNCIL**

The Leader of Council made the following statement:

Good evening and welcome to the last Executive Meeting before the Summer holidays, which will be far from typical. We are in the seventeenth month of Covid, but things are now inexorably returning to normal, we hope.

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

Covid cases remain high in our Borough and they are now similar levels to what they were in mid-January. While the data shows infections have dropped in recent days, this is not a true reflection of the current picture, as the positivity rate remains stubbornly high. Unfortunately, the pandemic is far from over and the lifting of restrictions does not mean the risks from Covid have disappeared.

As a Council, we and particularly I as the Leader of the Council and the Executive, have a duty of care to our residents, and we are urging everyone to remain cautious; using their personal judgement to make the right choices and protect the people around them. We are also maintaining all social distancing measures in public Council buildings; asking people to wear face coverings whilst inside, to follow one-way systems and keep a distance from others, and to practise good hand hygiene.

Many local businesses will be adopting a similar approach and we are continuing to support them, alongside local schools, care homes and other venues, as we navigate through the changing guidance. We encourage residents to be respectful of others during this time, particularly the more vulnerable members of our community and those who are

feeling anxious and nervous about getting out and about again. Importantly, One Front Door is still here to help those who may be struggling and we will ensure that we share important updates through our usual communication channels during this difficult time.

We want to see people back out and about more. It is good for the community and good for our local businesses. But it is not supportive to risk spreading the virus. Already far too many shops and other businesses across the country are having to close because of staff needing to self-isolate. During the school term that recently ended we saw many children sent home for the same reasons. We must try to avoid that when they return in September.

Although hospital admissions remain low, this stage of the pandemic is critical because it is about learning to take personal responsibility and coming together as a community to cope with Covid, while understanding that others will cope differently.

In the months ahead, the test, isolate, vaccinate message will be extremely important to help slow the spread and keep everyone safe. This includes taking regular lateral flow tests to check you aren't infected if you don't have any symptoms, booking a PCR test through Gov.uk if you have symptoms, and staying home for the self-isolation period if you test positive. Close contacts of positive cases should also self-isolate until the rules around this change mid-August.

Getting both doses of the vaccine is crucial for protecting yourself and others and we are working with the NHS to drive uptake and arrange additional pop-up clinics to make access as easy as possible. These steps will help to protect yourself and the people around you, and we must not forget that mild illness to one person could be severe illness or death to another. Beyond the initial infection, there is also the threat of getting long Covid, which can cause long-lasting health implications.

The message is very clear above all else please please, please, please, encourage everyone to be vaccinated with two jabs. Please urge our minority groups to do so where there seems to be some vaccine hesitancy leading to health inequalities.

As we learn to live with the virus, we will continue to manage the risks in front of us and put our residents at the heart of everything we do. So please be cautious, be careful and be kind.

## **18. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

## **19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

### **19.1 Pamela Jenkinson had asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities the following question but as she was unable to attend the meeting the following written response was provided:**

#### **Question**

Would you please confirm that Cranstoun, who are to replace Berkshire Women's Aid's refuges for abused women, actually have refuges available in Wokingham, ready for the

changeover of funding and services, in order to ensure the safeguarding of the vulnerable women, concerned?

### **Answer**

Domestic abuse is a very important and serious issue, which is a key priority for the Government, the Council and the Community Safety Partnership. It is the sad truth that anybody can be a victim, regardless of background and circumstance, that in the worst case can end in the most tragic way as a fatality.

It is in recognition of this fact I will spend some time covering the question and outlining the work being undertaken to ensure that the Council is working towards striving for excellence in providing support and help for local residents and victims in the Borough.

The provision and availability of refuge service for victims remains securely in place locally. Access to three local refuge spaces remains unchanged for victims who need safe emergency accommodation. In addition to this provision, the new service provider Cranstoun are working to secure more enhanced refuge spaces, which will add to the existing local provision already in place. This will result in more than doubling of local refuge provision for victims at a vital point for providing support. However, this will not stop us actively continuing to improve support and proactively look for opportunities to increase spaces above and beyond this.

Furthermore, in line with the Council's ambition to strive for best practice and to comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which came in on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, the Council has:

- Increased funding into its local domestic abuse services by 55% in recognition of increasing demands for assistance and requests for help. The increase in financial funding has also in turn allowed the Council to offer an enhanced local 24-7 offer for victims to access support;
- On Monday, the Community Safety Partnership launched our Housing Needs Assessment consultation in line with the Government's push on domestic abuse. In-depth consultations with local victims have helped shaped this work and our work around this has been recognised as good practice by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;
- Work is also underway to put together a wider Violence Against Women and Girls' strategy (VAWG); which will amongst other aspects ensure that our public spaces are safe places;
- Domestic abuse and safeguarding victims and children is a top priority for the Community Safety Partnership and the Council. The work being undertaken feeds importantly into wider and other strategic thinking on work around the poverty, inclusion and equalities strategies.

The valued contribution from both Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) and several other local organisations working to make an impact and improve outcomes for victims is highly commended. Our aim is to continue to work closely with all local charities, voluntary sector organisations together hand-in-hand with Cranstoun to tackle domestic abuse for all residents and victims.

## **19.2 Liz Mayers asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

### **Question**

This time last year I was party to a group complaint, submitted by 76 Wokingham residents, about your conduct with regards your statement, comments and posts about Black Lives Matter and the tragic murders in Reading. The complaint was first mislaid, then mixed up with other similar individual complaints and generally mis-handled. Finally, part of the resolution was you would under-go training about the key messages of your equality policy. When did that happen, and what did you learn?

### **Answer**

I would disagree that your complaint was not dealt with effectively. I would refer you to numerous public statements I made last summer where I apologised publicly for any upset I had caused and sought to clarify my position. Personal letters were also sent to residents who had complained through the Member Code of Conduct process.

Since then, I have carefully studied the LGA Equalities Framework and spoken with many residents, Officers and fellow Members to help educate myself on how the Council can improve and embed its approach to equalities.

As I have shared before, my focus is to help create the architecture and culture within the Council and the Borough to make more meaningful progress in tackling inequality.

In March 2021, I presented the Equalities Plan to Council which I said at the time was a comprehensive guide to tackling all these inequalities. This is not a hollow commitment to tick a box; rather it's backed up by a comprehensive Action Plan supported by Officers from across the Council to deliver real improvements for our residents and staff through 2021/22 and beyond.

The Council is currently undertaking its Member development programme in which equalities training will feature prominently for all our Members. This will build on the comprehensive training already undertaken by all staff. We are all on the same side. Diversity, equality and addressing need must be part of everything we do and the example we set. No rational person would take any other point of view and no responsible person would play politics with this issue. Every one of our residents must be free to live the life they wish and flourish in our Borough and I want to help ensure Wokingham Borough Council champions this.

### **Supplementary Question**

Another part of the resolution was an invitation for me to join the BME Forum, which was immediately suspended, and to engage with Wokingham Borough Council to assist with your review of your Equalities Policy. Numerous meetings were held with you, Susan Parsonage, Keeley Clements and Matt Pope where you claimed to care about equality and have this comprehensive plan which you wanted mine and the help of other residents in the Borough to improve. At the last meeting, which took place during purdah, Wokingham Borough Council committed to respond to a memorandum of intent after the election by 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Why have we been ignored since the last meeting when we were given a commitment by Wokingham Borough Council to reconvene with us before 22<sup>nd</sup> May?

### **Supplementary Answer**

If the Officers have sent you a commitment to get engaged with you then I am sure they will.

**19.3 Kiran Nar had asked the Leader of the Council the following question which was asked in his absence by Pol Exeter:**

**Question**

The Sewell report claims that there is no racism in the UK and last week we saw this was a lie following the appalling response from racists towards black footballers. We know racism exists and continues to exist in all walks of life including in Wokingham Borough. It has been over a year since I made a formal complaint relating to WBC's response to BLM and your response was that equality is hardwired in WBC's DNA and you were committed to equality. I note today that there is a no team leading equality initiatives anymore, the BME Forum has been disbanded and there has been no real commitment to understand the lives and experience of 155,000 (*Note: this figure was corrected to 17,000 at the meeting*) of the non-white population in WBC. What are you really doing to foster good community relationships and eliminate racism in the Borough?

**Answer**

Pol, it's great to see you and you have corrected the question because the 155,000 non-white population was a little erroneous. With the current Office of National Statistics data estimates the population of about 13% identifies as something which is other than white which would be approximately 22,000 people. The census data will be refreshed next year and this will give us a more accurate position.

I refute the suggestion in the question that we have scrapped the BME Forum. Indeed, we have not, and we are very keen to have taken the enabling role to support the BME Forum to deliver on its objectives, purposes and activities. We respect the desire of the Forum to be autonomous and we will work in collaboration to understand the best way we can move forward.

But why the overt concentration on the non-white community the Borough is interested in any of its residents who suffer prejudice or harm, with a view to mitigating, eliminating and repairing the prejudice or harm.

I have spent much of my life engaged in sport, both doing it and coaching. I feel genuinely sorry for sportsmen and women who do not do as well as they might, but hey ho we did get to the final of the Euros which is quite an achievement. We need to celebrate the positives and not dwell on the negatives. Well done the England football team, all of them!

The Council launched its Equality Strategy, "Tackling Inequality Together" in March 2021, which includes a detailed action plan with seven specific workstreams. The management of our Equalities programme continues to be led by the Insight, Strategy and Inclusion Team, as part of the Communities, Insight and Change Directorate.

This Team has recently bolstered its support to the equalities agenda by appointing an interim Equality Lead who has a raft of expertise and is now working with us three days per week, a Senior Specialist Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer who will start with us in August, along with a Service Manager of the Insight, Strategy and Inclusion Team who is joining us in September.

The equalities programme is continuing to deliver against the actions as outlined in the plan. The seven specific workstreams are led by Senior Managers across the Council to ensure ownership and accountability. The programme team has recently published an

easy read version of the action plan so that more of our residents can access our plans, as well as publishing a community profile to help residents, businesses in the Borough and Officers better understand the makeup of the community.

As part of the Equality Programme, the Council is continuing to support the external review of the BME Forum, which has included over 30 one to one interviews and group discussions and expects to soon be able to work with the Forum to understand how it wants to incorporate the findings from this review in its future activities. As stated within the Council's Equalities Action Plan, this review is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021. A key piece of early feedback from the consultants has been the broad ambition for the BME Forum being more independent and self-sustaining in the future, which will be factored into our planning.

Due to the global pandemic, for the past year our engagement activities with ethnic minority groups have been primarily focused on the most urgent need to promote Covid safety advice, supporting groups to deliver safe activities and to encourage participation in the vaccination and testing programmes that have been quickly implemented to stop the spread of the virus and get us back to normality as quickly as possible.

These activities have been largely successful and well received. We have provided weekly Covid and Community updates to all faith and community groups directly via email and with targeted one to one support, working with local ethnic minority groups to agree communications messages on accessing Covid services, vaccination pop-up sessions at a Mosque, PCR testing at a Gurdwara during surge testing, and direct engagement with local employers to vaccinate migrant workers.

The Council is also supporting the police community engagement programme through their Independent Advisory Group which has a particular focus on understanding residents' experiences of hate crime.

This Council is also working on a comprehensive plan to foster stronger engagement with local communities. But people shouldn't wait for us to reach out if they have something to share with us that can improve equality for the residents in our Borough. I would ask that they can get in touch with us so we can listen to them.

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

##### **Question**

The Black residents of Wokingham are suffering from the weight of discrimination they endure in their daily lives, going about their business of living and working in Wokingham. What contact have you had with representatives from the Black community of WBC and what tangible or practical action have you taken to assuage these discriminations?

##### **Answer**

As I have stated in the previous question, due to the global pandemic, for the past year our engagement activities with the ethnic community groups and ethnic minority groups have been primarily focused on the most urgent need to promote Covid safety advice, supporting groups to deliver Covid safe activities and to encourage participation in the vaccination and testing programmes that have been quickly implemented to stop the spread of the virus and get us back to normality as quickly as possible.

These activities have been largely successful with positive vaccination rates for ethnic minority residents and the avoidance of significant Covid outbreaks. What you can do to help is to ensure that all members of the communities that you are engaged with have a hundred per cent vaccination rate. That is a task which eludes us all at the moment.

Internally we have several staff support groups including the Ethnically Diverse Staff Network which meets monthly and a Members' Equality Group who worked together to provide oversight of the launch of our Equality Strategy earlier this year.

Our support for the external review of the BME Forum has continued, including contacting representatives from the Black community to participate in the one to one interviews and focus groups. This review is expected to be completed soon and its findings shared with the BME Forum to assist it in deciding what the next steps it wants to take for its future activities.

This is in line with the Council's target within its Equalities Strategy Action Plan of supporting the BME Forum to deliver on its objectives, purpose and activities.

The Council is also engaging with our ethnic minority residents in partnership with the police through their Independent Advisory Group which has a particular focus on understanding residents' experiences of hate crime.

As mentioned in my previous response, this Council is also working on a comprehensive plan to foster stronger engagement with local communities. But if there is anyone who has an insight into how we can promote equality further, please don't wait. I would ask that they can get in touch with us so we can listen to them immediately.

### **Supplementary Question**

That is a long list of words and promises. But as the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, Susan Parsonage, of Wokingham Borough Council what do you suggest to the residents of Wokingham Borough Council what more can we do to get the Council to take its knees off our collective necks?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I think as I have said the real issue we are facing at the moment is to attack vaccine hesitancy in our Borough and the health inequalities with minority ethnic groups are very substantial. So, what you can do to help is, particularly with the Caribbean community, is to ensure that everybody is vaccinated, two jabs that is the really practical part.

The other thing you can help us with is on the BME Forum which we are reaching out now to get the BME Forum up and running. The BME Forum is not the property of the Borough it is the property of the BME Forum and we would like to have it up and running; hopefully as soon as we can physically start meeting in the later half of the year.

## **19.5 Lesley Doyle asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

### **Question**

Regarding agenda item 28 - Climate Emergency Community Deliberative Processes; Why has this document been put to Executive for approval when the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee raised a number of concerns about it that demonstrate it lacks any credibility?

## **Answer**

The Climate Emergency Community Deliberative Processes report was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> July this year.

This was an opportunity for your Councillors to make their recommendations to me as the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions to consider before this report goes to Executive for approval this evening. The only resolution that was recorded in the meeting minutes was that the review of the potential Climate Emergency Community Deliberative Processes should be noted. Which I have done.

There were a number of questions asked during the discussion at Overview and Scrutiny which were addressed directly by the Officers at the meeting. In coming up with recommendations for deliberative processes, fifteen diverse and wide-ranging community deliberative processes were analysed. This report incorporated information from industry experts such as Involve, as well as benchmarking against several other local authorities' experiences where they were available. The comments made by members at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee have also been noted.

The paper setting out which deliberative processes, and the particular topics and the costs, will come to the Executive in October. Local deliberative processes on a range of topics and consulting a wide cross-section of our population is an essential element in finding the solutions to our climate emergency and I hope everyone will support them.

## **Supplementary Question**

Why has this report got more raw opinion gathering tools than meaningful deliberative processes assessed in it and made recommendations on a flawed scoring methodology?

## **Supplementary Answer**

The processes that were looked at are the ones that are published on a website of an organisation called Involve. They are experts in running local deliberative processes around the world. They have done it in this country, they have done it in other countries, they have done it for councils, and they have done it for entire nations. It is the list of processes that they have put forward as best in practice on their website and those are the ones that we have gone away and analysed and benchmarked.

I will accept that the scoring system that has been used is a subjective one. It is subjective to us as a community. It is subjective to us as our climate emergency to the conditions that our Borough exists in. In comparison to some other communities, it may seem like it is strange or different compared to Reading or to Oxford or to Leeds but we are not a primary metropolitan area we are a combination of a rural borough and some large towns. We have a very unique climate emergency. We have a very unique make-up and we have scored it on what we believe is right for our community, right for our climate emergency and will give us the most diverse collection of opinions back from our residents.

We cannot force our residents to do anything, that is not within our power. We have to work hand in hand with our residents. This is a vital part of that process. This is a vital part of coming to the solutions that we need to put in place in order to get to carbon neutral by 2030. I am hugely supportive of it and I hope that going forward we will have a multitude of deliberative processes on a variety of different topics and some of them are going to be open to a large number of residents and some of them will be very focussed

and conducted in a certain place at a certain time with a specific cross-section of our community.

But I can assure you that the work that has gone in behind this whilst it may seem subjective, and it is. It is subjective to us as a Council, us as a community and us as our climate emergency.

**19.6 Peter Major asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

**Question**

Barkham Solar Farm (Agenda Item 29) Barkham Parish Council has published in their recent residents' newsletter (Barkham and Arborfield Green Village Info June/July 2021) that WBC has increased the size of the proposed Solar Farm by extending east into Rooks Nest Farm, an additional 48 hectares and from 72,000 panels to 83,000. What are the financial implications of the increased size, i.e. what are the additional "Estimated Costs / Income over 25 Years", over and above the figures given in the Executive Committee briefing for Agenda Item 29?

**Answer**

The planning application submitted for the solar farm identifies a site area of 52ha in total. Taking into account the constraints and anticipated planning requirements of the site, at the time of submission, which was March 2021, it was estimated that the site could accommodate a solar farm to generate a peak of up to 33MW (MWp) of energy through the inclusion of up to 72,000 individual solar photovoltaic panels. This detail is included in the planning submissions.

As set out in the Executive report, discussions with adjacent property owners and occupiers are ongoing with a view to mitigating the impact of the development where practical to do so. In addition, further amendments to the scheme will be required following comments received from the Local Planning Authority as part of the planning process. These amendments however will only act to reduce the area of the solar PVs from what is currently shown in the planning application; albeit only marginally. As a consequence, delivery costs will inevitably be marginally reduced, because there will be less panels to install, but so too will the revenue, because there will be less panels generating power. The final array of PV panels cannot be fixed with certainty until planning permission has been secured at which time the financial appraisals can be rerun based on the actual being delivered.

In order to take these discussions into account and accommodate any changes required, it has therefore been recommended that decisions around the final extent and configuration of the Solar Farm be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in conjunction with the Lead Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration; albeit on the caveat that the scheme amendments will not result in the average annual net income after capital financing costs falling below £200k. Any projected lesser return would need to be reported back to Council.

I would also add that I haven't personally seen the Barkham Parish Council newsletter that you refer to but if it does make reference to 83,000 panels or additional land being utilised then I can assure you that it is incorrect.

**Supplementary Question**

I am slightly confused. Is Barkham Parish Council incorrect about extending into Rooks Nest Farm or just on the number of panels?

### **Supplementary Answer**

My understanding having asked the question myself today of the Officers is that they are incorrect on both fronts. It will be 72,000 panels in the area that has been identified in the planning application. As I said I haven't seen the Parish Council Newsletter myself but if you send me a copy of it I will gladly ask the Officers to speak with the members of the Barkham Parish Council and ideally correct the mistake publicly.

### **19.7 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

#### **Question**

The weighting method in the Council's review of local deliberative processes places more emphasis on cost and speed than it does on the potential for discussion or the variety of participants.

It also excludes any weighting given to the ability of residents to influence the scope and content of the plan. With the weighting choice employed, the report was bound to reach the conclusion that a cheap and quick way of consulting is best.

With the Climate Emergency Plan supposedly having a budget of £71m, it is astonishing that the weighting for a few thousand pounds of cost were given such importance. With no consultation at all on the measures residents were prepared to see implemented, it is even more astonishing that these proposals only relate to the Plan as it stands and do not allow meaningful additions to the Plan to make the Plan as good as it can be.

Leeds, Oxford and Camden Councils have all had successful Citizens' Assemblies. Why is this Council going to such lengths to rig the appraisal on consultations rather than simply opt for the most democratically legitimate and effective form of local engagement - a Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Emergency?

#### **Answer**

Wokingham Borough Council recognises the vital importance of community engagement and participation in tackling our climate emergency. The Community Deliberative Process Options Appraisal was a robust investigation and analysis of fifteen varied options scored against factors locally important to the particular challenges faced in Wokingham Borough in tackling our climate emergency. The report incorporates information gathered from industry experts and case studies from other local authorities' experiences in this field. Therefore, the report is a balanced score card aiming to guide decision making on the most effective options.

The processes explored would not exclude gathering information from a cross-section of the community and would ensure voices are heard from key stakeholders including young people, the voluntary sector and the business community. The selection process sought fairly to select the most appropriate processes for Wokingham Borough. The examples mentioned in your question above are cities which face different challenges and issues in tackling their climate emergency.

The climate emergency is an urgent problem that needs to be tackled in a time sensitive manner. Engaging and empowering residents and stakeholders to be part of the solution

is a key stage of the way forward. Although initial implementation of the process may be scored on time efficiency, engagement with residents and stakeholders will continue to be an ongoing process and priority in the climate emergency agenda as set out in the Action Plan which is a living document and constantly evolving. This has not been about saving costs but about finding the approach that represents the best value for money. As has been pointed out there is a gap currently in our Climate Emergency Action Plan. Local deliberative processes are a vital way of ensuring that gap is closed in a way that is palatable to our residents and to the needs of our climate emergency.

### **Supplementary Question**

I guess my point is that there is nothing in the current range of deliberative processes that are likely to come out of this that are going to empower residents to think that they can change the Plan. You keep mentioning that we cannot make residents do things. The only way that we can get people to change their minds is by having a citizen's assembly. None of the other processes will allow that. So, my question is why do you not trust the residents of Wokingham Borough to have a proper say in this most important issue?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I fundamentally disagree with you on that. I absolutely trust the residents of Wokingham Borough so much that I am prepared to put very specific questions to them and ask them for their opinion via a multitude of different engagement mediums rather than just by one, consulting on climate emergency as a whole.

I want to look at, for example, how we go about reducing the amount of waste that we generate as a community. If we did that as part of one massive climate citizen's assembly, it would only be a minor factor in the time and effort that that group of citizens would be able to consider. They would have to look at a multitude of other things as well. What I want to do is break up climate emergency into a multitude of elements and do the most appropriate deliberative process for each element of it.

## **19.8 Helen Palmer asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

### **Question**

School meals are chosen by pupils from a menu produced by Caterlink on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council who manages the contract.

Could the relevant Councillors and Officers, please, insist on two small but important changes to the menu?

Firstly:

- to implement a meat-free Monday every week (currently this is 2 Mondays in 3) in all schools, whilst continuing to offer fish but no meat on Fridays.

Secondly:

- to offer a vegan choice every day. Currently vegan choices appear just 2 or 3 times a week.

For many children, school lunch is the only solid meal of the day. It needs to be nutritious and balanced.

In the past it was believed that children needed regular meat to provide protein and iron, but research shows that lentils, beans and quorn provide these and other nutrients in

abundance and without saturated fat. Therefore, I am asking for a healthier menu, not an impoverished one.

It is also vital that, every day of the week, every child can select a meal which respects their ethics, religion, culture and food allergies.

Meat has a big carbon footprint. This change will make a small but significant contribution to the Borough's carbon reduction target.

### **Answer**

I absolutely agree that school dinners are an important meal to keep pupils sustained.

The catering company and WBC agree a menu which is submitted to the schools to consider at the beginning of each year. Each school understands the demographics of its children. Therefore, it is they who can make changes, taking into account their children's ethics, religion, culture and food allergies. We will pass on your suggestions to the schools to extend meat free Mondays and daily vegan choice. Schools do promote healthy dieting and now have much about climate control in their curriculums. Children today, like many other things, have a better awareness of these subjects than their parents and it is the children who will choose what they consume, hopefully healthily.

I would also just add that earlier this month there was the first Schools' Council and I would say for anyone that witnessed it, including the ex-Prime Minister Teresa May, they were a very erudite and eloquent bunch of people and they were very forthright in their ideas going forward.

### **Supplementary Question**

At present under the National Food Standards for school children schools are obliged to offer meat three times a week, fish once a week and dairy every day. In view of what you were just saying about pupils, schools and the Council making the choices will the Council please lobby the Government to remove these rules and give councils and individual schools autonomy as academies have?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I think it is within your power, within your national vote, to lobby your MPs to get national Government to change its policies. We have certain powers over schools. Schools are academies which are independent of the local authority in this respect, and we don't quite have that command and control that we used to have in the past. Certainly, we can mention it to Government in the future.

## **20. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

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

### **20.1 Jackie Rance asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

#### **Question**

Could the Executive Member for Planning, please tell me how many houses have been granted planning permission in the past 10 years for the Wards of Hurst, Shinfield, Arborfield and Winnersh?

## **Answer**

The strategy established by the Core Strategy local plan was to meet the majority of our development needs in four major development areas: North Wokingham, South Wokingham, Arborfield Garrison and South of the M4. A remainder of development needs would be met on the edge of our towns and villages.

This approach has enabled significant infrastructure to be provided alongside new homes, helping to mitigate the impacts by providing an opportunity to access local services, facilities, and the need to reduce travel. This approach has enabled us to have the opportunity to retain the character of our towns and villages through actions such as the retention of gardens.

The Core Strategy was prepared in consultation with residents and stakeholders. Views expressed through residents to more recent planning consultations continue to suggest that the preference of residents is to meet the majority of development needs through major development areas.

In accordance with the strategy established by the Core Strategy, planning permissions have been granted.

Monitoring is routinely undertaken by parish area, other than wards. The majority of dwellings have been permitted in Wokingham Parish, totalling 3,699 dwellings between 2010/11 and 2019/20.

Turning to the specific parishes you request the number of dwellings permitted are as follows:

- Shinfield, 3,397
- Hurst, 37
- Arborfield, 2,047 - but I must say that the majority of that sits within Arborfield Green which is part of Barkham parish
- Winnersh, 131.

## **20.2 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:**

### **Question**

How many public health funerals has Wokingham Borough arranged during the last two years, ensuring that all residents are treated with dignity in death even if they or their relatives cannot afford a funeral?

### **Answer**

We have carried out one public health funeral within the Wokingham Borough in the last two years.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am really surprised that there has only been one public health funeral, but I did try to find information on the Council's website about our responsibility to arrange these public health funerals. I was very concerned that I could not find any clear statements about the Council's responsibilities and how the bereaved can get support. This is likely to lead to our residents with the lowest incomes being unaware of help that they are entitled to, and it falls well short of the Government's guidance to councils.

What steps will the Council take to ensure that Wokingham Borough Council complies with the Government's guidance on public funerals, including the recommendation that councils have a written policy on public health funerals shared publicly on the website and made accessible for all residents including, for example, those who use braille or who have English as a second language.

### **Supplementary Answer**

Yes of course Rachel I totally agree with you because the Environmental Health deals with assisted funerals on behalf of the Council. We establish contact with the informer to see if the deceased has any relatives and if no relatives are found the Council's Environmental Health will ensure that the deceased gets a dignified exit from this world. We are totally clear about that, and I am surprised that you have even asked this question. Environmental Health are responsible for carrying out that responsibility on behalf of the Council.

### **20.3 Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

#### **Question**

Given Cllr Murray's answer to a question on climate change at last week's full Council meeting in which he stated that changing people's behaviour was vital, will the Council work with the appointed school catering company to provide more meat-free menu options, and perhaps meat-free days, replacing meat with vegetarian protein to reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions?

#### **Answer**

It was noted that a response to Councillor Bray's question had already been given as part of an earlier answer.

#### **Supplementary Question**

I understand where we are with menus. I do want to make the point that in this report it mentions things, for example, like the local supply chain but includes that because it will help the local economy. It doesn't mention the benefits of fewer food miles for the climate emergency.

So, my question is how can the Council get to grips with the need to really drive change through in the way that is needed? So, what will you do to ensure that the climate emergency is at the top of people's minds whenever services are commissioned or tendered?

#### **Supplementary Answer**

I am sure your question applies to a lot of procurements, and I am sure that is included as part of the policy on procurement. I really cannot go much beyond that except to say specifically for schools, as we have 9 out of 10 secondary schools currently that carry a lot of our pupils of course are academies and over half of our 54 primaries are academies, a number of them are procuring their meals separately through their trusts. So we are in a position only to suggest and influence not to implement in most cases.

### **20.4 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

### **Question**

Page 299 Executive Summary states and I quote "On 23rd January 2020 the Council set a target to plant 250,000 new trees in the Borough as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. The aim of this target was to increase the amount of carbon captured by trees in the Borough".

Why was there no condition placed in the planning consent for the replacement of about 500 very mature trees given planning permission to be removed without any consultation at Bearwood Lakes as to have done so would have helped considerably to increase the amount of carbon capture as part of the Council's Climate Emergency evolving policy?

### **Answer**

There was no planning consent to impose a condition on as the process to which you refer is one which is regulated by the Environment Agency, and I will read the section now but I am quite happy to e-mail it to you later, Section 10 (3)(c) of the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Following a statutory inspection of the Bearwood Lake dam by an independent reservoirs engineer, the engineer identified a need for critical tree clearance works required in order to conduct essential safety works to the dam. Accordingly, an agent acting for the landowner submitted an emergency notification of tree removal under again, and I will send it to you but it is, Section 14(1)(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.

For clarity, the emergency notification was not a 'planning application' and there was no grant of 'planning permission' for these works. There is no provision under either of the above Acts to enable replacement planting to be provided in these circumstances. However, the Council is working closely with the landowner, and as part of our plan of planting the 250,000 trees, to identify potential for some replacement planting in the nearby and suitable locations.

### **Supplementary Question**

There is a planning application number actually assigned to those works and you can pick it up very easily. Bearwood Park and Lakes is a very big Grade 2 historic park considered to be at risk by English Heritage and as part of the original planning application by Reading Football Club Wokingham Borough Council, to satisfy English Heritage, had to develop a CLENP, which is a Conservation, Landscape and Environmental Plan to get English Heritage to withdraw their objections to what was happening on that site.

My supplementary question is why was English Heritage not consulted when this process took place?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I honestly do not know Gary, but I will find out and I will come back to you.

## **20.5 Sarah Kerr asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:**

### **Question**

Generating renewable energy is a good thing. We must ensure though that in our quest to tackle climate change, there aren't adverse effects in other areas. This solar farm site is classed as a BMV site - Best and Most Versatile - as it falls within grades 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. It was being used for both cattle and crops. The NPPF

specifically states that if agricultural land has to be used, it should be poorer quality, which this isn't. Why is prime agricultural land being used against Government advice?

### **Answer**

To quote what the NPPF says it sets out that “where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality”. It does not however preclude delivery of solar farms on Best and Most Versatile Land (BVM). In such cases developers will need to demonstrate special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

The Council cannot hope to reach carbon neutral within ten years without making some difficult decisions and implementing some significant interventions; including the delivery of four solar farms with the potential to generate in excess of 20MWP under target 12 of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. A 20MWP solar farm is a large scale facility and will require access to in excess of 20ha of land. In respect to the ‘Target 12 solar farms’ therefore the Council has looked across its larger landholdings; having regard also to the emerging development plan for the Borough and the current planning and BRE guidance in respect to commercial scale ground mounted solar PV. The potential for this project to contribute towards the CEAP is clear, as outlined within the Executive report. WBC do not have control of four alternatively preferable sites of significant scale to facilitate delivery against this fundamental CEAP target.

The planning application has now been submitted and is awaiting determination by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). It will be for the LPA to balance the wider environmental benefits against the temporary change of use of the agricultural land for a 25-year period, having regard to all the local and national guidance.

I would also add that we are also looking at generation on smaller land sites and also looking at solar farms on our other assets, such as our schools which has already begun, our property estates and our car parks as well as other assets. There is a great deal of additional complexity in doing so though, not least of which is getting a national grid connection to ensure that energy is not lost, wasted or discharged dangerously.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am pleased to hear about the car dual use actually. There is a risk that at the end of use as a solar farm after 25 years this site may not be restored to the prime agricultural land it currently is and I am concerned about the risk of a change of use that could classify it potentially as brownfield. So, there is a possibility that it could be classified as a brownfield site which means houses. What is this local authority doing to mitigate against this risk of a change of use after the solar farm is gone?

### **Supplementary Answer**

It is a really interesting point that you raise Sarah. Yes, there is the potential risk that it might be classified as a brownfield site at the end of its use but my understanding of planning guidance, and the regulations in relation to this, is that we will not be the authority that determines whether or not it will become a brownfield site. It will come down to national planning guidance that would determine that, not us as a Borough.

My personal intention would be that it returns to being farming or it continues as being a solar farm long into the future. But we cannot guarantee that right now. All we can

guarantee is that by turning it into a solar farm right now it is not going to be turned into housing right now, which definitely would never be returned to farming use in 25 years' time.

So, my personal view is that I would much rather take the potential that it might become a brownfield site over the actual of it becoming housing.

## **21. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FY2021/22 - QUARTER ONE**

The Executive considered a report setting out the budget monitoring position for the revenue budget for quarter one.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing introduced the report and advised that it was the first report for the 2021/22 financial year and reminded Members that the previous year's budget had resulted in a shortfall of £400k. Councillor Kaiser advised that it was currently being predicted that the shortfall this year would be in the region of £600k; although it should be recognised that it was still early in the financial year.

Councillor Kaiser also drew Members' attention to the request for a supplementary estimate for the Tone of Voice project which would improve the Council interactions with its customers.

### **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the financial impact of the Covid-19 crisis. as illustrated in the Executive Summary, be noted;
- 2) the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report, be noted;
- 3) a supplementary estimate of £31,500 for Tone of Voice project be approved.

## **22. CAPITAL MONITORING 2021/22 - QUARTER 1**

The Executive considered a report setting out the Capital budget monitoring position for Quarter 1.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Finance and Housing drew Members' attention to the fact that the Council was currently on target to achieve the objectives of its Capital Programme, including capital spend and investments relating to forward funding of infrastructure, schools etc.

Councillor Halsall highlighted the potential capital underspend, which would have a significant impact on borrowing, and was likely to be £152m this year.

### **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the proposed rephrasing to the Capital Programme following the annual budget profiling review from the Medium Term Financial Plan, to get more realistic profiling for financial management and cashflow purposes, as set out in paragraph 3 and Appendix B of the report be approved and noted;

- 2) the position of the capital programme at the end of Quarter 1 (to 30 June 2021) as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in Appendix A to the report be noted;
- 3) additional budget added to the capital programme for a parcel of land at Winnersh Triangle Station, for the Park and Ride project, to the value of £175k be noted and approved. Funded by a transfer of a nearby parcel of land to the same third party, also for £175k.

### **23. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2021**

The Executive considered a report relating to the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out the timetable for the preparation of local plans, including minerals and waste, for the following three-year period.

The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement advised Members that it was intended to take the Plan to Executive in October with a view to going out to consultation thereafter.

**RESOLVED:** That the Local Development Scheme 2021, attached as enclosure 1 to the report, be adopted.

### **24. COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY**

The Executive considered a report setting out a Commercial Strategy which was intended to support and enable Members and Officers to make positive choices about where they wanted to invest, rather than having to make decisions about where to reduce expenditure.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Finance and Housing advised the meeting that as the Council had become more commercial it was important to have a Strategy in place to further improve service delivery and organisational efficiency. Councillor Kaiser pointed out that any surpluses or profits that ensued from being a commercial entity would be used for the benefits of residents.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the Commercial Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report be adopted;
- 2) the Chief Finance Officer be delegated authority to revise and update the Strategy as required to ensure legislative compliance and delivery of best practice in the Council's commercial ventures and activities.

### **25. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

The Executive considered a report setting out a proposed Procurement Strategy which was in accordance with the use of best practice and followed recommendations from the recent CIPFA review.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing went through the report and advised that at the end of last year CIPFA had carried out a review of the Council's procurement, contract management and commissioning processes and one of the objectives in the resulting action plan was to develop, adopt and maintain a Procurement Strategy.

Councillor Murray was pleased to note that the eighth mandatory assessment of the Procurement Strategy related to whether the business case considered relevant climate emergency actions.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the adoption of the Procurement Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed;
- 2) the Chief Finance Officer be delegated authority to revise and update the Strategy as required to ensure legislative compliance and delivery of best practice in procurement and commissioning.

## **26. INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY**

The Executive considered a report setting out proposals for implementing a Community Investment Strategy to improve resources available to the Council by acquiring property assets that would enhance WBC policy delivery in the Borough.

The Executive Member for Business and Economic Development introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the fact that the report was refocussing the Property Investment Strategy that was approved by the Executive in September 2017.

Councillor Kaiser explained that part of the reason for refocussing the Strategy was because the Public Works Loans Board had changed its criteria and as a result the Council would only be investing within the Borough or in partnership with another body outside the Borough, provided it would benefit the Borough. Councillor Kaiser also pointed out the criteria for investment as set out in Appendix A.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the refocusing of the existing Investment Strategy and criteria, as set out in Appendix A, be noted;
- 2) it be noted that the delegated authority already given to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Executive Member for Finance and Housing and the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development, applies to this refocused policy;
- 3) the changes to the delegated authority with regard to investment criteria, as set out in Appendix A, be agreed.

## **27. NEW CONTRACT FOR HEATING SERVICES**

The Executive considered a report setting out a procurement business case for a new contract to provide the range of heating services required for the Council's housing stock in compliance with the Council's statutory duties.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing introduced the report and reminded Members that the Council was responsible for around 2,800 social homes in the Borough and although safety of these homes was paramount there was also a need to consider climate change. It was important to ensure that these homes were not only fit to live in but that they met all the latest standards. Therefore, as part of the tendering process the

Council would be looking for a partner who specialised in new initiatives relating to climate change eg heat pumps etc to enable Council homes to be as clean as possible.

**RESOLVED:** That the business case to enable the Housing Service to procure a suitably qualified, experienced, and competent contractor for the delivery of heating services required for the Council's housing stock be approved.

## **28. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY (INC. SEND)**

The Executive considered a report setting out proposed new travel assistance policies for statutory school age children and young people post-16.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Children's Services advised that the policies, which cover the Council's statutory responsibilities, had been updated after a full and thorough consultation had been carried out. The reason why the policies were coming forward to the Executive now was so that the relevant information would be available for parents to take account of when considering which school to choose for their child for admission in September 2022.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the two Travel Assistance policies (statutory school age, and Post-16) as appended to the report be approved;
- 2) implementation of the new Travel Assistance Policies be from the academic year commencing September 2022.

## **29. SCHOOL MEALS MANAGED CATERING SERVICE**

The Executive considered a report setting out the procurement business case for a school meals and kitchen maintenance traded services contract which included the provision of meals, directly supplied to schools by the appointed supplier and maintenance of school kitchen equipment managed by the Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the proposed business case for procurement of a new contract for school meals and kitchens maintenance be approved to commence in August 2022, noting that the updated traded services offer will no longer deliver the same level of income but still represents a viable option.

## **30. CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMUNITY DELIBERATIVE PROCESSES**

The Executive considered a report relating to the outcome of the work undertaken to identify effective deliberative engagement processes with the community on climate emergency.

The Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions went through the report and outlined the process that had been followed which had led to an analysis of 15 options, including opinion polls, user panels, citizens' assemblies etc, for community engagement as set out by Involve, who were experts in this field. Case studies from other councils who had gone through this process already had also considered. Each one of the local deliberative processes had been assessed against a multitude of factors.

Councillor Murray advised that the intention was to take a further report, setting out the plan for local deliberative processes going forward, including the likely topics and what

methods of deliberative processes have been chosen, to October Executive. It was noted that likely topics were, vision for the future of carbon emergency, waste reduction, how the gap in the Climate Emergency Action Plan could be closed, etc.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the extensive review that has been undertaken regarding community deliberative processes in climate emergency (as set out in Appendix A to the report) be noted;
- 2) progressing the development of focus groups and e-panels to engage the community with climate emergency be supported;
- 3) it be noted that a fully worked-up proposal with financial implications will be presented to Executive in October 2021.

### **31. PROPOSED SOLAR FARM - BARKHAM**

The Executive considered a report requesting authority to proceed with the development of a solar farm at Barkham.

The Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions drew Members' attention to the fact that report was requesting £30,283,000 funded from borrowing to build a solar farm of up to a 36 Mega Watt Peak capacity on land owned by the Council in Barkham. This would lead to a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint as a Borough by approximately 1%, or the equivalent of the Council's usage on an annual basis.

Councillor Murray advised that the project would also provide an opportunity to plant approximately 18,000 trees and protect and improve hedgerows and public rights of way around the site. After running costs and servicing the debt the projected annual revenue, based on current energy prices, would be around £0.5m per annum, which could then be reinvested in other climate emergency initiatives.

Councillor Margetts welcomed the fact that trees would be planted which would ensure that the site was screened from visitors to California Country Park, nearby roads etc. One issue that had been a concern to his residents was about construction on the site and particularly lorries accessing the site. In order to limit disruption to residents Councillor Murray confirmed that the intention was that large construction material would be taken to a site nearby where they would be held and then moved to the site using smaller vehicles. In relation to the solar panels the intention was that they would be kept at the docks until required and then brought in on a demand basis.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to securing the necessary planning consents, Council be asked to:

- 1) recommend the capital expenditure of the £20,283,000 funded from borrowing as previously set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- 2) approve delegation of decisions around the final extent and configuration of the Solar Farm to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Finance Officer) in conjunction with the Lead Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions where scheme amendments will not result in the average annual net income after capital financing costs falling below £200k;

- 3) note the estimated net income (after running costs and capital financing costs) of £12.0m over 25 years (equal to £480k per year on average) will be introduced into the Councils annual budget using an equalisation reserve.
- 4) approve commencement of the Solar Farm at Barkham.

### **32. CARBON CAPTURE VIA THE PLANTING OF 250,000 NEW TREES**

The Executive considered a report relating to the funding required to begin phase 1 of the project to plant 250,000 new trees in the Borough as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement highlighted the successful bid for grant funding, amounting to £300k, from Woodland Trust to contribute towards the cost of purchasing and planting the trees. Councillor Smith advised that phase 1 of the project would include setting up the project team, development of a tree strategy and working with landowners to identify possible sites. It was noted that around 250ha of land would be required and therefore the Council would need to work very closely with town and parish councils and other landowners.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) Officers be given approval to begin phase 1 of the project, including the recruitment of a project manager, completion of a feasibility study and tree strategy, and start-up of the small woodland planting and community garden planting initiative;
- 2) £350,000 of capital borrowing be approved to fund the first phase of the project. The £350,000 requested will ultimately be funded as part of the invest to save scheme for the overall capital project (preliminary calculations show these costs can be comfortably accommodated);
- 3) It be noted that the estimated pay back of the full cost of the scheme is likely to be within 4 years of project completion, with an annual surplus thereafter to be confirmed with updated business case;
- 4) It be noted that a further report, including a full Business Case and additional funding requirements, will be presented to the Executive for approval early next year.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 11 AUGUST 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.13 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

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

**Councillors in Attendance**

Councillors: Gary Cowan

**Councillors Present and Speaking**

Councillors: Michael Firmager and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

**Officers Present**

Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery  
Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager  
Sean O'Connor, Head of Legal Services  
Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management  
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

**Case Officers Present**

Mark Croucher  
Christopher Howard  
Senjuti Manna  
Simon Taylor

**20. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted from Carl Doran and Rebecca Margetts.

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

**21. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**22. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Bill Soane declared a personal and prejudicial interest in items 26, 27, and 28. Bill stated that he would leave the room for entirety of these items and take no part in the discussions or votes.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey declared a prejudicial interest in item 30. Rachelle stated that she would leave the room for entirety of this item and take no part in the discussion or vote.

Stephen Conway declared a personal interest in items 26, 27, and 28, on the grounds that his son had worked in the café on the site between ten and twelve years ago amongst a number of other school children. Stephen added that he would continue to take part in both the discussions and votes for these items.

Stephen Conway declared a personal interest in item 30, on the grounds that he had been referred the applicant at one point for a medical issue. Stephen added that he had not been in contact with the applicant since, and would therefore take full part in both the discussion and vote for this item.

### **23. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS**

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

### **24. APPLICATION NO.211024 - LAND AT ARBORFIELD GARRISON PARCEL V1S, NORTH OF NUFFIELD ROAD/LAKESIDE BUS ROUTE, ARBORFIELD**

**Applicant:** Bloor Homes Ltd

**Proposal:** Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 dated 02/04/2015. The Reserved Matters (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) comprise details of 126 dwellings within parcel V1S with access via the Lakeside Bus Loop, associated internal access roads, parking, landscaping, open space, footpaths and drainage.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 13 to 46.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

Rebecca Fenn-Tripp, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Rebecca stated that the site had been granted outline planning permission, and this application sought reserved matters approval for 126 high quality homes. The site would include 25 affordable homes, delivering twenty percent on-site provision of affordable housing, in line with the S106 agreement. Rebecca stated that the development incorporated a variety of house types, materials, and architectural details to provide sufficient interest and differentiation across the site. Rebecca added that all of the proposed dwellings met or exceeded national space standard requirements, whilst the site would also meet the Borough's parking standards, whilst also incorporating electric vehicle charging points. The proposals would include the planting of 43 new trees in addition to new hedgerows, whilst retaining the three mature oak trees found on-site. Rebecca concluded by stating that the proposals would provide a ten percent reduction in carbon emissions including via the provision of photovoltaic panels.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether electric vehicle charging infrastructure would be put in place across the site to allow activation when needed, queried whether photovoltaic panels would be offered to residents, and queried whether there were any plans to install heat pumps across the development. Christopher Howard, case officer, stated that condition 5 set out the requirements relating to electric vehicle charging. Christopher added that it was up to the developer as to how they wished to install, or offer up for installation, photovoltaic panels.

Stephen Conway queried whether thirty-five percent affordable housing would be delivered on-site across the wider SDL. Christopher Howard stated that this application would deliver twenty percent on-site affordable housing, and a monetary contribution for fifteen percent off-site affordable housing, in line with the S106 agreement made at outline. The off-site contribution would go towards affordable housing developments across the

Borough, an example of which could be seen at the Gorse Ride redevelopment. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery, clarified that it was agreed at outline to allow off-site contributions towards affordable housing, and it was down to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) to decide where the off-site affordable houses should be developed. Across the wider SDL, twenty percent of the homes would be affordable whilst a contribution for the equivalent of fifteen percent affordable housing would be received in line with the S106 agreement.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether all associated infrastructure relating to electric vehicle charging including transformers would be installed at the point of development of the site, queried whether the decision to provide twenty percent on-site affordable housing was at the request of the developer or WBC, and queried whether a specific condition should be included to secure a biodiversity net gain on-site. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, stated that it was not that onerous to install an electric vehicle charging meter in a house. The electricity load would come off of the meter supply for that home, and the load would be balanced. Standalone facilities such as a car park or spaces on the highway, separate infrastructure would be required. It was conditioned for the developer to set out in detail where the 43 active charging spaces and the 46 passive spaces would be placed, whilst ensuring that infrastructure was in place prior to commencement of works. Connor Corrigan stated that that WBC had taken the decision to a portion of off-site affordable housing contributions. Connor added that biodiversity improvements would be seen as a part of this development, and noted that the outline application was approved prior to the requirements for developments to achieve a ten percent biodiversity net gain. The overall SDL would achieve a biodiversity net gain, for example via the provision of SANGs.

Pauline Jorgensen commented that she would like to know more details about the site to work out what level of biodiversity net gain was achievable. Pauline queried what protection would be given to the two mature oak trees which were proposed to be situated near residential houses, and queried whether any protection could be given to require any future HMOs on site to seek planning permission. Connor Corrigan stated that the mature oak trees would have a root protection area and the site had a conditioned landscape management plan. In addition, Connor stated that the Tree officer was content with the proposals and it was not envisaged that there would be any ongoing issues. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, Stated that at the moment a C3 to C4 conversion required no planning permission to create a small HMO, and there would have to be a very good reason to restrict this on this site.

Angus Ross commented that until there was a policy change, electric vehicle charging and biodiversity issues would continue to be a frustration for the Committee. Angus queried whether payments for both SANGs and SAMM had been made at outline. Connor Corrigan confirmed that the S106 agreement required these payments to come forward as the site was developed.

Gary Cowan commented that it was difficult to condition when there was no specific policy in place for some issues. Gary added that policy CP5 fixed thirty-five percent of affordable houses for all of the SDLs, and he was not particularly in favour of reducing the on-site provision of these affordable houses. Gary stated that he was overall supportive of this application, and noted that the overall SDL site had good and regular communication between the developers, residents and Town and Parish Councils.

Sam Akhtar sought details regarding to asbestos and lead contamination of the soil on site. Connor Corrigan stated that this site was a former MOD site, and part of the outline decision was for site surveys to be carried out. Asbestos and lead contaminated soil would be transported to a licensed site, and replaced with new soil. A considerable amount of work had been carried out to ensure that the site was safe for development and habitation.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried where the homes would be built using the off-site affordable housing contribution. Connor Corrigan stated that the planning requirement was to collect the contributions, and it was up to the WBC housing team to decide where the money would be best spent.

**RESOLVED** That application number 211024 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 14 to 18.

**25. APPLICATION NO.210179 - SAND MARTINS GOLF CLUB, FINCHAMPSTEAD ROAD, WOKINGHAM**

**Applicant:** Sand Martins Golf Club Limited

**Proposal:** Full Planning application for the proposed part single, part two storey side/rear extension to existing clubhouse, erection of a detached Hotel Building comprising 39no. bedrooms, function rooms, kitchen and staff room, with car parking, servicing, associated landscape enhancements and an electrical sub-station.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 47 to 82.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning agenda included a correction to the Wokingham Town Council comment, which the report mistakenly stated that 'Pedestrian and cycle access should be approved', whereas it should have correctly stated 'improved'.

Peter Edwards, agent, spoke in support of the application. Peter stated that the club owners maintained their unwavering desire to commit to the club despite national lockdowns. An earlier proposal had been withdrawn, and the new design team had been tasked to produce a proposals which would complement the existing golf club, diversify its offer to provide financial resilience, provide facilities which would be beneficial to the wider community, and provide landscaping and ecological requirements. Peter stated that the original golf club had permission for a small hotel, which had kindled the idea for a venue building to be run by the club to be used for weddings, conferences, small functions and exhibitions. This venue building would be supported by high quality guest accommodation, a bar, and breakfast room. Peter stated that a new high quality restraint was proposed adjacent to the clubhouse, accessible to members and the wider community. Peter stated that biodiversity net gains would be achieved across the site, and the proposals were energy efficient and of a high quality design. Electric vehicle charging and heat pumps would also be provided where possible. Peter concluded by stating that photovoltaic panels would be provided on the clubhouse, and the proposals had been well received by the community.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether two vehicles could pass on the main access route to and from the site, and queried whether a higher BREEAM rating should be applied to this site as very good was the minimum standard for a public building. Mark Croucher, case officer, stated that two vehicles could pass each other on the main access route to the site.

Mark added that whilst he was not sure whether this facility constituted a public building, officers could not ask for more than the minimum BREEAM standard. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that condition 22 required the site to meet the BREEAM ‘very good’ standard.

Sam Akhtar queried what was being done to ensure that bats were not adversely affected by the proposed development. Mark Croucher stated that condition 17 related to this, and the ecology officer had looked at this and was satisfied that the development would have an acceptable impact on bats subject to condition 17. A license would also be required from Natural England, which would look further into this issue, and as such officers were confident that adequate protections for bats were in place.

Angus Ross queried whether all vehicles would be required to access the site via the Finchampstead Road, and felt that the number of trees scheduled to be replaced should be stated. Mark Croucher stated that it was not physically possible for vehicles to traverse across the site from Evendons Lane, and therefore all access would be via Finchampstead Road. Mark stated that the recommendation relating to tree replacements was borne out of comments from the applicant’s agriculturalist, however there were no set numbers. There would be numerous replacement trees on site, and officers were satisfied that the planting would be maintained and the woodland planting would be strengthened.

Gary Cowan commented that it was very odd for planning officers to go against the tree officer’s objection to this application. Gary added that he was unsure how many trees would be removed, and felt that a condition should be required to ensure sufficient replacement trees and suitable total foliage replacement. Mark Croucher stated that the recommendation was not contrary to the tree officer’s objection, as officer agreed that there was some harm as a result of the proposals. Mark added that planning officers had to balance any harm against the benefits of the proposals. Mark felt that the landscape management plan was an appropriate way of dealing with the replacement of trees in appropriate locations.

Stephen Conway proposed an additional informative, asking the applicant to replace equivalent tree foliage to that being removed. This proposal was seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

**RESOLVED** That application number 210179 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 48 to 53, and additional informative requesting proportionate tree foliage replacement as resolved by the Committee.

**26. APPLICATION NO.211084 - HARE HATCH SHEEPLANDS, LONDON ROAD, HARE HATCH**

***This item contains the substantive minutes for agenda items 26, 27, and 28. The individual resolutions for each item are contained within their respective minute item.***

***Bill Soane declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and therefore left the room and took no part in either the discussion or vote.***

**Applicant:** Hare Hatch Sheeplands

**Proposal:** Full Planning application for the proposed change of use from Horticulture use to Exhibition Space (Use Class F1(e)) for the display of Haworthia and associated plants

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 83 to 108.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Correction to condition 4 to include reference to other associated plants;
- Clarification that the information contained within paragraph 6a was incorrect, and that horticultural use was already being lawfully undertaken and that planning permission was never enacted for this purpose.

David Hall, agent, spoke in support of application 211084, 211085, and 211086. David stated that Hare Hatch Sheeplands (HHS) was a community minded business which had uses comprising of a plant nursery, café, butchers, garden shop, space for community events, and a farm shop. David added that HHS was a valued community asset, and the site had been operating on a fully authorised basis since July 2017. David stated that the horticultural business across the site had continued, however the horticultural industry in general was still under pressure due to Covid-19 and Brexit, amongst other issues. David stated that these issues and delays had interrupted the implementation of the temporary permissions previously granted for the site, the purpose of which was to allow the horticultural business to survive and develop whilst allowing sufficient time to review with the Council the requirements for the business and future plans for the wider area. David added that under these exceptional circumstances, the applications submitted were asking for two additional years to allow the business to develop, whilst providing the applicant with some certainty over the operations uses of the site, in line with the Inspector's decision. David stated that the enforcement notice and injunction remained in place, however they did not prohibit ancillary activities to the plant nursery such as the holding of events. Examples of the community focussed approach to the site included hosting flower shows, children's activities, activities relating to community events such as the RG10 front gardens competition (Twyford in Bloom), and food and drink tasting events. David stated that some of these events would take place during the winter when the greenhouses were not in full growing use, supporting the enterprise during the off-season. David stated that the applicant was disappointed that officers had only recommended a one year extension, as opposed to the two year extension requested by the applicant. David was of the opinion that a two year extension was seen to be a realistic approach to the timescale required for the applicant to work on the business during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, whilst simultaneously dealing with the consequences of Brexit. David felt that the suggestion that the pandemic having had a duration, currently, of 16 months equated to a similar timeframe for these operations for the business to restore itself to its pre-Covid trading pattern was unrealistic. David stated that the pandemic had not gone away, and the effects of both Covid-19 and Brexit would have ongoing effects which would make a one year extension an unrealistic period of time to develop the business sufficiently. Relating to application 211085, David was of the opinion that there was no planning justification for inserting condition 3e, since the application did not propose the sale of goods by retail. David added that it was a fact that no food or drink sales had been made from the events area, and any food or drink consumed in the area had been bought from the café or brought in by people visiting the events. Relating to application 211086, David raised concerns relating to proposed condition 3 as this was not required by the inspector at the appeal decision. David added that the Inspector had recognised the garden shop was required to help the horticultural business grow, and to allow a review of future plans for the site, and not to make a horticultural use viable. David was of the opinion that this

condition pre-supposed that a viable horticultural use was possible within the next year, which was a complete unknown and it was difficult to see how they would be achieved via an enforceable condition. David stated that it was not possible at the outset to comply with this condition, as the site operated lawful and permanent retail floor space within the farm shop. David asked that Members review the reasonability of the aforementioned conditions. David added that the applicant looked forward to continuing discussions with the Council on a strategy for moving the business forward in a comprehensive way, within the Council's policy and green belt framework.

Frank Moore, resident, submitted a statement in support of this applicant which was read out by Councillor Angus Ross. Frank stated that he was disappointed to read the proposed limitations being placed on applications 211084, 211085, and 211086. Frank was of the opinion that the proposed limitations had no relevance to the plans encompassed within the applications, and in many cases some of the comments were completely incorrect. Frank was of the opinion that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) was trying to 'get their own back' on HHS, having lost a significant court case against them in the Court of Appeal in 2019. Frank reminded Members that Her Honour Lady Justice Hallett had stated that prosecution proceedings brought by WBC were unfair and an abuse of process. Frank felt that many of the added comments were in the same vain, and Frank strongly urged Members to ignore the added comments and simply appraise the applications correctly as submitted.

Chris Bowring queried whether condition 3e relating to application 211085 was a duplication of condition 3g. Simon Taylor, case officer, stated that 3e was a carryover of the original permission, and referenced the previous permission with regards to restricting retail sale in the events space. 3g strengthened and expanded upon 3e, and was specifically relating to events only.

Chris Bowring queried whether condition 3 relating to application 211086, requirement of a business plan, was not required by the Inspector. Simon Taylor stated that the Inspector had given three primary reasons for permission to be granted; to allow the business to grow, to allow time for review of the future intentions of the site, and to review the impact on the green belt and the countryside. WBC's view was that the temporary permission would not be continued unless they were satisfied that a viable business was operating without the retail use being there. Simon added that the Council would only be satisfied of this if there was a sound financial basis behind any submitted evidence.

Stephen Conway commented that this site had a long and complex planning history, and the appeal decision had allowed the applicant until 2022 to use the site as permitted. Stephen added that when permission was granted, Brexit and Covid-19 were not issues, and Stephen felt that it was ungenerous to only allow an additional year given these factors. Stephen was of the opinion that permission should be granted for all three applications until 14 March 2024, to balance the local community need and the harm caused. Simon Taylor stated that the exhibition space was considered for a one year permission to tie in with the other applications, the events use recognised that some events had been taking place through the periods of lockdown, whilst the temporary use for the purpose of retail had remained open for most of the lockdown period, demonstrating that the retail use within the nursery had been operating fairly successfully as had the farm shop. Simon added that weighing up all of the factors, a one year extension seemed entirely appropriate to officers.

Andrew Mickleburgh echoed the concerns and suggestions raised by Stephen Conway. Andrew queried why the permission being recommended for application 211084 was for one year when three years were being sought, queried whether there was a quantifiable reason to justify only a one year permission, and queried whether the length of any extension would have any bearing on any future planning application for this site, for example an application for permanent permission. Simon Taylor stated that the exhibition use was proposed for three years, commencing from today, and running through to 2024. This would have resulted in the permission extending for around six months longer than the other two applications. Simon added that it was a material change of use to include class F, which was contrary to green belt policy. A three year extension was seen as excessive as it was a horticultural nursery, and one year seemed reasonable, partly to align this permission to the other permissions. Simon stated that the retail use and the events use had almost seven months left on their permission, and an additional twelve months was proposed to allow a business plan to be developed to demonstrate their future intentions and use. Some discussions had occurred outside of the planning process regarding future intentions for the use, which had not been acceptable to WBC as of yet. Simon commented that the primary use of the site remained horticultural, and felt that these extensions did not set a precedent for a permanent garden centre or other such business.

Chris Bowring was of the opinion that at the time of the application the Inspector would have been aware of Brexit, and therefore felt that the Committee should focus on the effect that the pandemic has had on this site.

Angus Ross was of the opinion that it was best to apply the same end date for all three applications for the sake of consistency, and to avoid confusion. Angus was of the opinion that if these applications were allowed until 2024, it would be harder to refute any potential future application for permanent use if they were deemed to cause harm. Angus stated that he saw no reason to go against any of the officer recommendations.

Pauline Jorgensen queried how long it would take to prove that a successful horticultural business could exist with some other supporting ancillary uses. Simon Taylor stated that it was the Inspector's intent to grant temporary permission to hopefully allow the horticultural business to stand on its own without a retail element. There had been incremental growth of the use of the site over a long period of time. Simon added that WBC had some hesitancy to maintain the temporary periods, as the intentions of the applicant had not been clear over an extended period of time.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey was of the opinion that the planning history for this site was very complex. Rachelle added that, in her opinion, a one year extension seemed to be reasonable given the unforeseen circumstances faced by the applicant.

Stephen Conway was of the opinion that the Inspector could not have known the full details of Brexit, and the Committee had to consider whether it was reasonable to only grant a one year extension when the applicant had already faced 16 months of disruptions. Stephen was of the opinion that allowing temporary permission until 2024 for all three of the applications provided a balanced decision, and maintained control for WBC.

Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, commented that officers were conscious of the difficulties that the business had faced, whilst also being conscious that part of the business had been open for some of the lockdown period. Justin added that the Inspector had felt that this development was inappropriate development

within the green belt. The view of officers was that this additional year was a reasonable compromise as it would end in 2023, given that the Inspectors decision was made in 2019.

Stephen Conway proposed that condition 1 be amended for application number 211084, to amend the terminal date from 14 March 2023 to 14 March 2024. This proposals was seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh, and upon being put to the vote the amendment fell.

Stephen Conway stated that in the spirit of keeping the all three applications in line with each other with the same terminal date, he would not propose amendments to either of the further applications.

**RESOLVED** That application number 211084 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 83 to 85, and correction to condition 4 as set out within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

**27. APPLICATION NO.211085 - HARE HATCH SHEEPLANDS, LONDON ROAD, HARE HATCH**

***Item 26 contains the substantive minutes for agenda items 26, 27, and 28. The individual resolutions for each item are contained within their respective minute item.***

***Bill Soane declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and therefore left the room and took no part in either the discussion or vote.***

**Applicant:** Hare Hatch Sheeplands

**Proposal:** Application to vary condition 1 of planning consent 192018 for the Full application for the Change of Use of three existing nursery glasshouses into events area relating to the existing nursery. Condition 1 refers to temporary permission and the variation is to extend temporary permission for two years.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 109 to 130.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Amended condition 3, in order to carry over part (iv) of the types of events allowed within the permission;
- Clarification that the information contained within paragraph 7a was incorrect, and that horticultural use was already being lawfully undertaken and that planning permission was never enacted for this purpose;
- Correction to paragraph 5 to correctly refer to application number 211084 as the correct application for the exhibition space.

**RESOLVED** That application number 211085 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 110 to 112, and amendment to condition 3 as set out within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

**28. APPLICATION NO.211086 - HARE HATCH SHEEPLANDS, LONDON ROAD, HARE HATCH**

***Item 26 contains the substantive minutes for agenda items 26, 27, and 28. The individual resolutions for each item are contained within their respective minute item.***

***Bill Soane declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and therefore left the room and took no part in either the discussion or vote.***

**Applicant:** Hare Hatch Sheeplands

**Proposal:** Full application for the continued use of existing sales area permitted temporarily under 173316 and change of use to include an additional sales area.

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 131 to 170.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Clarification that the information contained within paragraph 6a was incorrect, and that horticultural use was already being lawfully undertaken and that planning permission was never enacted for this purpose;
- Correction to paragraph 10 to correctly refer to application number 211085 as the correct application for the extension of the temporary permission for events use.

**RESOLVED** That application number 211086 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 132 to 134.

**29. APPLICATION NO.210693 - READING BLUE COAT SCHOOL, HOLME PARK, SONNING**

**Applicant:** Mr Simon Jackson

**Proposal:** Application to vary condition 13 of 170118 and F/2010/1641 for the erection of a two-storey classroom block, construction of an internal access road (part temporary part permanent) and erection of two temporary buildings containing 4 classrooms following demolition of three existing classroom buildings. Condition 13 refers to pupils enrolled at the school and the variation is to allow for up to 1,100 pupils to be enrolled at the school

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 171 to 200.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Correction to the recommendation set out on agenda page 172, which should refer to the grant of planning permission of planning application 210693;
- Clarification that the AM peak was in relation to school arrivals in the morning between 7AM and 9AM;
- Clarification that the maximum additional vehicle movements referenced within paragraph 25 was the absolute maximum, and the real number was likely substantially lower across the two hour arrival period;
- Additional clarification of paragraphs 26 and 27, relating to vehicle movements from different routes to the school.

Trefor Fisher, Sonning Parish Council, spoke in support of the application. Trefor stated that Sonning Parish Council strongly objected to this application, as whilst residents were pleased to accommodate the school within the Parish, there was concern relating to issues including the traffic associated with the school. Previous planning applications had restricted pupil numbers to 750, and later to 825. The reasons for these restrictions were mainly due to highway safety and to congestion. Trefor stated that an enrolment of the proposed 1100 pupils compared to the 785 currently on roll would represent a forty percent increase, subsequently leading to a forty percent increase in traffic, congestion, and pollution. Trefor added that at school arrival and departure time, the section of Sonning Lane adjacent to the school entrance became gridlocked. Trefor added that local residents and commuters would avoid this area and take other routes due to this congestion. Trefor stated that the traffic survey accompanying the application focussed on the junctions of Sonning Lane and the A4, showing thirty-eight percent of school traffic went via this junction. Trefor added that the survey therefore failed to recognise that sixty-two percent of traffic travelled via the Pearson Road in Sonning, which was a narrow road with parking along its length. Trefor was of the opinion that the suggestion that a forty percent increase in school traffic was nonsensical. Trefor added that the increase in pupil numbers would place additional pressures on existing infrastructure, including the drainage and sewage systems, whereby the drains within the school site already experienced blockages with current pupil numbers. Trefor stated that approval of this application was subject for approval to a separate application for an extension of the car park at Berkshire County Sports Club. Sonning Parish Council had also objected to this application, on the grounds that it involved the loss of another area of green space, when other pre-existing tarmacked areas could be used instead. Trefor stated that the site of the school west of Sonning Lane was adjacent to Holme Park Farm, which had recently been added to consideration for the Local Plan Update. Trefor was of the opinion that for both this application for the school expansion in conjunction with any future application for housing at Holme Farm would be a disaster for the Village of Sonning. Trefor concluded by stating that consultation was a two way process, and it was not currently happening for this and other applications.

Christopher Wickham, agent, spoke in support of the application. Christopher stated that there was a strong demand for school places in the area, and co-educational provision. Christopher stated that the school had engaged proactively with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), and cited national policy guidance which placed great weight on the need to expand schools. The application had been subject to rigorous assessment by WBC highways officers, and the school believed that the issues of highways impact, car parking capacity, and sustainable travel measures were fully supportable. Christopher stated that traffic surveys had shown that the additional traffic generated by the proposals in the AM peak hour, both coming north through Sonning village and south via the A4 junction was within entirely acceptable limits. This was in part due to the staggered starts of staff and pupils, in addition to the success of the managed drop off facilities that the school had provided on site. Christopher stated that during the 8.15AM to 8.30AM peak would amount in the worst case to one additional vehicle via Sonning Lane to the north. Christopher added that the historic issue of car parking along Sonning Lane had been addressed via the implementation of double yellow line restrictions and by the drop off lane which the school had constructed. Christopher stated that the detailed analysis within the report showed that the overall proposed level of off street parking would meet the Council's parking standards, whilst other proposed conditions would cover parking management and the provision of cycle parking. The school had an established travel plan which was regularly updated, and the school also used a network of privately managed bus networks,

which was due to be expanded further, whilst parking and turning of these bus services was provided off of the highway. Christopher concluded by stating that cycle parking and electric vehicle charging points were also proposed, and requested that the Committee approve the application.

Michael Firmager, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Michael stated that he was not in any way against the increase in education opportunities, as these should be the right of everyone if they so wished. Michael was of the opinion that this application would have a considerable on the traffic and pollution levels in Sonning, and in particular along the Sonning Lane and Pearson Road. Michael added that these roads were especially congested with parked cars, and as a result they were extremely tight for vehicles to navigate around. Michael stated that there had been a steady increase in pupil numbers over the years, and noted that even with car sharing and bus travel methods, the increase in pupils would lead to a large number of additional vehicles using the already congested roads in and around Sonning. Michael stated that the extension of car parking at the Berkshire County Sports Club was not in and of itself a bad idea, however it would still lead to more vehicle movements in and around Sonning's roads. Michael reiterated his view that this application would increase congestion and pollution in surrounding area, whilst also increasing the risk of accidents within the surrounding area.

Angus Ross queried why only some schools had a limit on total pupil numbers, queried what tests had been carried out to evidence that the proposals were acceptable in terms of congestion and pollution, and queried what guarantees were there that the Berkshire County Sports car park would allow parking for the school beyond their current long term lease. Simon Taylor, case officer, stated that capping pupil numbers by condition was a recent trend. Relating to the car parking, Simon stated that the lease agreement was in place until 2040, and condition 18 tried to tie the lease to this application. Judy Kelly, Highways Development Manager, stated that the modal split data came from the school travel plan, which provided detailed data. A survey had been carried out at the junction, and showed that the worst case scenario was the queue increasing from one vehicle to four vehicles, which was not a high level nor at capacity. Any increase of queueing in this manner would be temporary and limited by the nature of the peak school drop-off and pickup time periods.

Angus Ross commented that only thirty-eight percent of the traffic was shown to use the A4 junction, with the rest of the traffic travelling via Pearson Road. Angus sought clarification regarding the traffic which was not using the A4 junction. Judy Kelly stated that the traffic was split in three directions, with the flow of vehicles using the Sonning Lane junction shown to be the highest of the three different directions of travel. When assessing the performance of a junction, officers looked at the direction of most vehicle flow as that was the junction which was most likely to struggle. Having been assessed, the A4 junction had shown a maximum additional queue of three vehicles in the AM peak drop off time, which was considered acceptable.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried why the percentage increase of pupils had been carried out from the current maximum number of pupils being 850 rather than the number of pupils currently on roll, queried whether it was possible for to guarantee use of the Berkshire County Sports Club in perpetuity, and commented that the issue of congestion was not just due to the number of additional vehicles but also the nature of the roads. Simon stated that the thirty-three percent increase in pupil numbers was based on the existing approval, and was not a traffic based assessment. Simon stated that the use of the car park could not be changed, and if it were to change it would be anticipated that an alternative arrangement

would come forward prior to any change occurring. Simon added that the dual-use nature of the car park was a positive for outcome for the Sports Club. In relation to the nature of the roads, Judy Kelly stated that the Highways officer would have carried out a site visit at the school peak hour in order to identify any potential issues. There were very strict rules in relation to the input of geometric dimensions of the road and junction within the software used, and needed to include the visibility splays from all directions. Judy added that the additional vehicles using the road would be cars and not oversized vehicles.

Bill Soane sought assurances that the completion of the car park was a prerequisite to increase of the maximum pupil numbers. Bill commented that he had great concerns in relation to the safety of Sonning Lane and the A4, which included a very dangerous right turn off of the junction in his opinion. Bill added that any form of traffic control would be of benefit to the area, and commented that he had attended a large funeral locally recently which had caused the village area to become gridlocked. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, confirmed that condition 13 required completion of the planning application for extension of the car parking area prior to the school increasing their maximum pupil numbers.

Stephen Conway commented that he had personal experience with this section of road at the school drop-off time, and added that there was also a nursery next to the school. Stephen was of the opinion that this application would add to the congestion issues on the road, but added that Members had to be guided by the technical recommendation which was based off of data.

Pauline Jorgensen noted that there was a low number of pupils cycling to the school, and queried whether officers had engaged with the school to understand what the barriers were to children cycling to and from school. Judy Kelly stated that the school had a travel plan which was due to be updated in six months' time, and part of this process involved consulting with the school and wider community to understand what barriers to cycling were present.

Pauline Jorgensen proposed an additional informative, encouraging the school to work with the Local Authority to increase the amount of cycling to and from the school. This proposal was seconded by Chris Bowring, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

**RESOLVED** That application number 210693 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 172 to 177, reference to the correct planning application number of 210693 as contained within the Supplementary planning Agenda, and additional informative encouraging the school to work with the Local Authority to increase the amount of cycling to and from the school as resolved by the Committee.

**30. APPLICATION NO.211754 - 25 CAMELLIA WAY, WOKINGHAM**

***Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and therefore left the room and took no part in either the discussion or vote.***

**Applicant:** Dr Robert Koefman

**Proposal:** Full application for the proposed change of use of the site from residential (Use Class C3) to a mixed use of residential and a beauty salon (Use Class Sui Generis) (Retrospective).

The Committee received and reviewed a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 201 to 216.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

John Walsh, neighbour, spoke in objection to the application. John stated that he had been subject to a campaign of harassment from the business owner and neighbours. John added that his wife had been subject to several verbal onslaughts on her own doorstep. John stated that there were only three formal parking bays at number 25, as the modified garage was too small to accommodate any vehicle. John added that he had submitted photographs, land registry maps, title deeds, and a solicitor's letter confirming that that he had driveway ownership and intended use. John added that after considering the vehicles owned by number 25, there were no formal bays left for use by either the intended clients or business owner. John stated that prior to the business operating, the closest public viewpoint into his property was 25m away at the end of the driveway, and the closest pedestrian walkway route was closer to 40m away. John was of the opinion that there was therefore a significant reduction in privacy, as the nearest window of his property to the business entrance was only 3m distance, and his family's privacy was particularly important to them during the evening and weekends when the children were at home and adults were not working. John was of the opinion that the business operator had not been adhering to any planning rules, whilst operating outside of the proposed hours and client volume contained within the planning application, whilst the published opening hours on social media did not align with those on the application. John asked the Committee to consider how the operating conditions would be enforced by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), should this application be approved. John stated that whilst his preference was for the business to relocate somewhere more suitable, he hoped that the Committee could at least consider additional conditions, including restricting opening hours to 9-5 on weekdays and excluding all weekends and bank holidays, use of an alternative business entrance point such as the property front door or rear gate, and finally asked that the driveway forecourt was not used by the business operator or client parking during the agreed business hours.

Matthew Miller, agent, spoke in support of the application. Matthew stated that this was a retrospective application as the applicant had not realised that permission was required, and had applied for permission as soon as they were advised to do so. Matthew stated that the business operated on an appointment only basis with a maximum of four clients per day within strictly enforced hours of operation. Matthew added that this application would meet WBC's parking standards, and commented that the neighbouring property at number 23 did not have sole right of access. Matthew commented that the planning authority had to take into account any fall-back position that could be adopted, which in this case would be that a similar business could be lawfully operated without the need for planning permission by the owners of number 25 rather than the daughter who did not reside at the address. Matthew concluded by stating that the application conformed with both local and national planning policy as a whole, as was a fully sustainable development which also brought about a degree of economic benefit. Matthew asked that the Committee approve this application.

Imogen Shepherd DuBey, Ward Member, commented on the application. Imogen stated that Councillor Rachel Bishop-Firth had listed this application to the Committee due to concerns relating to potential noise and disturbances to residents in the area including neighbouring properties. Imogen stated that she was not against this type of business,

however ground rules needed to be in place to ensure that businesses did not cause any problems for neighbours or local residents. Imogen asked the Committee to listen to both the applicant and local residents, and agree a framework whereby all parties could understand and live with.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether the safety of children in relation to additional vehicle movements had been considered, queried officers view on the entrance for the business coming off of the public footpath along Bob's Copse, queried what test was applied to determine that the business use was incidental to the residential use of the main dwelling, and queried whether a condition to exclude all weekend and bank holiday trading was reasonable. Senjuti Manna, case officer, stated that officers had visited the site and felt that the front garden was small and not really large enough for children to play in. Senjuti added that use of the footpath for access would change the nature of the application. Relating to ancillary use, Senjuti stated that planning permission would not be required if the business operator lived at the address, and officers felt that the overall use of the business was ancillary to the residential nature of the dwelling. Senjuti stated that condition 3 stated that the business could not operate on Sundays or bank holidays, and permission to operate between 10AM and 4PM on a Saturday was considered reasonable.

Stephen Conway stated that operation of the business on Saturdays could have an effect on residential amenity, however not allowing it could be of detriment to the business. Stephen queried whether it was reasonable to allow use of the business between the prescribed hours of 10AM and 4PM on Saturdays. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that only four appointments were allowed on a Saturday, with a thirty minute gap between appointments, and as such officers had deemed this acceptable.

Stephen Conway commented that residents could contact the WBC enforcement team if they had any concerns relating to breach of conditions in the future.

**RESOLVED** That application number 211754 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 202 to 203.

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Decision made in the presence of:  
Geoff Hislop, Parking Manager  
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Officers in attendance: Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking & Road Safety Team Manager)

<b>INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION RECORD SHEET IMD 2021/20</b>
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<b>Title of the report</b>	<b>Wokingham Borough-wide Traffic Regulation Order - On-Street Parking Restrictions - Amendment No. 4</b>
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**DECISION MADE BY** Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Pauline Jorgensen

**ACTION BY** Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

**DECISION MADE ON** 12 August 2021

### **Recommendation contained in the report**

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport:

- 1) approves the transition of statutory processes required to enable the proposals in Amendment no.4 Schedule A of this report to be implemented on roads within the Borough; and
- 2) instructs officers to revise the proposals for streets listed in Schedule B of this report and undertake further consultation as necessary amongst affected residents;
- 3) further instructs officers to bring forward relevant parking controls in respect of those roads deferred at this time in a future Amendment;
- 4) authorises officers to write to respondents to advise them of the outcome of this IEMD.

### **Decision**

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport:

- 1) approved the transition of statutory processes required to enable the proposals in Amendment no.4 Schedule A of this report to be implemented on roads within the Borough; and
- 2) instructed officers to revise the proposals for streets listed in Schedule B of this report and undertake further consultation as necessary amongst affected residents;
- 3) further instructed officers to bring forward relevant parking controls in respect of those roads deferred at this time in a future Amendment;
- 4) authorised officers to write to respondents to advise them of the outcome of this IEMD.

### **Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation**

N/A

**Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision**

N/A

<b>SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>	
<b>Director – Resources &amp; Assets</b>	No comment
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	No comment
<b>Leader of the Council</b>	No comment

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

**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**

Consultation responses and officer's decision sheet

**PUBLISHED ON:** 12 August 2021

**EFFECTIVE ON:** 20 August 2021

**CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES:** 19 August 2021

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.05 PM

### **Committee Members Present**

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

### **Executive Members Present**

Councillors: Stuart Munro and Bill Soane

### **Audit Committee Members in Attendance**

Councillors: Maria Gee and Ian Shenton

### **Officers Present**

Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist), Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Rhian Hayes (Interim Assistant Director Housing and Place), Andrew Moulton (Assistant Director - Governance), Mark Redfearn (Head of Localities Service) and Grant Thornton (Category Manager Economic Prosperity & Place (Interim))

### **23. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Sam Akhtar and Phil Cunnington.

Norman Jorgensen attended the meeting as a substitute.

### **24. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 June, and the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 21 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following minor amendments and comments, and signed by the Chairman.

21 June 2021:

The actions relating to the Community Safety Partnership item be chased, and subsequently circulated to the Committee.

An answer related to how Wokingham Borough Council protects itself from cyber ware and ransom attacks be provided to Committee Members.

21 July 2021:

Minute item 21, agenda page 17: "WBC had appreciated the partnership working over the years, however it was not felt that the residents of Wokingham would be better served by an in-house service."

Minute Item 21, agenda page 18: "The Interim Director (Place & growth) stated that there was ~~unilateral~~ **universal** thanks to the staff and the PPP as a whole for the work that they had done."

Correction to mark Councillor Alison Swaddle as present at the meeting.

## **25. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

A personal declaration of interest was submitted from Councillor Alison Swaddle in relation to agenda item 28, on the grounds that she was a paid election agent for the recent local elections.

## **26. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

### **26.1 Keith Malvern asked the Chairman of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following question:**

#### **Question**

It has been interesting to read the document on library enhancement and relocations as it states clearly the libraries added value.

The recent consultation about Wokingham Library (ended 29th August) states that "the new library will have everything that the current library in Denmark Street has" but doesn't specifically mention how those libraries added things will be delivered. As an example how to counteract social isolation and poor mental health by coffee mornings etc, without a cafe and comfortable seating.

Recognising that the new library is due to open next August will this list of library added value be looked at to see how they can be provided?

#### **Answer**

The relocation of Wokingham Library, as with the relocation of Twyford Library and the new micro library within the new Shinfield Community Centre, have the central objective of improving services for our residents. These improvements are both within the core statutory elements of the library service, and the additional value provided through the wide range of events and activities provided by the library service.

The relocation of Wokingham library does not restrict or diminish the ability of the library service to provide added value to our residents. The new library has more usable space that is also more flexible and adaptable so that it can respond more easily to the changing demands of a modern library service. This is the central reason behind the recent engagement survey for Wokingham Library so that residents and local community groups have a direct opportunity to communicate their ambitions for using the library.

In response to the specific question about a café, the new Carnival Hub includes space for a café for all visitors to use that is larger than the one currently available within Wokingham Library.

#### **Supplementary Question**

I do find it a bit disappointing because clearly the detail of the new library has not really been defined in any clarity. And clearly, what one would want to feel comfortable about is that everything that the existing library does is going to continue to be. I hear mention of efficiency, and we have this list on your agenda and more things as well, that is page 55 and 56. What I would want is to be confident, and I am not, that these things are actually going to be provided in the way that they currently are provided. I agree that yes there might be a café, but is it going to be a café that will suit casual visitors to satisfy the point that I raised I raised earlier on, let alone all of the other things. I do think that it needs to be looked at again.

## **Supplementary Answer**

I think that what you are referring to, and the detail of the offer of the existing offer, is actually what we are going to be talking about later tonight. We are looking at what will happen in the future with our library service, because a library and the library service is much more than what we traditionally see as a library in regards to books, facilities etcetera, there is much more that it can offer Wokingham from that point of view. So, it is a case of what is being offered now we need to basically try and mirror and basically enhance it going forward. That is the purpose of a lot of documentation in the agenda tonight and how we are going forward, but this is only the first stage as it needs to go forward. Bill, am I incorrect in that assumption?

Yes you are correct. The whole point is here that the new facility in the Carnival phase two offers a greater area to start with. At the moment we have 133m<sup>2</sup> in the library (café) and this will be increased to 285m<sup>2</sup>, so a considerably larger area is given to the library than currently available. And with that, I can say that the current services offered by the library will be transferred over to the new library and I hope that there will be additional services as well. I can't say for sure but that is what I would hope to see given that there is more space.

## **27. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

## **28. UPDATE ON LOCAL ELECTIONS**

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 23 to 30, which gave an update on the running of local elections within the Borough.

The report outlined the delivery of the combined elections held in May 2021 within the context of a complex backdrop of significant public health restrictions which presented complex new challenges for all those involved in the electoral process. The report outlined a number of actions derived from the analysis of learning from the running of the May 2021 elections. These actions included the undertaking of an interim polling places review of selected polling places to be reported to Council in January 2022, and planning to hold the verification and count for the May 2022 elections during the daytime on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

Andrew Moulton (Assistant Director – Governance) attended the meeting to answer Member questions.

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

- The Committee were unanimous in their thanks for the elections team and wider staff network for the successful running of the May 2021 elections under difficult conditions.
- Whilst being effective for the purposes of delivering a Covid-secure polling day, the reduction of polling places available to the residents of Norreys Ward to a single polling place would not be ideal going forwards. Was this planned to revert to multiple polling places for future elections? Officer response – This change was planned as a one-off change for those set of elections, and the change was planned to revert back to multiple polling places all being well.

- A number of Members commented that the daytime verification and count worked well, and they hoped that this could continue going forwards.
- How likely was it that for the elections due to be held in May 2022 that none of the polling places due to be used would be a school? Officer response – There were only four schools within the Borough which were used as polling stations, and a considerable amount of work had been done over previous years to reduce the Borough's reliance on schools as polling places. The view was to speak with Ward Members and take a report to Council in early 2022. It had always been the intention to not disrupt the education of school children as a consequence of running elections wherever possible.
- Had marquees within the school grounds or playing fields been considered as an option instead of using the school building itself? Officer response – This had been an option considered for the May 2021 elections, however for a variety of reasons this did not work out on this occasion.
- It was commented that some school buildings were the most obvious public building within a Ward and therefore merited consideration for use as a polling place.
- There had been a large increase in the numbers of people choosing to vote by post for the elections held in May 2021, which was good to see. Some residents had become confused regarding the instructions for how to vote by post and it would be worthwhile to have a further look at the instructions issued.
- How many postal votes had arrived after polling day? Officer response – These figures would be circulated to Members of the Committee. On a related note, a significant number of people choose to hand deliver their postal vote to their polling station on polling day.
- What were the approximate percentage increases in the numbers of people choosing to vote by post, and how many of these were applications to permanently vote by post? Officer response – There had been an approximate increase of between thirty and forty percent of people choosing to vote by post. The numbers of people who registered to permanently vote by post would be sought and circulated to the Committee.
- Was there a significant percentage of spoilt ballot papers, or ballot papers that could not be count, as they had not been correctly filled in as a result of the individual being confused by the postal vote instructions? Officer response – There had likely not been any marked increase, and the instructions were very prescribed which gave the returning officer very little room to edit the instructions. Most errors were likely due to an increase in people voting by post for the first time.
- With the Government proposing to require voters to produce identification documents at polling stations, what checks and balances were carried out for a postal voter? Officer response – All postal votes are subject to strict checks against their original postal vote application form.
- Relating to the final paragraph of agenda page 30, what was a digital imprint, what must be done with them, and what was organic material? Officer response – This was

centred around political campaigners specifically, but a more detailed written answer would be provided.

- It was agreed that the figures relating to the number of postal votes received after polling day would be sought and circulated to the Committee. In addition, the figures relating to the numbers of postal votes rejected would also be sought and circulated to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Andrew Moulton be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The figures relating to the number of postal votes received after polling day for the May 2021 elections be circulated to the Committee;
- 3) The figures relating to the number of postal votes rejected for the May 2021 elections be circulated to the Committee;
- 4) The figures relating to the number of individuals who registered to permanently vote by post in the period leading up to the May 2021 elections be circulated to the Committee;
- 5) A written answer be provided relating to the query about digital imprints and organic material;
- 6) An item regarding the implications of the proposed Elections Bill return to the Committee when the Bill was further progressed.

**29. BROADBAND PROVISION**

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 31 to 44, which gave an update on broadband provision within the Borough.

The report outlined the current position with regard to the existing Superfast Berkshire Broadband project, which would give broadband coverage with speeds of over 24Mbps to 98.64% of households in the Borough. The report added that a strategy was in place to increase full-fibre coverage in Berkshire to 95% by the end of 2025 from the current baseline of 13.86%. Achievement of this target would require actions to try and ensure that both commercial and subsidised provision was expedited and that investment in Berkshire's digital infrastructure did not lag behind other parts of the country.

Stuart Munro (Executive Member for Business and Economic Development), Grant Thornton (Category Manager Economic Prosperity & Place (Interim)), Rhian Hayes (Interim Assistant Director Housing and Place), and Lynne Wilson (Project and Program Manager for Digital Projects across Berkshire) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- How was Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) actively advertising the Gigabit voucher scheme to our rural communities and businesses? Officer response – Some residents and Town and Parish Councils had been directly written to in the past. There was a plan to promote the scheme more widely, and there was an aspiration to work with

Connecting Communities Berkshire to see how they might outreach and promote this directly with the Borough's more rural communities.

- Was there a plan to provide the Gorse Ride regeneration homes with ultrafast broadband provision, as one of the aspirations of the overall plan was to provide social housing with ultrafast broadband. Officer response – There was an ongoing conversation taking place with the Gorse Ride steering group and local residents, as this was seen as a great opportunity to provide top class broadband to a redeveloped estate. Conversations were ongoing with the appropriate contacts about making this a trial project.
- How much of the rollout may require public subsidy, how much might this cost, and what provisions were being made? Officer response – The primary source of finance was the Gigabit initiative from central Government. It was a Government objective, and it was down to the Government to issue the contracts which should deal with the vast majority of those people and businesses not connected commercially. Based on Government figures, 85% of properties are expected to have full fibre provision by 2025, with the further 15% to be looked at later. Berkshire's objective is set slightly higher, at 95% coverage by 2025.
- Members requested that information be provided when available relating to the level of grants expected and how much of a potential funding gap might need to be filled relating to full fibre rollout.
- Recent full fibre rollout in the Winnersh area had seen an 18 month delay between laying the infrastructure and users being able to take-up the service. What would change in the future to prevent delays in take-up in other areas of the Borough? Officer response – It was accepted that there had been issues in the early years with rollout by some providers, and officers were awaiting to see who would be awarded future contracts. As the technology had developed, there was now more passive infrastructure access as well as a variety of different providers competing to carry out the work whilst using lessons learned from early rollout.
- Was there ample provision of companies and core infrastructure across the whole country to deliver the suggested rollout to schedule? Officer response – This was an issue on the risk register, however there were now a number of providers competing for this work. The rollout was continuing to progress, but there was a risk that this issue could occur in the future.
- What was being done to mitigate the risk of a lack of personnel to carry out the infrastructure rollout? Office response – There was an apprentice programme in place to entice people to get involved in this industry. In addition, more than one contract or sub-contract could be issued to allow a switch to a different provider if necessary. Weekly meetings were being undertaken with suppliers to highlight any potential issues.
- There could be limitations regarding the no-dig option in addition to the available road space to lay infrastructure. Had these factors been considered? Officer response – These factors were being looked at, and work was being undertaken to try and get suppliers to share infrastructure and space. It was a priority to lay infrastructure when major roadworks were already being carried out, to reduce disruption and to streamline delivery.

- How many houses would not have superfast broadband provision as a minimum under current delivery plans? Officer response – The specific stats would be sought and circulated to the Committee. Those properties which were not reached were likely due to wayleave refusals, and trying to setup provision for these properties in another way would cost a very considerable amount of money.
- Was 5G being considered to ‘fill the gap’ for some properties going forwards? Officer response – 5G was being considered and looked in to. This was very new and had just been picked up, and there were a number of competing priorities. A leader in 5G would be addressing the Board in September, and it was hoped that this would assist in moving projects related to 5G forward.
- Were suppliers aware of the demand from consumers for these services? Officer response – The Board had regular contacts with suppliers and the wider market, which allowed for feedback relating some of the issues that were occurring. Conversations were also occurring to ask suppliers what best practices that they would like to see to make Berkshire a more attractive place for them to invest.
- What was the Berkshire ‘LoraWan’? Officer response – This was part of the smart city project, and related to the ‘internet of things’. For example, one local authority was using it to place sensors in bins to understand which bins needed more regular emptying to increase efficiencies.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Stuart Munro, Grant Thornton, Rhian Hayes, and Lynne Wilson be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Information be provided when available relating to the level of grants expected and how much of a potential funding gap might need to be filled relating to full fibre rollout;
- 3) The specific statistics be provided relating to how many properties would not be supplied with a minimum of superfast broadband.

**30. LIBRARY SERVICE UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 45 to 62, which gave an update on the Library Service within the Borough.

The report outlined a number of topics including the statutory requirements for library provision, an overview of the nine libraries which Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) operated across the Borough, and library enhancements and library relocations.

Bill Soane (Executive Member for Neighbourhood and Communities) and Mark Redfearn (Head of Localities Service) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- It was agreed that the slides relating to the new library offer be circulated to the Committee.

- Would the Executive Member be happy to set up a cross party working group to look at the future library offer, including making use of Members on the Arts and Culture working group? Executive Member response – This was a good idea which would be looked into to see if it could be accommodated. An update would be provided to Members regarding this.
- Were there any plans to have additional opening hours on Sundays, and could any future consultation take place during school term time? Officer response – When the library offer was consulted on five years ago the main goal was to be as inclusive as possible, and the more input from library users including students the better. Officers were always looking at when library users most wanted the service to be open, which had included less evening offerings and additional Saturday offerings. It would cost an additional approximate £35k per year to facilitate Sunday openings.
- Was the micro library in Shinfield of sufficient functionality for the population that it served? Officer response – This was part of the amenities within the wider SDL, with space for approximately 1500 books, a self-serving kiosk and intelligent shelving. The Parish Council were involved in coming up with ideas as to how best use the space for sessions, such as story time sessions.
- How well used were the smaller libraries in the Borough? Officer response – Figures relating to usage statistics for the smaller libraries could be circulated to the Committee. The Earley library was less well used than Woodley or Wokingham, but still better used than others.
- Did people tend to congregate in the larger facilities, or were they dispersed amongst the smaller facilities as well? Officer response – The smaller libraries remain well used whilst the larger sites of Woodley, Wokingham and to a lesser extent Lower Earley attracted a significant number of users. The libraries themselves were spaces within communities which were used as community hubs for activities and groups. It was important to have provision outside of the main hubs of Wokingham, Woodley and Earley.
- It was really important to incorporate the Arts Strategy into our library provision. What was planned in this regard? Officer response – Officers wanted libraries to be gateways to other things including culture and learning opportunities. Artwork from local artists was often displayed, and local authors were encouraged to come along for reading sessions. The new Wokingham library would follow suit, and there would be space for artistic exhibitions.
- Residents living in areas with a smaller library would be happy to hear the support from officers regarding the important roles that these spaces provided.
- Would it be possible to work with Optalis to put an Alzheimer's café in the new Carnival Pool hub? Executive Member and officer response – This could be looked at by the potential future working group, and this was a worthwhile idea to explore alongside the voluntary sector. The café was due to be operated by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, and additional details would have to be worked out with them. The plan was to make the library and café as accessible as possible for all users.

- It was noted that libraries were more than just buildings and books. Libraries were community focussed areas, with learning opportunities, educational facilities and arts and culture sessions and exhibitions.
- Had conversations been had with the University of Reading Library and the British Museum relating to outreach of the Borough's Library service? Officer response – Detailed talks had not been had with the University of Reading, but the door was always open for future talks. Contact had been made with the archives, and prior to the pandemic discussions had been ongoing relating to how the archives outreach service could align with the work of the Library service and also schools. These conversations were ongoing and it was a key aim for the service. In addition to this, conversations were always ongoing with schools and with Children's Services colleagues. A key success of engagement with schools included the author's in schools projects, which had received a fantastic attendance.
- It was good to see all of the work being done to improve the Woodley library, including the works to make the building energy efficient. Were officers open to the idea of displaying the figures as to how much energy the building had generated, as well as information explain how a heat pump worked? Officer response – This was a good idea and officers would look to incorporate this.
- The Committee gave their universal praise for the team behind the Library Service, and hoped that the team would continue to innovate going forwards.
- The Executive Member commented that it was WBC's duty to continue to support the residents using these services and improve upon them. The possible future working group would look at potential improvements to support residents.
- It was noted that officers within the Library Service worked tirelessly to improve and innovate the service.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Bill Soane and Mark Redfearn be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The slides relating to the new library offer be circulated to the Committee;
- 3) It be recommended that the Executive Member explore the opportunity for the creation of a cross-party working group to look at the future offering of the library service, whilst looking to include Members from the Arts and Culture working group;
- 4) Figures relating to usage statistics for the smaller libraries be circulated to the Committee;
- 5) Officers consider the provision of an interactive sign in the Woodley library detailing how much energy the building had generated, how much carbon had been saved, and how other features such as a heat pumped worked;
- 6) The team behind the Library Service be thanked for their tireless work and innovations;

- 7) A future update regarding the new library offer return to the Committee when it has progressed.

### **31. UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE**

The Committee considered their work programme, set out in agenda pages 63 to 68.

The Committee were advised that an extraordinary meeting had been scheduled for 3 November 2021 in order to accommodate a thorough overview of the draft 2022-2025 Medium Term Financial Plan.

During the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

- Relating to the item regarding overgrown pavements, Members wished to ensure that there was a follow-up process to pavements which had been attended to but required further works on a continual basis. In addition, Members wanted assurances that the public could report issues properly, and that footways were being cleared from the verge up to the boundary edge. Members added that they would like to know how pavements were categorised for clearance, to ensure a proactive strategy was in place. Members also wished to know whether highways inspectors were picking these issues up, and how footways were dealt with in autumn and winter when there was significant leaf fall.
- It was recommended that an additional update relating to the Council's exit from the Public Protection Partnership be scheduled for the Committee's January meeting;
- An update be sought regarding provision of a refuge for domestic abuse victims, with a briefing note to be circulated to Members.

#### **RESOLVED That:**

- 1) Callum Wernham be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The extraordinary meeting scheduled for 3 November 2021 be agreed;
- 3) The point relating to the item regarding overgrown pavements be noted and passed on to officers;
- 4) An additional update relating to the Council's exit from the Public Protection Partnership be scheduled for the Committee's January 2022 meeting;
- 5) An update be sought regarding provision of a refuge for domestic abuse victims, with a briefing note to be circulated to Members.