



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS
FOR THE PERIOD**

29 SEPTEMBER 2021 to 28 OCTOBER 2021

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

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 10 November 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.

	PAGE NO.
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 29 September 2021 of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 - 12
Minutes of meeting Thursday, 30 September 2021 of Executive	13 - 24
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 6 October 2021 of Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	25 - 34
Minutes of meeting Monday, 11 October 2021 of Standards Committee	35 - 38
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 13 October 2021 of Planning Committee	39 - 50
Minutes of meeting Thursday, 14 October 2021 of Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board	51 - 56
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 20 October 2021 of Licensing and Appeals Committee	57 - 62
Minutes of meeting Thursday, 28 October 2021 of Executive	63 - 72

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Others Present

Nick Durman, Healthwatch Wokingham
Charles Margetts, Executive Member Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Matt Pope, Director Adult Services
Jim Stockley, Healthwatch Wokingham
Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
David Birch, Chief Executive Officer, Optalis
Hugh O’Keefe, Senior Commissioning Manager Dental, NHS England and NHS Improvement – South East

25. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Sam Akhtar and Carl Doran.

26. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Jones questioned whether the individual councillor who had asked a question could be referenced. The Chairman indicated that the current approach had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Councillor Jones suggested that other councillors such as Executive Members be referenced by their title. The matter was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

27. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

29. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

30. ACCESS TO NHS DENTAL SERVICES IN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

The Committee received an update on access to NHS Dental Services in Wokingham Borough from Hugh O’Keefe, Senior Commissioning Manager Dental, NHS England and NHS Improvement – South East.

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

- Access remained a challenge and services had been operating at below full capacity because of the pandemic. This related largely to the safety issues involved in the provision of dental services, which slowed down the rate at which patients could be treated.

- Practices were continuing to prioritise patients within the existing available capacity. The key criteria used was urgency (pain, swelling and breathing), incomplete care plans and those with more frequent recall requirements, such as children, high oral disease risk and wider health issues. Practices were working within a national standard operating procedure
- Worse oral health was starting to be seen with more people requiring longer treatment plans or admittance into hospital.
- Net capacity was increasing, and it was hoped that it would increase further from October.
- Members were reminded that people were not registered with a dental practice. It was often those who did not have an established relationship with a practice who had found accessing dental services more difficult during the pandemic.
- Hugh O’Keeffe outlined some of the schemes in place to support those who were having difficulties accessing services. Additional access sessions were commissioned from several practices on a voluntary basis – 13 in BOB, 3 of which were in the Borough. Further provision was always being sought. There was also advice about accessing services, available via NHS 111 and the NHS.UK website.
- A decision had been taken to invest significantly in referral services, particularly non hospital specialised dental services based in the community such as special care and paediatrics and out of hospital oral surgery. This was to help reduce the waitlists for these services.
- There had been a 3 month reduction in patients waiting more than 52 weeks for hospital services, although this area was likely to remain a challenge going forwards.
- A pilot scheme was being run to support access for Looked After Children.
- There was a backlog in the dental system, which was likely to remain for some time, but it was hoped that the aforementioned schemes would help to make significant inroads over the next 12-18 months.
- A Member asked what percentage of Wokingham Borough residents regularly attended a dentist, and also how many practices there were in the Borough. Hugh O’Keeffe agreed to circulate this information following the meeting.
- In response to a Member question regarding decreasing waitlists at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Hugh O’Keeffe commented that the focus had been on those waiting the longest for services, and additional sessions had been run. In addition, the Royal Berkshire Hospital did not admit oral and maxillofacial surgery patients, so the service did not face the same pressure on hospital beds as those that did admit.
- Dentists were paid on the activity delivered. 60% was the minimum threshold applied for the period 1st April – 30th September 2021, and if any less was delivered at the end of the period, then financial recovery would take place. Dentists were currently reporting that the high demand for urgent care meant that a relatively low proportion of work was routine. Urgent cases generally took longer to treat and achieving the target was challenging. The rate at which patients could be treated was slower than pre pandemic because of the additional safety requirements.
- In response to Member questions regarding patient ratios, contract allocations and how much was spent on NHS dentistry in the Borough, Hugh O’Keeffe commented that investment was focused on additional sessions to ensure greater capacity in the system. Members were informed that there had been some investment within the Borough in the last decade, with newer practices in Earley and Finchampstead.
- The Committee discussed the forthcoming Integrated Care System and the possible role of dentistry within this.

- Nick Durman spoke of a resident who had had a broken filling and had tried 10 different practices for assistance, without success. Hugh O’Keeffe stated that practices would undertake an urgency assessment. Additional access providers might be able to assist in such instances but only if they had sufficient capacity.
- A Member questioned how frequently information provided to NHS 111 was updated. The Committee felt that communication around the availability of additional capacity in the system could be improved.
- In response to a Member question regarding resilience, Hugh O’Keeffe again referred to the additional access sessions.
- Members were assured that no practice had had to close for some time due to staff isolating because of Covid. A Member asked about staff vaccination levels and was informed that the individual practices would hold this information.
- Members asked how it would be ensured that there was adequate dental provision given the increasing population within the Borough.
- A Member questioned the frequency that residents should be seeking a dental check-up and was informed that the frequency related to the individual’s general oral health. Typically, those who were older or with poorer oral health, had to visit more frequently.
- Members questioned whether some private appointments could be converted to NHS appointments and was informed that consideration was being given as to how this could be achieved in the short term, in a way which was financially robust.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the update on access to NHS Dental Services in Wokingham Borough be noted.
- 2) Hugh O’Keeffe be thanked for his presentation.

31. OPTALIS PERFORMANCE UPDATE

David Birch, Chief Executive Officer Optalis and Matt Pope, Director Adult Services, provided a presentation on the performance of Optalis.

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

- David Birch outlined the services provided by Optalis.
- With regards to operational performance, maintaining operational standards through the pandemic had been a challenge, which staff had met well. A good review of the START service had recently been received from the CQC.
- Members were informed that Optalis were now halfway through a two-year programme designed to deliver efficiency savings for the Council, in line with the Council’s Adult Social Care strategy. Optalis had been able to return £578k to the Council in 2020/21 and despite the impact of the pandemic, the programme remained on track to deliver a further £400k of savings in 2021/22.
- Optalis was starting to grow its services in Wokingham Borough, including launching a new independent living service at Gorrick Square in Wokingham.
- David Birch highlighted the success of the Supported Employment service.
- Members were pleased to note that over the last 18 months, Optalis had not lost a single customer or member of staff to a Covid infection picked up in its services.
- Optalis had supported the surge testing efforts in June, helping to deliver test kits in target areas, and providing the Trinity Court offices to the testing team.

- As a result of the pandemic, day services offered had had to be restricted. Wherever possible, alternative support had been provided.
- David Birch went on to highlight lessons learnt from the pandemic. Staff had coped well with new ways of working and had been flexible. The pandemic highlighted opportunities to do things differently. In addition, the pandemic had emphasised the importance of organisations working together for the benefit of residents.
- The Committee was informed that in line with the Council's Market Management approach, planning was well-advanced for Optalis to take on at least 10 new and existing services in the Borough, covering a wide variety of different care needs. This expansion was underpinned by investment in a new Peripatetic Team, which gave Optalis the capacity to transfer and initiate new services successfully when required by the Council.
- Members were informed of the Ability Travel service, which helped customers to gain higher levels of independence and confidence on public transport through skills training. Projected savings over the next 5 years for adult social care transportation costs, were estimated at between £400k and £500k. A Member questioned whether the voluntary sector played a partnership role in this service and was informed that this would be welcome, as public transport did not go to all areas. Nick Durman indicated that Healthwatch Wokingham Borough had received positive feedback about the service.
- Capacity and productivity enhancements were planned for the START reablement team.
- The Out & About service was consistently oversubscribed. Optalis was now investing to expand this service. A reduced service had been maintained during the pandemic.
- Optalis was working with the Council's commercial advisers to develop a range of additional opportunities for income generation for the Council. It was also evaluating options for setting up a Community Interest Company which would allow it to work more closely with the local voluntary and charitable sector in the Borough, as well as providing access to external sources of funding.
- In response to a Member question, David Birch commented that the current most difficult challenge was resourcing. The recruitment and retention of staff was important. Optalis' workforce would need to nearly double should all initiatives be put into place. Optalis had a Resourcing Manager who would go into school and job centres amongst other places, to highlight the benefits of working in the care industry.
- Members questioned how Optalis could deliver savings without compromising on the service provided. David Birch emphasised the importance of margins and identifying where savings could be made without services being compromised. He indicated that Optalis had merged some management roles, made some changes with regards to insurance and had stopped using a consultant.
- The Committee asked about the relationship with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council (RBWM) and ensuring a good deal for Wokingham Borough. David Birch commented that building trust on all sides and transparency was important. Matt Pope stated that there had been some work with RBWM over the last 18 months over who paid for what. He was comfortable with the current position. The Executive Member added that historically the aim of Optalis had been to grow quickly. There had been a change in strategy 2 years ago, with a focus on a better run company with a better service provided.
- Members asked how the relationship with RBWM had changed. The Executive Member responded that RBWM had initially focused on growing Optalis. The

Council had wanted a more focus service. The councils' focuses were now more aligned, and they were working well as partners.

- Members asked about the potential new services. Matt Pope indicated that the Council had secured and renovated a number of properties across the Borough for people with Learning Disabilities. Optalis would provide support in these services.
- Members questioned whether they would hear more about income generation during the Budget setting process. It was confirmed that they would. A Member referred to the benefits of dementia cafes. David Birch commented that Optalis had commissioned research from the Council's commercial advisor about where Optalis might be able to provide additional income and additional jobs for those being trained through the Supported Employment Service. Cafes, horticulture, and corporate cleaning had been some of the areas considered. Matt Pope added that Members would be kept updated regarding future services. With regards to dementia, a sub group of the Wellbeing Board was looking at the establishment of a dementia alliance.
- Members questioned what criteria was used to prioritise services provided and were informed that safety of the service for residents was integral.
- Any efficiencies made were strategically reinvested to help ensure value for money was delivered.
- David Birch indicated that when he had been interviewed for his position, stakeholders had participated in the interview process.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the update on Optalis' performance be noted.
- 2) David Birch and Matt Pope be thanked for their presentation.

32. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS Q1 2021/22

Matt Pope, Director Adult Services, took the Committee through the relevant Key Performance Indicators for Q1 2021/22.

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

- In response to a question as whether the stretch targets were realistic and achievable, Matt Pope responded that it was his ambition for the department to a top performer, so targets were set deliberately as stretch targets. Benchmarking data and direction of performance were considered. Achievability had been affected by Covid and demand had increased. There had also had to be a focus on safety and infection control. He was confident that targets were difficult but achievable.
- AS4 – Safeguarding timelines – how had this target been achieved and was it sustainable? Matt Pope commented this had been an area of focus when he had become Director and some immediate changes had been made. A dedicated Safeguarding team had been put in place and significant progress had been made on addressing concerns.
- ASC 9 – Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes per 100k population – how was this target achieved? National and local policy was that people be looked after in their own homes where possible. This target fluctuated due to the differing needs of residents. A Member questioned whether there was an element of seasonality and was informed that there was, but that Covid was the main reason for fluctuations. There had been a change in national policy regarding

hospital discharge and there had been periods where there had been some double counting, which had now been evened out.

- The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Key Performance Indicators would be presented at each meeting, and asked that should Members have any technical questions on the reports, that they send them to the clerk prior to the meeting, so that these could be provided to Officers.

RESOLVED: That the KPI's for Q1 2021/22 be noted.

33. HEALTHWATCH WOKINGHAM BOROUGH UPDATE

The Committee considered an update on the work of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough.

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

- Members questioned whether Healthwatch had seen an improvement in health services in the last quarter or whether they felt that some were still facing issues. Nick Durman stated that many were still having difficulties. Access to dental care and increasingly access to GP services, were some of the main issues of concern to residents that Healthwatch had heard about via various means. Healthwatch were aware that the GP surgeries were under severe pressure. Many people who had had medical issues at the peak of the pandemic had put off contacting GPs. Demand and call levels had increased. Nick Durman went on to express concern regarding those who were extremely vulnerable or who were not proficient with technology. He was concerned that if they found it difficult to contact their surgery they may give up, and potentially become sicker. He questioned what short term measures would be put in place to relieve this.
- Nick Durman referred to the most recent GP Patient Survey. In terms of satisfaction several local GP surgeries were at the top and some were at the bottom for the Berkshire West practices. He had contacted the CCG asking what they would do with the results and what had been learned from the best performing practices which could help those performing less well, to improve, but had not yet received a response. The Executive Member added that he had written to James Kent, Head of the CCG asking for the improvement plans for the four GP surgeries in the bottom quartile. The CCG were planning to commission additional GP practice appointments to increase capacity to March 2022, a pilot of hospital emergency departments booking patients into GP appointments who attended with problems would be carried out, in person booking of appointments enabled, more face to face appointments made available, a community pharmacy consultation service made available and an audit of GP practice phone messages carried out. It was not clear how and when this would be undertaken and when residents would see a difference.
- One of the practices had put in a dedicated carers phone line. Nick Durman questioned why other practices could not do something similar.
- The Committee referred to the pie charts within the What Matters Most report, which related to responders' views on particular health services that they had used during the pandemic. Members asked who the results were shared with and were informed that they were shared with the relevant service providers. Key issues which had come out of the What Matters Most survey closely matched the five priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- From next month Healthwatch would be running a GP access survey. GP practice staff would also be invited to give their views on the issues that they faced and what

solutions they could possibly see. There was a possible communication piece as not all residents might understand the pressures that the practices faced.

- Members expressed concern that 33% of responders had felt that the maternity services were poor and the other 67% had considered it adequate. Nick Durman indicated that a recent CQC report had indicated that the quality of maternity services varied across the country. Jim Stockley added that maternity services in some other Boroughs had suffered with staffing levels, which created additional pressure. It was suggested that the Committee received an update on local maternity services at a future meeting.
- Nick Durman suggested that the Committee request an update on the continence service provided by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. Healthwatch were hearing of an 8-week waiting list for this service, from residents, Age UK Berkshire, the LINK Visiting Scheme and Dementia Coordinators.
- Members expressed concern regarding residents' views on mental health services, in particular children's mental health services. In response to a question regarding the age of responders, Nick Durman indicated that Healthwatch did ask the age of responders in the survey but not everyone had provided an answer. Healthwatch were part of Wellbeing Board subgroups which were working to address specific priorities including mental health. The Executive Member referred to a number of mental health initiatives, including the Mind service. Lots of work was being undertaken regarding mental health in schools.
- The Chairman proposed that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to the Committee meeting at which mental health was being discussed.
- The Executive Member suggested that if the Committee wished to look at the progress of the Mind service, they do so in 12- or 18-months' time to give the service time to bed in.
- Members noted that 126 people had completed the Healthwatch survey and questioned whether people were more likely to respond to a consultation if they were unhappy with services. Nick Durman indicated that Healthwatch received both negative and positive feedback from residents.
- With regards to Wokingham Medical Centre, Members questioned whether feedback had improved following a change in management. Nick Durman commented that feedback received was still largely negative. The surgery had now been rated 'Good' by the CQC following its most recent inspection.
- The Committee thanked Healthwatch for their valuable signposting work over the pandemic.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the update from Healthwatch Wokingham Borough be noted.
- 2) Nick Durman and Jim Stockley be thanked for their presentation.

34. PUBLIC TOILET PROVISION

This item was deferred.

35. FORWARD PROGRAMME 2021-22

The Committee considered the forward programme.

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

- It was agreed that the further update from Optalis be deferred to the Committee's January meeting.
- It was suggested that the item on mental health be moved to the Committee's March meeting to allow the update to also include the Mind service. Members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would also be invited to participate in this item.
- The Committee would request an update on maternity services for the January meeting.
- Members agreed to defer the report on public toilet provision to the January meeting. Members asked that representatives from the Chron's and Colitis Society also be invited for this item.
- The Committee would request an update on the continence service provided by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, for its January meeting. Nick Durman commented that it would be good to see whether the rapid response that was being put in place would reduce the current 8 week wait list.
- The Key Performance Indicators would be considered at each meeting.

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.55 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Other Councillors Present

Rachel Bishop-Firth
Stephen Conway
David Hare

38. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Charles Margetts.

39. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 29 July 2021 and the Extraordinary Executive meeting held on 29 July 2021 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Leader of Council.

It was noted that there was a typo in the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting and that the meeting had taken place in the evening and not the morning.

40. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor John Halsall declared a Personal Interest in Item 43 Procurement of Adult Social Care Voluntary Sector Service on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis.

Councillor John Kaiser declared a Personal Interest in Item 43 Procurement of Adult Social Care Voluntary Sector Service on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis.

Councillor John Kaiser declared a Personal Interest in Item 46 Housing Allocations Policy 2021 on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Stuart Munro declared a Personal Interest in Item 46 Housing Allocations Policy 2021 on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Wayne Smith declared a Personal Interest in Item 46 Housing Allocations Policy 2021 on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

41. STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

The Leader of Council made the following statement:

It is now nineteen months since our first Covid case. The rate of new Covid cases within the Borough remains high and is rising as we begin to see the impact of returning to school and returning to workplaces. The current rate is 296 per 100,000 (compared to 211 this time last week) and this is expected to continue to rise further over the coming weeks. The rate within the Borough remains slightly above, but in line with, the rates across the South-East (280 per 100,000). Most cases continue to occur within the school age

population, in line with the rest of the country. We must remain cautious and continue to work hard to reduce transmission of the virus within our Borough.

We are working closely with our Head Teachers and school communities through the Children's Services Taskforce in the management of Covid within their settings. This work has increased over the past week, and we will continue to do all that we can to support Head Teachers who are facing an incredibly challenging term. The vaccination programme of 12–15-year-olds within schools is underway and whilst the responsibility for the programme is with Central Government, we are working to support schools, particularly with the anti-vaccination messages that they are receiving. I am reliably told that our teenagers are doing a remarkable job in masking and being vaccinated. So, thank you all if anybody is on this call.

Covid marshals are providing support to schools on the day of vaccination, as well as offering reactive support should it be needed. In addition, marshals are proactively walking routes to our secondary schools to look for any anti-vaccination communication or activity. The Children's Services taskforce are collating questions and concerns from the parent community and school which will shape any further communication and support.

Finally, we are working closely with our colleagues in the CCG and in primary care as the Covid booster programme begins to be rolled out to the 60,000 residents that are eligible.

Therefore Covid 19 is far from over and we continue to step up and play our part in responding to the pandemic, working closely with our Health partners and the voluntary sector as we do this. My message to you remains consistent; please follow Public Health advice, be considerate of others and please do take up your vaccinations and encourage others to do so.

This Council has taken its financial management responsibilities very seriously over many years which is why, unlike others, we have been able to fund vital additional support to our community throughout this awful period in our history. We want to also be able to provide valuable support to our community in the future, both in the context of our response to the pandemic and enabling our community to recover as best it can.

However, it is important we recognise that we face yet another financial precipice to navigate: We have the long-term impact of Covid-19 meaning there is a greater need for local authority support. We must ensure we find funds to enable the delivery of our Recovery Strategy. We are facing significant inflationary pressures impacting on our services and Capital programme ambitions, these include gas prices and the cost of building materials, and probably most significantly, we have a potential multi-million-pound burden following the recent NHS and Social Care announcements. Many of these pressures are already upon us and others will be taking their toll over the coming years. We cannot afford to take our hands off the financial tiller and must continue to collectively steer our way through turbulent and challenging times. I have no doubt we have the right calibre of personnel and officers on board to do this with great effect.

Up ahead is one of the most significant Local Government Finance Settlements this Council has faced in a very long time. It will determine the grant funding we have to deal with our challenges over, I suspect, the next three years. It is essential we get a fair deal for this Council and our residents. I and my Executive will do everything in our power to press home the case for Wokingham. I am just grateful that my contact with Government and MPs is so very good. Regrettably I cannot determine the outcome of such a national

funding settlement. So, whilst doing all I can to bring pressure to bear to get the funding settlement our residents and our Borough deserve, it remains incumbent on us to relentlessly pursue value for money in all we do and continue to practice the highest standards of financial management in delivering vital services for our community. Therefore, we are reviewing our revenue income and expenditure, and our capital budget, particularly if unsupported.

Whilst I am a strong adherent of maximising the recycling rate, I could not support Shirley Boyt's motion on public waste receptacles as it would place adverse pressure on both our capital and revenue budgets at this critical time. Had we had time we would have proposed an amendment.

We were due to discuss the lease for a proposed new library for Twyford this evening but are now not able to do so. The recent and rapid increase in building costs across the country necessitates pause to consider how we ensure value for money for all our residents. A recent tender exercise for the work required for this project revealed a significant increase of above previously planned and budgeted costs. It is well known that I have personally husbanded this project with my Executive and invested much time and political capital to its realisation, with very little local Member or parish council tangible support. So, it is a real disappointment that we must pause our efforts.

This is simply not the moment to be cavalier with our capital spending. We are beginning to see the consequences of other authorities over-stretching themselves and getting into financial problems and these consequences are not pleasant. We have always been prudent and will continue to be so to safeguard services and quality of life for all residents.

I understand this will be disappointing and want to assure everybody that we remain supportive of the principle of the new library and that this is a pause to allow us time to make the right decision.

I have been very lenient with questions to the Executive and have done my best for them all to be answered. However, I would point out that the total permitted time is twenty minutes.

A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply and must not introduce any new subject matter. I will reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds in Rule 5.4.37. A supplementary question must not be longer than one minute. If I consider that the questioner is making a statement, I will rule that the questioner be not further heard.

42. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

43. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

43.1 Prue Bray had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question. Due to her inability to attend the following written answer was provided:

Question

At the Executive in July, you gave out the figures for the numbers of houses given planning permission in Hurst, Shinfield, Arborfield and Winnersh between 2010/11 and 2019/20. What are the figures for the number of additional dwellings actually built in each of those Parishes between those dates?

Answer

As explained in my answer of 29 July, 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.

Turning to the specific request, the number of dwellings built over the ten year period specified across the Borough are as follows:

Parish	Completions (net) 2010/11 to 2019/20
Arborfield	276
Barkham	255
Charvil	22
Earley	138
Finchampstead	95
Hurst	24
Remenham	1
Ruscombe	53
Shinfield	1,897
Sonning	21
Swallowfield	82
Twyford	45
Wargrave	65
Winnersh	521
Wokingham	2,900
Wokingham Without	136
Woodley	1,195

Strategic Development Locations and related parishes:

1. South of the M4 SDL = Shinfield Parish
2. Arborfield Garrison SDL = Arborfield, Barkham and Finchampstead Parishes
3. North Wokingham SDL = Wokingham Town
4. South Wokingham SDL = Wokingham Town and Wokingham Without Parish

43.2 Gary Cowan had asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question. Due to his inability to connect the following written answer was provided:

Question

Wayne, I did bring a series of questions concerning ongoing works currently taking place on Gravelpit Hill Lane to the attention of Officers, the Leader and yourself among others going back to early August asking has the Borough Council seen and approved these plans and if so, why has there been no planning Application submitted.

My question is why have I not had a reply to my questions from anyone including yourself within Wokingham Borough Council?

Answer

Between early August and the receipt of the question, the following emails about the engineering works to the dam have been received from Gary Cowan (GC) and responses provided:

GC	3/8/21	12.25
FH	3/8/21	17.11
GC	4/8/21	7.45
GC	4/8/21	11.02
GC	4/8/21	11.03
GC	6/8/21	11.19
MC	6/8/21	12.19
GC	6/8/21	12.34
GC	7/8/21	12.18
GC	8/8/21	10.56
GC	9/8/21	10.46
MC	9/8/21	12.02
GC	9/8/21	12.33
MC	9/8/21	12.40
GC	9/8/21	14.52
MC	10/8/21	14.49
GC	10/8/21	16.40
MC	10/8/21	16.55
GC	10/8/21	17.42
GC	10/8/21	19.44
MC	11/8/21	9.02
Question for Executive Member received	12/8/2021	
GC	13/8/21	12.19
GC	23/8/21	14.12
Susan P	24/8/21	17.13

In addition to the above, there has been responses to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and the offer of a meeting with Assistant Director Mark Cupit.

There has been a further ongoing email exchange throughout September and a meeting has been arranged on 7 October with Assistant Director Stephen Brown.

43.3 Stephen Conway asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities the following question:

Question

I am delighted to see the lease for the new Twyford Library recommended for approval by the Council's Executive. Assuming that the Executive does indeed approve, can the Executive Member give some indication of the timetable for the conversion work and likely date of the opening of the new library?

Answer

I will not go into detail of your proposed first choice of question, obviously that has been pretty well answered.

The Council has an excellent track record of sound financial management and maintaining high quality services for our residents.

The Council will need to consider the financial consequences of this project alongside the other pressures we are facing, so that we can continue to maintain our core objective of protecting the services that our residents rely on.

A key part of the considerations for this project will include discussions with the Polehampton Trust to understand their view on the challenges we face and how this project continues to support their objectives for supporting the people of Twyford, Ruscombe and Charvil.

Supplementary Question

I understand that you cannot answer the original question in terms of the timetable given. This pause, and I hope indeed that it is a pause. John indicated that is just a pause which is good news, I think. Could I ask you that when we do move to the stage of moving to the conversion work, and you are able to consider a likely opening date, could we consider naming part of this new building after the late Dave Turner who was one of the Polehampton Trustees? John would know him very well, and I readily acknowledge the work that John has put into this, but I think we should also recognise Dave Turner's contribution. I am hoping that we might be able to perhaps name one of the rooms in the new library after him in recognition of his considerable efforts on this project.

Supplementary Answer

I also knew Dave Turner very well, and I know the amount of work that he put into this and the work that he did within the Twyford community. It is a consideration that we will take very seriously, and I would like to think that we are able to do that, but obviously that will need to be a consideration taken by Council Members rather than just me. Personally, I would like to see it happen.

43.4 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question which was answered by the Deputy Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services in his absence:

Question

May I congratulate the officers in this enterprising paper, support for the preventative service is something I have long advocated. You are increasing the money available to the voluntary services excellently in 2022/3 but the increase in 2023/4 is only £100km that

is 5% or not much more than inflation. As the voluntary sector grows due to more certainty that this funding provides along with increased demand and need will further monies be available to fund new preventative and first step services that are valuable assets to the Council?

Answer

Thank you for supporting this paper on the procurement of voluntary sector adult services. I am pleased to note that we have cross party support as far as I can find, for our approach to the much-valued voluntary sector. The first point to make here is that inflationary increases are dealt with from a separate additional funding stream in the MTFP. The details of this are agreed through an annual inflationary uplift process. This means that the £600K increase over 2 years is in the region of a 30% gross increase against our early intervention and prevention agenda. I think you will agree this is impressive given the pressures on local government and the uncertainty we have in central government funding going forward.

We will of course keep this under review each year through our budget setting process and will be having regular conversations with the Voluntary Sector providers as part of our contract monitoring and management process. Our ambition is that if the new spend successfully helps us manage demand and we can afford it we will of course consider more investment having evaluated any requirements raised by our providers and taking into account our own view of the services in place alongside any changing needs in this sector.

We recognise that funding is a difficult issue for the voluntary sector and that they are dependent on a number of funding streams to support their viability. We cannot and will not ignore the invaluable contribution made by the voluntary sector and we will continue to support them to maximise those external streams which are available to them.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for that answer and certainly, as I have said, it is something that I have advocated for many years, last time I was on the Council as well, not always with success. With regards to new services required by the Council from the voluntary sector, has an investigation been done in areas other than dementia into the gaps in voluntary service that are already offered, and the way new services can be provided by the voluntary sector to enhance the lives of residents?

Supplementary Answer,

Yes, thank you for that David. I think that you will hear in my speech later that there has been quite a big consultation process across the voluntary sector services to understand where they can identify gaps, as well as the ones that we can identify, and to put in place the best options that we have so that we can procure appropriately. That is really at the core of this paper, and supports those procurements on an ongoing basis.

43.5 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

I am very pleased to see on the report from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group that you see behaviour change science as a golden thread throughout the CEAP and that the Council will be encouraging public transport and active travel wherever possible. This will be vital in tackling the climate emergency.

What steps will you be taking to limit the number and length of journeys which are taken within the Borough?

Answer

Firstly, I have to say that we do not have the power to limit journeys and I would oppose any move to impose journey limits, quotas or restrictions on any resident. Actually, I am also pleased that we do not have the power to limit civil liberties because that sounds more like some form of totalitarian dictatorship rather a democracy, which for the sake of my children I would defend to my last breath. I am surprised that you used the word limit but for the record your Conservative council wants to help people be more sustainable, not force them to be. Unlike the Lib Dems we will not force people out of their cars. What we will do is support residents in reducing their need to travel. We will also support residents reduce their reliance on travelling by private car, by providing viable alternatives to those that want and are able to use them.

Delivering sustainable living through behaviour change is the single most important thing we can do in the fight against climate change. By engaging with experts in behaviour change and incentivising sustainable living we aim to remove the barriers that currently prevent residents from living the desired behaviours in their everyday lives. That means working with schools, via schemes such as Beat the Street, to get kids walking and cycling to school. It means working with businesses to reduce the expectation of their staff to commute into their workplaces. It means using the Planning Strategy to design communities where people of all ages have the opportunity to access a wide range of services without having to drive. We can remove the need for residents to use their cars without having to limit, restrict or quota their use. So, will I vote to limit car use? No. Will I prevent people from visiting relatives, to go to work or to take their kids to school because of an arbitrary quota or limit? No, I will not, and frankly I am disappointed that you would.

Supplementary Question

I am not quite sure how you have interpreted the question in such a way. Certainly, nobody could or would want to, try to force people, or to impose quotas on them. The Borough as a large employer in Wokingham has it in its gift to support in managing the number of unnecessary journeys which its staff need to take on WBC business. What steps is WBC going to take as an employer to explore the possibilities of hybrid working, to allow those staff who can do so to continue to work from home?

Supplementary Answer

Firstly, the reason why I have interpreted your question the way that I have is that in your question you say what steps will you be taking to limit the number and length of journeys which are taken within the Borough. You have used the word limit and so I have interpreted it as you want to limit the journeys that people are taking.

In terms of the Council as an employer, we already have a hybrid working policy. We had it before Covid, we maintained it during Covid, and we are looking to maintain it post Covid. Actually, as a result of work that has been done on hybrid working by the Council, we have reduced our carbon footprint of vehicles coming in and out of the Council by over 65%. That has been maintained during Covid and since, which is absolutely fantastic. The Shute End offices are not full of officers, again you will have seen that yourself when you come in, you will have seen that for Council meetings, and you could see it tonight if you had been here. We have to lead by example. We have a duty as an employer, but also as a community leader to lead by example. We cannot go to businesses and ask

them to reduce the number of days that they are expecting their staff to go into offices, if we are not offering the same ourselves to our staff, which is what we are doing already.

John Halsall, Leader of the Council:

If I could just be helpful. We have a huge piece of work going on at the moment which is called 'The Workplace Reimagined', which is looking to what we should be like in terms of a Council in the future, and it is a long-range piece of work, which will come to the Executive in the course of time when we know what it looks like.

44. OFFICERS RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Executive considered a report setting out the Officer response to the recommendations from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish following their review of the Wokingham Borough Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Councillor Gregor Murray, Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions, introduced the report and highlighted that the Task and Finish Group had made 25 recommendations, many of which had been agreed by Officers. He provided an update on the implementation of some of the recommendations; work was being undertaken to ease commute related emissions; the Bus Service Improvement Plan was under development; roads not yet built would be reviewed where possible. In addition, a house refit trial was already in place. Revenue from the Barkham Solar farm would be reinvested into further climate initiatives, and a number of behaviour change experts had been invited to pitch ideas which could be implemented across the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Officers' responses to the recommendations from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group, as set out in the report, be approved.

45. PROCUREMENT OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SERVICES

The Executive considered a report setting out a procurement business case for Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) Adult Prevention Services.

During his introduction the Deputy Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services advised that the proposed process would enable the Voluntary Sector to have more stable, long-term funding, whilst allowing the Council to direct providers into areas where there was a need for services.

Councillor Halsall praised the way in which the Voluntary Sector had worked with the Council during the pandemic.

Councillor Kaiser commented that the Voluntary Sector had had a positive input in reducing rough sleepers. He went on to state that the work of the Voluntary Sector should be seen a compliment to the work of the Council and not as a substitute.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the procurement business case for Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) Adult Prevention Services, as attached to the report, be approved;
- 2) the Director of Adult Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services be delegated permission to approve the contract and grant the award.

46. FUTURE PART PROVISION OF REGULATORY SERVICES BY WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

The Executive considered a report seeking approval to enter into an agreement with West Berkshire Council to provide a limited range of regulatory services to the Council, in parallel with the bulk of regulatory services that were due to be delivered in-house.

Whilst introducing the report the Executive Member for Neighbourhood and Communities clarified the services that would be provided by West Berkshire Council which included regional and national capability for trading standards, food standards, air quality and animal welfare. In addition, West Berkshire's regulatory proceeds of crime and enforcement case preparation to support these functions would be retained.

Councillor Soane went on to highlight the benefits of having the anti-social behaviour service, back in house.

Councillor Halsall clarified that all services would be brought back in house but that some services would then be sub-contracted back to West Berkshire Council, whilst the Council retained authority. He went on to clarify that the measurement of air quality would be undertaken by West Berkshire Council but not the mitigation measures.

A cross party Task and Finish Group would look at policy issues for the different elements of legislation.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) an agreement be entered into with West Berkshire District Council for the provision of certain regulatory functions under s113 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as set out in the report), from 1 April 2022 until 8 January 2027; and
- 2) the Director of Place and Growth and the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Housing, be delegated the agreement of the final terms with West Berkshire and completion of the agreement.

47. TWYFORD LIBRARY LEASE

This item was withdrawn.

48. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY 2021

The Executive considered a report setting out a draft Housing Allocations Policy for consultation.

During his introduction the Executive Member for Finance and Housing sought approval to consult on the draft Housing Allocations Policy 2021. The consultation would ask responders to give their views on how social housing was allocated across the Borough, and would last 6 weeks. The Council's Housing Allocation Policy was last updated over 6 years ago.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the draft policy be agreed to go out to consultation. The proposed external consultation period is six weeks;

- 2) the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Housing, be delegated authority to adopt and implement the Housing Allocations Policy following consultation.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.30 PM

Committee Members Present

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

Committee Members in Attendance

Councillors: Alison Swaddle

Executive Members Present

Councillors: Parry Batth, John Kaiser and Bill Soane

Officers Present

Susan Bentley (Prevention Manager), Stephen Brown (Interim Assistant Director - Place), Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Graham Ebers (Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Resources and Assets)), Joseph Howorth (Commercial Activity Manager), Beverley Thompson (Sport & Leisure Manager), David Thrall (Interim Public Protection Consultant) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

32. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

Alison Swaddle attended the meeting virtually and was therefore marked as in attendance, and was unable to propose, second or vote on items.

33. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

36. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

37. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) 2022-2025

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 15 to 38, which gave a strategic overview of the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022-2025.

John Kaiser (Executive Member for Finance and Housing) and Graham Ebers (Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Resources and Assets)) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

It was stated that this was the third year of the budget scrutiny process, of which the previous years had helped the overall budget setting process. This was a challenging time for local authority finances, with issues including inflation and social care costs providing

increasing pressures on budgets. It was likely that the upcoming Local Government finance settlement would be a three year settlement, which would add an element of certainty with regards to funding. The potential impact of social care reforms could see severe pressures placed on Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) finances, as Wokingham had self-funding and partial self-funding social care users contribute around £8.5m per annum. Children's Services were still on their journey to a 'Good' OFSTED rating, whilst the increases to building costs and materials had meant that some capital projects were being reviewed with regards to a temporary hold whilst costs stabilised.

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

- What were the concerns in relation to CIL and S106 contributions? Deputy Chief Executive response – WBC's approach was to provide the funding upfront to unlock future development. S106 and CIL contributions were then received later from developers. Where a developer was struggling, or there was a significant time gap between the upfront funding and receipt of contributions, WBC could see pressures on its finances. The general reserve was there to cushion any impact, however if several large developers all started struggling simultaneously then reserves may not be enough.
- What was the worst case scenario financially for WBC with regards to the adult social care reforms? Deputy Chief Executive response – In very crude terms, the better the NHS was funded the better their throughput of patients would be, which would mean more clients entering the social care sector. If there was no forthcoming funding whatsoever, these reforms could place a £20m burden on WBC in several years' time.
- It was noted that Members were appreciative of taking both capital and revenue proposals together this year.
- Were WBC being penalised for having a good collection rate of Council Tax, how confident were WBC that a 3 year Local Government settlement would be forthcoming, and should a three year settlement be agreed what could be done mid-settlement to improve the terms for WBC? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – When looking at grants, WBC were good in many areas and subsequently received smaller grants. The only way that central Government could improve struggling Councils was by providing them with additional funding. WBC needed to be very alive to the levelling up agenda and the impact that this might have on the Borough. Officers were more confident than not with regards to a three year settlement, and it was not unheard of for representations to be heard and changes to be made mid-settlement, for example negative revenue support grants.
- Which staff were included within calculations relating to contractual inflation? Deputy Chief Executive response – This would include all directly employed staff with a best estimate for the level of contractual inflation. Currently, budget had not been assigned for a pay award, however there were indications that it could be around a 1.75% award.
- Why was the assumed additional council tax base increase 2.25% for year one and 1.5% for year 2? Deputy Chief Executive response – This was a statutory calculation which included forecasts and officers tended to be fairly cautious. The further on officers looked, the more speculative they had to be and there was no confidence that there would be an increase above 1.5%, however this would be reviewed.

- Who exactly were WBC engaging with within Central Government with regards to receiving a fair funding settlement? Executive Member response – John Redwood had been spoken to publically with regards to this, and this would be done with all of the Borough's MPs in a simple and logical way. It was then hoped that the Borough's MPs would lobby Ministers on WBC's behalf. The second stage would involve writing to Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations) to try and persuade him to provide a fair funding settlement. It was important that the levelling up policy was not at the detriment of the Wokingham Borough.
- It was noted that draft bid sheets would be provided to the Committee earlier than the publishing dates of future agendas where possible and practicable.
- How realistic was it to balance the capital funding gap? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – WBC would have to set a balanced budget, and therefore it was a definite realistic prospect to balance the budget. The real issue would be how many 'pinch points' would be involved, and identifying source income and when schemes would be delivered. The budget for year 1 would have to be balanced, and preferably year 2 and year 3 in addition. The capital programme had already been reduced by approximately £9m in the past three weeks, and the funding gap would be achieved however there may be some pain in doing so.
- Had any further impacts of Brexit been budgeted for? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – This had been flagged up as there were a number of potential issues including interest rates, staff shortages, and supply chain issues. Best estimates were always used for the budget setting process, regardless of where those pressures came from.
- Had any percentage increases been included within the capital programme with regards to the increased costs of materials, inflation, or labour issues? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – A very modest amount had been budgeted in for the moment, and it was a work in progress with regards to uplifting figures.
- Were the significant savings targets achievable? Deputy Chief Executive response – Many of the savings proposals were efficiency savings, whereby a simultaneous service improvement and service cost reduction could be achieved. Some savings goals were more complicated going forwards, for example using the Public Loans Board to invest and receive a return. New regulations had reduced the ability of Local Authorities to borrow to invest, which had been laid out in a recent Executive paper.
- What was the current Council Tax collection rate, and how far would it have to fall for a significant or catastrophic impact on WBC's finances? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – The current Council Tax collection rate was around 99%, with a similar rate for business rates collection. A similar trajectory was developing and was expected for collection rates this year. Each 1% of Council Tax not collected would cost WBC approximately £1.2m, which would be significant in and of itself and therefore there was not a lot of leeway. The Council Tax reduction scheme had been extended this year, and WBC was working positively with residents to help them avoid getting into debt in general.

- What could the national levelling up agenda mean for WBC? Executive Member response – Everybody should be entitled to a decent wage and opportunities. As Wokingham was seen to be at the top of the pile in terms of Local Authorities, it would be hard for the Government to level it up further. Levelling up appeared to be a good idea, but not at the expense of Local Authorities such as WBC. It was a great ambition, but it was yet to be seen what this would mean for WBC.
- How much of the split of services delivered by WBC was moving from discretionary to statutory? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – WBC tried to make discretionary services self-funding so that they did not impinge on the budget as much. For example, the town centre regeneration would provide funding for other services.
- The Committee gave their thanks to officers and Executive Members for their hard work in already being in a better position with regards to a budgetary gap than this time last year. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that WBC compared much better than a lot of Local Authorities in terms of a budgetary funding gap, however it was important that WBC were not penalised for having a strong Council Tax collection rate in terms of future settlement deals.
- Would there be any delays to the capital programme as a result of increasing building material costs? Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive response – It was wise to pause or change some projects where savings could currently be made and where it was palatable to do so. WBC was robust enough to be able to challenge and review projects where it made sense to do so. An example of this was the change of focus on WBC's investment strategy to instead focus on affordable housing, which would take time including waiting for construction costs to fall.
- Members commented that it was fantastic to see that the Citizens Advice Council Tax protocol had been adopted. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that the Council Tax team had done fantastic work to achieve a high collection rate whilst working positively with residents.
- Would the capital templates be brought up to the same high standard of the revenue bid templates this year? Deputy Chief Executive response – It had been stressed to Directors and officers that it was important for the scrutiny process that each template was correctly filled out.
- It was suggested that a section of Equalities obligations might be placed on bid sheets to remind officers and Executive Members at an early stage of potential full equality impact assessments that might later be required.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) John Kaiser and Graham Ebers be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Revenue and capital bids be presented at future meetings of the Committee by each Directorate;
- 3) Officers endeavour to circulate bids to Committee Members via email prior to agenda publication where possible.

38. LEISURE SERVICE PROVISION UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 39 to 72, which gave an update on Leisure Service provision within the Borough.

The report outlined the investment that had been made to a variety of facilities within the Borough, including the Cantely Park enhancements and the new outdoor activity centre at Dinton Pastures. A variety of specialised programmes were in place, including the SHINE programme for over 60's and Wokingham active holiday camps for children. A draft revised Leisure Strategy had been developed, and the associated action plan was appended to the report for consideration.

Parry Batth (Executive Member for Environment and Leisure), Graham Ebers (Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Resources and Assets)), Susan Bentley (Prevention Manager), Joseph Howorth (Commercial Activity Manager), and Beverley Thompson (Sport & Leisure Manager) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- Were the 1.3 million fitness attendances for the 2019/20 year, and was the 1700 figure for the walking for health programme the total number of walkers or attendances? Officer response – The 1.3 million fitness attendances were for the 2019/20 year, and there were 1700 walkers for the walking for health programme in that year.
- How were the views of residents who were not currently using leisure facilities being captured? Officer response – A consultation had been undertaken and publicised online, and a number of wants had taken place in a variety of locations across the Borough.
- How was the free membership for children in receipt of free school meals being advertised? Officer response – These passes were given directly to schools within the Borough to distribute to eligible children. These children could then attend as many sessions as they wished to attend.
- The SHINE programme had seen the unlimited sessions pass rise from £180 to £780 per annum, which could be very off-putting for a number of residents. Had officers noticed any fall off in attendances of SHINE sessions as a result of these changes? Officer response – This programme had been reduced as a result of Covid-19, and in order to maintain the original programme and offer more variety the price was increased. Splitting the fee into monthly instalments had been investigated, and officers were working hard to procure a new booking system. There had been a slight decrease in member take-up, however there had not been much of a decrease in attendance of sessions. Approximately 76% of the total offering was being taken up by members.
- There was some concern that the increase in the unlimited session SHINE fees was very large and could be at the detriment of many residents within the Borough. Officers noted that this offering was still cheaper than that offered by other Local Authorities via benchmarking.
- Would spending be split up in future to show where Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) had invested in services rather than where third parties or grants had been used, for example the Loddon Valley Leisure Centre upgrade? Deputy Chief Executive

response – WBC were still paying for the Loddon Valley Leisure Centre upgrade as the contract with Places Leisure required them to invest in WBC facilities. Grants were only awarded via the effort and commitment of officers in winning bids to enable projects to be delivered.

- How much did the new boxing studio cost to develop? Officer response – The boxing studio costed £630k in total.
- The Committee commented that the Sports and Leisure Service did a fantastic job and delivered a diverse range of services for residents to enjoy.
- How was the boxing studio going to be advertised to appeal to a variety of demographics? Officer response – This had been identified as a hole within the overall sports and leisure offering within the borough, and there was a desire for boxing, kickboxing, and combat sports sessions. A variety of classes would be on offer including a young offender offering. The goal was to get a diverse range of people signing up to sessions, and there had already been a good sign-up rate from women and whole families for a variety of different sessions and classes on offer. A variety of different membership and pay as you go options were available. The Executive Member added that this was a demand driven service which would be welcomed by a wide variety of people as this was the only such offering within the Borough.
- Why was there a difference in expenditure between the Bulmershe and Carnival Pool leisure centre redevelopments? Executive Member and officer response – Carnival pool was a larger overall facility, whilst Bulmershe was physically restricted due to the overall space and footprint of the site. Carnival Pool was also being used as a cultural hub for the Borough, which would cater for aspects other than sports and fitness.
- What was being done to improve bus travel availability to and from leisure centres, and were more cycle routes planned to avoid the need for as many car journeys? Officer response – Officers were aware of the need for improved bus provision and cycle route provision as a result of the consultation responses. Officers were working with My Journey and the Cleaner and Greener team to try and improve upon these areas.
- It was noted that whilst the provision of additional car parking spaces at leisure centres went against the Climate Emergency Action Plan, this was a key piece of feedback from the consultation which officers were working to address.
- How were the views of Town and Parish Council's being incorporated into the draft Strategy and action plan? Officer response – Town and Parish Councils would be represented in the ongoing working group, and an addition could be made to the action plan to highlight this. It was noted that this issue could also be raised at the Borough Parish Liaison Forum.
- Were there any plans to broker a deal with the bus service operators to offer a discount on entry to leisure centres including the Bulmershe leisure centre? Officer response – Places Leisure could be liaised with regards to exploring options for all facilities.
- Could a specific section be added to the action tracker specifically for over 60's? Officer response – A section could be added to action tracker with regards to this.

- Was there a good take-up for cardiac rehabilitation classes, and were there sessions on offer for those diagnosed with diabetes? Officer response – There was still a good take-up for the cardiac rehabilitation sessions, and sessions were offered for those diagnosed with diabetes via GP referrals.
- Were swimming lessons receiving a good take-up? Officer response – Swimming lessons were very popular within the Borough, and there were waiting lists for sessions. These lessons were paid for by the parent or guardian of the child. Officers were looking to work with leisure centres and swim centres to help attract more teachers in order to reduce any waiting lists.
- Were the holiday classes run by WBC? Officer response – Yes, these offerings were run by WBC and were used by approximately 4000 children.
- How much pupil premium funding was spent on sports and leisure? Officer response – This was decided by each school on a case by case basis.
- Had Town and Parish Council's been consulted regarding any potential outdoor gyms? Officer response – This was in the process of final designs, after which Town and Parish Council's would be consulted on the designs and proposals.
- What was done to help attract hard to reach groups into health and fitness environments? Officer response – There were a number of programmes for people with disabilities, and outreach to a wide variety of potential users would be linked in with the Health and Wellbeing Board Action Group.
- The Committee wished to thank the Service for continuing to do a fantastic job, whilst offering a diverse range of classes, activities, and sessions.
- How was the low uptake of swimming lessons by people within the BAME community being addressed? Officer response – This was being worked on by the Health and Wellbeing Action Group.
- Had local religious centres been contacted to help advertise the Service's offering to a variety of potential users? Officer response – This could be added to the action tracker alongside additional marketing opportunities.
- The Executive Member commented that the credit for the fantastic service offering went to the officers and staff who went out of their way to meet residents' needs. The Committee commended this sentiment.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Parry Batth, Graham Ebers, Susan Bentley, Joseph Howorth, and Beverly Thompson be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Suggestions relating to a specific section on over 60's and marketing opportunities be added to the action tracker;
- 3) Officers and staff be thanked for delivering a diverse, well-used, and much appreciated service.

39. BRINGING THE PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE BACK IN-HOUSE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 73 to 78, which gave an update on the process of bringing the Public Protection Service back in-house.

The report outlined that the majority of associated regulatory services would be brought back in-house, with a minority of services with more regional significance being provided by West Berkshire Council. Examples of services to be provided by West Berkshire Council included Trading Standards, air quality, and farm animal welfare. The exit plan was likely to be signed off via delegated decision after 8 October 2021.

Bill Soane (Executive Member for Neighbourhood and Communities), Stephen Brown (Interim Assistant Director – Place), and David Thrall (Interim Public Protection Consultant) attended the meeting to answer Member queries.

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

- It was noted that the PowerPoint slide pack would be circulated to the Committee.
- Was the exit plan on target? Officer response – Yes, this was on track and the goal was to enhance the overall service provision. Staff were doing a fantastic job to enable the transition back in-house to run smoothly.
- Were any costs in relation to bring the service back in house being kept as low as possible? Officer response – Costs were being kept as low as possible for all parties during negotiations. Negotiations were difficult as the partnership feel that they were losing out by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) leaving, however officers were working as hard as possible to get a fair deal for both WBC and the partnership.
- Were there any concerns that critical milestones may not be met on time? Officer response – There had been concerns earlier on in the process with regards to some deadlines, however officers were now more confident as the process moved forwards.
- Were issues relating to the pension scheme for staff on target to be addressed? Officer response – Parity would be assured for all staff, and allowances would be made for staff who were expected to work antisocial hours.
- Were negotiations relating to jointly owned partner assets going smoothly? Officer response – The key assets were vehicles, and WBC were looking to take a number from the partnership to eliminate the liability aspect for vehicles. The remainder of joint assets were fairly low level.
- Had meaningful discussions taken place with the police with regards to antisocial behaviour, and the move on this aspect of the service back in-house? Officer response – Discussion had been had with the police since the beginning of this process, and discussions had also taken place with the Community Safety Partnership. The aim of the service was to build better partnerships, and it was expected that this would be beneficial for the police service, the Community Safety Partnership, and WBC.
- Who would produce the report in relation to air quality for DEFRA? Officer response – This would be provided by the partnership for WBC, as it was felt better value to pay

towards the cost of the expert that was writing this report rather than paying solely for an expert.

- The Executive Member commented that this was driven by a desire to offer residents a better service. Antisocial behaviour was just one aspect where benefits would be seen, for example by working closely within communities to address issues early and use less police resources. Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils would be a great help in feeding in local knowledge to assist with antisocial behaviour, food hygiene, and licensing issues. Officers were working very hard on very difficult and complicated tasks, for the purposes of providing residents with a better service.
- It was noted that there were project costs associated with this area, and it was accepted that West Berkshire would be reimbursed for associated project costs. £250k had been allocated to cover costs associated with bringing the service back in-house.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Bill Soane, Stephen Brown, and David Thrale be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) A further verbal update be considered by the Committee in January 2022.

40. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their work programme, which was set out in agenda pages 79 to 82.

It was noted that whilst Council owned companies were not currently scheduled for an upcoming Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, these were still on the wider work programme and could be looked at in the next municipal year.

Officers commented that the provisional plan was to receive an interim update on the BME forum at the extraordinary meeting of the Committee on 3rd November, with a more substantive update then planned for March 2022.

It was noted that the item on overgrown pavements would be widened to include how the Council managed a range of contracts including street cleansing and highways issues.

It was commented that the Council's strategy for lowering transport emissions alongside the electric vehicle strategy would be out for consultation after Christmas 2021. It was suggested that these issues be taken to either the 5th January 2022 meeting or a further extraordinary meeting.

Officers noted that an update on the Domestic Abuse Strategy would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 18 October, and the intention was to invite Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Members to listen to the presentation and ask questions.

Members asked that an update report be produced with regards to any updates relating to the proposed in-Borough Crematorium.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Callum Wernham be thanked for attending the meeting;

- 2) Items relating to scrutiny of Council owned companies be provisionally scheduled for the next municipal year;
- 3) The item on overgrown pavements be widened to include how the Council managed a range of contracts including street cleansing and highways issues;
- 4) The provisional plan be to receive an interim update on the BME forum at the extraordinary meeting of the Committee on 3rd November, with a more substantive update then scheduled for March 2022;
- 5) Officers explore the options regarding scheduling an item relating to the consultations on the Council's strategy for lowering transport emissions alongside the electric vehicle strategy;
- 6) The Domestic Abuse Strategy be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 18 October, with the intention to invite Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Members to listen to the presentation and ask questions;
- 7) An update report be produced with regards to any updates relating to the proposed in-Borough Crematorium.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Kaiser (Chairman), Prue Bray, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Abdul Loyes, Daniel Sargeant (Vice-Chairman), Caroline Smith and Jackie Rance

Parish/Town Council Representatives: Sally Gurney (Co-Optee, Wokingham Town Council)

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Jennifer Lee, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer

9. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Roy Mantel.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Note: Sally Gurney referred to the discussions on updating the Member Code of conduct and highlighted the need for a consistent definition of “co-opted” member in the relevant procedures and documents.

11. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

13. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

14. PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from Town and Parish Councillors.

15. PROCESS FOR HANDLING MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 9 to 18, which gave details of an independent review of the Council’s arrangements for handling Member Code of Conduct complaints.

The report stated that the Committee had agreed to commission the review from Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd., an independent company with significant experience and expertise relating to standards in local government. The review had benchmarked the Council’s procedures against good practice and the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

The report stated that, in summary, the independent review concluded that the Council's procedures were broadly in line with most authorities and represented good practice in many aspects. However, there were a number of comments on specific aspects of the procedures which the Committee may wish to consider. Paul Hoey attended the meeting to provide further analysis and to answer Member questions.

The Committee considered the following recommendations, set out in the Hoey Ainscough report:

- Process for Considering Code of Conduct Complaints – this detailed process document was available online but not on the WBC website.

Recommendation – that the document “Process for Considering Code of Conduct Complaints” be added to the Council website along with a copy of the Code of Conduct.

- Receipt and acknowledgement of a complaint – WBC's internal timescale for acknowledgement of a complaint was three working days.

Recommendation – that the three working day timescale for acknowledgement of a complaint be formalised by adding it to the process.

- Timescale for the Subject Member to comment on the complaint.

Recommendation – that the Subject Member should be given a timescale within which to provide comments and if no comments are received, the Monitoring Officer should proceed without the comments. Furthermore, the Monitoring Officer should not go back to the complainant for clarification in relation to any comments received by the Subject Member – this could form part of the investigation if necessary.

Note: The Committee agreed that a timescale of 15 working days was appropriate for Subject Member comments – this timescale to be extended at the Monitoring Officer's discretion.

- In Parish or Town Council cases the process stated that the Monitoring Officer would seek the Clerk's views, but it was not clear what the Clerk was being asked to comment on.

Recommendation – that the Clerk's views be sought on factual matters (e.g. was the Member present at the meeting complained about) rather than matters of opinion.

- Initial assessment of complaints currently undertaken by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with an Independent Person and the Chairman of the Standards Committee.

Recommendation – that the Monitoring Officer only consult with the Independent Person when carrying out the initial assessment and deciding on a course of action.

- Informal resolution – in cases where informal resolution has been pursued but has not been successful, the Council should reserve the option to refer the matter for formal investigation.

Recommendation – that the Monitoring Officer be able to refer a complaint for investigation where it is considered that informal resolution has failed – the Independent Person should be consulted in these circumstances.

- Public disclosure of Subject Member’s name - in cases where informal resolution had followed an investigation and finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct, the current process stated that the Subject Member’s name was not to be disclosed.

Recommendation – that the Subject Member’s name be disclosed where the Investigating Officer has found a breach of the Code of Conduct following investigation and the case has been referred for informal resolution.

- Hearing Panels meeting in Private – as a decision making body of the Council a Hearings Panel is covered by the rules relating to access to information and political balance.

Recommendation – that there should not be a blanket presumption towards closed hearings, with each meeting to consider the facts on their merits at the start of proceedings.

Note: the Committee agreed that the Hearings Panel could meet in public but the Panel would consider and make any decisions in private.

Recommendation – that the Standards Committee consider whether political proportionality should apply to Hearings Panel meetings.

Note: the Committee agreed that political proportionality should apply to Hearings Panel meetings.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Paul Hoey be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;
- 2) the recommendations in the Hoey Ainscough report, as set out above, be approved;
- 3) that the agreed recommendations be forwarded to the Constitution Review Working Group and full Council;
- 4) the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee, be given delegated authority to draft the changes to the Constitution arising from 2) above.

16. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 19 to 24, which provided an update on progress relating to Councillor Code of Conduct complaints.

The report stated that, since the previous meeting of the Committee, on 19 July 2021, four new complaints had been received. In addition, a number of complaints had been progressed.

Andrew Moulton, Monitoring Officer, provided a progress report on each of the complaints (set out at Appendix A to the report). Andrew stated that he would be writing to all

Members about the proposed changes to the complaints handling process, as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Andrew stated that he would also be meeting with Town and Parish Clerks to discuss the impact of the Borough Council's updated Code of Conduct and amended procedures. It was noted that Town and Parish Councils had a discretion relating to the adoption of the LGA Model Code of Conduct.

Members suggested that Andrew consider additional guidance to Members on virtual/hybrid meetings and issues relating to dealing with the media.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the update on Councillor Code of Conduct complaints be noted;
- 2) the Monitoring Officer consider the provision of additional guidance to Members on conduct in virtual/hybrid meetings and issues relating to dealing with the media.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth

Officers Present

Neil Allen, Senior Specialist; Legal Services
Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Chris Easton, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Justin Turvey, Operational Manager - Development Management
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Adriana Gonzalez
Christopher Howard
Simon Taylor

40. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Gary Cowan and Pauline Jorgensen.

41. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following minor amendment.

Agenda page 13: "...and additional informative relating to asking the applicant to work with the farm ~~owner~~ **tenant** regarding the possibility of dual use of the land for grazing purposes as resolved by the Committee."

42. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

44. APPLICATION NO.211841 - LAND NORTH AND SOUTH OF CUTBUSH LANE, SHINFIELD, RG2 9LH

Proposal: Full planning permission for the Science Park Creative Media Hub comprising the erection of film stages and associated workshops and office space; and ancillary uses including equipment stores, café. Formation of associated access, decked and surface parking, and landscaping at the Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP).

Applicant: Shinfield Studios

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 19 to 124.

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

- Updated resolution to recommend grant of planning permission subject to notification of the Secretary of State of a potential departure from policy in the development plan;
- Updated recommendation A;
- Clarification to the report with respect of biodiversity net gain of 10%;
- Insertion of plan numbers under condition 2;
- Insertion of the word 'ancillary' in front of the word 'offices' within condition 3;
- Insertion of the word 'out' after the word 'carried' within condition 7;
- Insertion of the words 'for monitoring purposes' after the word 'review' within condition 16;
- Insertion of the word 'the' after the word 'for' and insertion of the word 'thereafter' after the word 'maintained' within condition 17;
- Deletion of condition 34 and subsequent renumbering of later conditions;
- Insertion of plan reference for newly renumbered condition 38;
- Correction to report that the ditch had been approved on 12th October 2021;
- Insertion of letter of objection from Icenl on behalf of the residents of Cutbush Manor, Cutbush Barn and Badger Cottage and officer responses;
- Additional consultation responses received after publication of the report;
- Insertion of text in relation to the procedure of referring this application to the Secretary of State;
- Clarification that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has no set parking standards for studio use as this was not envisaged when the parking standards were set up, however five other comparable sites had been used for the parking calculations;
- Confirmation that the heritage assets cited in paragraph 113 were Grade 2 listed;
- Confirmation that landscaping details would be secured by condition 26 and evergreen planting could be secured if required.

Mark Cockram, neighbour, submitted a statement in objection to the application. In his absence, the statement was read out by Angus Ross. Mark stated that he supported the overall application for the Shinfield Studios and recognised the benefits that it would bring to the local area. Mark stated that he was however objecting to the positioning of the very large office A building which would be in close proximity to the Grade 2 listed buildings. Mark added that the office building would be approximately 50m from Cutbush Manor, and the office building would dwarf Cutbush Manor in a similar context to the Queen's Head pub and the Civic Offices in Wokingham. Mark stated that the buildings of Cutbush Barn, Badger Cottage and Cutbush Manor were all over 400 years old and constructed on timber frame and brick, built directly on to London Clay with no foundations. Mark was of the opinion that the potential structural impact to these buildings from the nearby building of Office A had not been adequately assessed under the current application by geotechnical investigation or by a specific and detailed engineering analysis. Mark was of the understanding that the land to be used was bequeathed to the University of Reading with the condition that it was only used for research. Mark added that Shinfield Studios had stated that office A would be sub-leased and that this would therefore be an entirely commercial part of the venture. Mark was not of the belief that it was in the public interest to use green space to build commercial real estate in a market that was already over saturated. Mark felt that the contractor at the current temporary site for the studios had

repeatedly failed to meet the requirements of their planning approval. Mark added that work had been conducted outside of approved hours and Cutbush Lane East continued to be used by site traffic, despite a design and access statement that stated that this road would be closed to all motor vehicles. Mark stated that near misses with pedestrians and cyclists were common, and should this continue, it was highly likely that a serious injury, or worse, would occur. Mark was of the opinion that due to poor schedule management, permission had now been given for work every Sunday, and the build time for the next phase is estimated at 27 months. Mark added that continued lack of schedule management would inevitably force more weekend work and disruption to nearby residents. Mark concluded by stating that it was his view that approval of the plans with office A remaining as proposed would result in the Local Planning Authority failing to meet its duty of having special regard to heritage assets as per Section 66 of the Planning Act of 1990.

Nick Smith, applicant, spoke in support of the application. Nick thanked Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) officers for their support throughout the planning process. Nick stated that content production was a fast growing industry, with £4bn worth of inwards investment, whilst the Government was targeting a figure of £6bn. Nick stated that this was a real opportunity to place Shinfield and Wokingham on the map as an area of production for high quality shows and movies. Nick added that this application would provide millions of pounds of inwards investment into the area, with an average production spending approximately £100m of which a significant proportion would be spent within the local area. Nick stated that approximately 500 crew would be employed for productions, which would create many local and high paid jobs. Nick stated that they had engaged with stakeholders, and the Parish Council were supportive of the proposals as were the Thames Valley LEP, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Department of International Trade. Two online sessions had been held which had attracted over 120 participants on both occasions. Nick stated that they were grateful for all of the support that had been given to this application. Nick added that the issue of sustainability had been taken very seriously for this application, with BREEAM excellent being targeted for this application, which would include the provision of solar panels, heat pumps and a fabric first approach. Nick concluded by stating that the cinema and post production area had been moved away from residential properties, and hoped that the Committee would approve the application.

Christopher Howard, case officer, responded to a number of points raised by public speakers. Christopher stated that the 50m separation gap to the listed building was the distance to the curtilage, which was a significant amount of space, whilst the distance to the dwelling was approximately 70m. Officers had looked at this in detail and had taken advice from the conservation officer, and the harm had been identified as less than substantial. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF stated that such applications were required to be assessed against the public benefits, which had been set out within the report and had been deemed to outweigh any harm. With regards to concerns relating to piling and extended construction hours, any piling operations would be auger driven which would create substantially less noise than other operations, and the Government had asked Local Authorities to be flexible in terms of extended hours, and this facility needed to be opened in a time critical manner to meet production schedules. Christopher stated that times had moved on since the premise of the science park had been agreed, and options had to be explored to look at alternative use cases which could also be collaborative with other parts of the site. Christopher added that science companies tended to cluster together in areas such as Oxford and Cambridge in recent times.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried what impact the proposed office A might have on the listed buildings, and queried how many decks of the multi-storey car park were above ground and what their visual appearance would look like. Christopher Howard stated that the car park would consist of 11 split levels and the above ground portion would be lower than the stage building and would cut into the landscape of the science park, with the motorway side being open. The building would be cladded which would shield some lighting from the M4. With regards to the listed buildings, Christopher stated that the method of piling would reduce noise and vibrations when compared to other piling methods, and the construction team would have a duty of care to the listed buildings.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether anything could be put in place to restrict HGVs using Lower Earley Way rather than the M4 during the construction phase, as this was creating noise pollution and safety issues. Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage and Compliance, stated that Lower Earley Way was a strategic route which was built to be capable of accommodating HGVs. Chris added that Lower Earley Way needed to remain as a secondary access route. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery, stated that it would not be reasonable to state that vehicles could not use Lower Earley Way, as the direction of travel would depend on where the vehicles were coming from.

Angus Ross stated that the site visit had been useful for Members, and stated his hope that the right of way situation could be tidied up outside of this application. Angus queried whether the issue of manoeuvring of vehicles such as fire service vehicles had been addressed, and sought clarification that application 212936 had been agreed yesterday. Christopher Howard confirmed that the application for the drainage ditch had been approved yesterday, which would also help address some historic issues that had occurred on Cutbush Lane. Christopher stated that there was approximately 20m of space between each stage building which should allow for Fire Service vehicles to turn, and an additional condition was proposed to establish if fire hydrants were necessary for the development in consultation with the Royal Berks Fire and Rescue.

Sam Akhtar sought assurances that the cladding on the outside of the proposed building would be safe and fire resistant. Christopher Howard stated that the cladding was for aesthetic purposes, and building regulations would cover the safety aspects of the cladding.

Bill Soane queried what would be emitted from the proposed chimneys on site. Christopher Howard stated that these would likely be used to expel excess heat and may also be required to facilitate painting on site. Environmental Health would control any safety issues relating to the chimneys.

Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey queried how many photovoltaic panels would be installed on the site, queried whether additional vegetation could be added to the car park, and queried whether heat pumps would be installed on the site. Christopher Howard stated that twenty percent of required power would be generated from photovoltaic panels and a good generator would be installed to facilitate this. This figure was above the policy level of ten percent, which was commendable and above the policy threshold. Christopher confirmed that heat pumps would be installed and the development would be gas free. Christopher stated that landscaping had been incorporated where possible, and officers had secured a ten percent offsite biodiversity net gain and a comprehensive management plan for these spaces.

Stephen Conway felt that this was a well-balanced report with clear negatives and positives, and in his view the balance was in favour of the positive aspects of the proposed development. Stephen Conway proposed an informative indicating the Committee's wish that construction traffic be discouraged from using the Lower Earley Way. This was seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

Carl Doran was of the opinion that this was not a clear cut decision, with local people feeling that the traffic in the area was already high and that future development would only add to this issue. Carl stated that he was pleased to see that drainage improvements for the area had been agreed. Carl queried whether (newly numbered) condition 37 relating to community engagement would still apply should the site be sold on in future, queried whether the proposed offices were solely related to the film studio, and queried whether the hours of development, particularly the 6am start on a Sunday, could be explained. Christopher Howard confirmed that condition 37 would still apply if ownership changed in future as this related to the planning permission, and any change would be subject to a change of use application. Christopher stated that the film studio needed to be set up at short notice, and the site was quite isolated and any disruption caused had to be considered with the backdrop of the M4 and Lower Earley Way both being in close proximity, and as such officers felt that the hours of construction would not cause significant harm.

At this point in the meeting, Sam Akhtar left the room and did not participate in the vote for this item.

Carl Doran sought assurances whether the landscape buffer near the footbridge over the M4 would remain, queried whether the height of the sound stages would be 22.6m total, queried whether the parking proposals were based off of parking models at similar facilities or actual use at other facilities, and queried which bus services would serve this facility. Christopher Howard stated that the landscaping was subject to condition and further details and strengthening could be included within condition discharge. Christopher confirmed that the stage would be 22.6m height in total including the concrete plinths. Chris Easton stated that other similar facilities such as Pinewood and Shepperton had been used to model a parking standard on a worst case assessment, and if anything there would be an overprovision of car parking on site. Chris added that the main public transport service was secured as part of the wider south of the M4 SDL.

Carl Doran commented that Shepperton had a free shuttle bus to local stations, and this might be worth considering for this site.

Angus Ross queried how much of a delay might arise from referring this case to the Secretary of State. Christopher Howard stated that this process would likely take around three weeks to complete.

RESOLVED That application number 211841 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 21 to 37, updated recommendation A and various updates and renumbering of conditions as set out in the Supplementary Planning Agenda, additional condition relating to assessment of whether fire hydrants were required on site, and additional informative dissuading construction traffic using the Lower Earley Way as resolved by the Committee.

45. APPLICATION NO.211530 - LAND AT SHINFIELD WEST, NORTH OF BEKE AVENUE

Proposal: Reserved Matters application pursuant to Outline planning permission VAR/2014/0624) (a variation of O/2010/1432) for the erection of 25 dwellings, 134.5m² of Class A1-A5 floorspace including access roads, parking spaces, open space and landscape treatment. (Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be considered)

Applicant: Bloor Homes Ltd., Bovis Homes Ltd. and Linden (Shinfield) LLP

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 125 to 200.

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

- A further objection received from Shinfield Parish Council on 8 October 2021;
- Amendments to conditions 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. Conditions 10 and 14 had been deleted, and as such condition 11, 12 and 13 became conditions 10, 11, and 12, and conditions 15 and 16 became conditions 13 and 14.

Nick Paterson-Neild, planning consultant, spoke in support of the application. Nick stated he was speaking on behalf of the consortium, and they were delighted that this reserved matters application had been recommended for approval. Nick added that the application formed part of the local centre within the SDL in Shinfield, which was granted outline planning permission in 2012 for up to 1200 homes and supporting uses, and this application formed one of the final phases of this important development. Nick stated that the local centre was community focussed and had been positively shaped via pre-application and public consultation processes, and was in accordance with the approved local centre development brief. Nick added that the scale, type, and density of the development was appropriate and would provide for a vibrant and attractive local centre which complement the approved community building and care home. The consortium was working closely with a potential food store operator, Lidl, to deliver a food store. The proposals had been carefully planned and amended to ensure that the operator of the food store and its future delivery were not compromised. Nick stated that the proposals would deliver 25 homes, including 6 affordable units, which was an overprovision of affordable homes when considered across the allocation of the outline site as a whole. Nick added that the site would include flexible retail space to meet local needs, a public plaza which would prioritise pedestrians, high quality landscape and green infrastructure, energy demand reduction via a fabric first approach, 19 passive and 4 active electric charging points, and space to provide a food store in the future. Nick felt that this site was in an extremely sustainable location, and supported the officer's recommendation of approval.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried whether photovoltaic panels would be installed as part of this application, and queried whether the electric vehicle points would be upgradeable to any future standards. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery, stated that the outline application was approved prior to the requirement for ten percent energy generation, and therefore the proposals were policy compliant. Connor added that building regulations would contain sustainability measures. Simon Taylor, case officer, stated that the electric vehicle charging infrastructure would consist of the latest infrastructure available.

Carl Doran queried why the bus gate had been removed, queried why there was only affordable flats rather than a mix of affordable flats and affordable houses, and queried where the amenity space was for the proposed flats. Chris Easton, Head of Transport, Drainage, and Compliance, stated that the bus gates were historic, and where the housing was located there would always be traffic in that location. Chris added that the model had been re-run, and had deemed that there was no significant benefit to the bus gate remaining and in any case it would be hard to police. Simon Taylor stated that the delivery of affordable houses had changed over time, and there was now a demand for affordable flats. Simon stated that the amenity space was located to the north of the site was intended to be used. Simon added that the flats would be dual aspect, with Juliet balconies and good south facing aspects which would reduce the necessity for ground level amenity space. Simon commented that this was not a departure from policy, as these were only guidelines.

Stephen Conway queried why the number of retail units had been reduced over time. Connor Corrigan stated that a considerable amount of work had gone in to planning this development, and part of the site had been safeguarded for a supermarket. Connor added that the retail market had changed substantially over the past ten years, and one retail unit and a supermarket was a much better fit in the current climate. Connor stated that whilst the supermarket would be slightly smaller than agreed, the operator had standard supermarket formats and would therefore meet the needs of the community.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried why the application for the food store had not been considered as part of this application, queried what officers envisaged the use of the retail unit might be, queried whether additional details should be provided in relation to condition 5 (public art strategy), queried what guarantees were in place to guarantee the accessibility of specific properties in perpetuity, queried whether the residents of the flats would have sufficient allocated car parking space, and sought additional details with regards to the shared section of the roadway within the local centre. Simon Taylor stated that the residential application was ready for consideration whilst the application for the food store was not, and officers could not compel the applicant to bring the applications together. Simon added that the retail unit would have A1 through A5 use classes. Simon stated that public art was considered as part of the SPD but not as part of the outline application. The applicant had agreed to its inclusion within this application, however the details would only come forward with the permission. Simon stated that the intention was to ensure that the dwellings were to M4(2) standards as adaptable dwellings in the future. Chris Easton confirmed that the application met the Council's car parking standards, including provision for the flats. Chris added that there was allocated provision for the flats within the parking court to the rear. Chris stated that the materials to be used within the local centre would indicate a change in character, with a footpath cycleway running through to create a hub area with four crossing locations. Chris added that the proposals would need to comply with road safety standards, and would be subject to various road safety audits, assessments and technical sign offs both prior to and during construction.

Angus Ross commented that, in his opinion, the proposals may not lead to a town square with only one retail unit. Angus sought additional details regarding the proposed refuse collection points on site. Chris Easton confirmed that the green dots within the provided plans indicated where each property would be served in terms of refuse collection.

RESOLVED That application number 211530 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 126 to 133, and various amendments to conditions and numbering thereof as set out in the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

46. APPLICATION NO.212228 - LAMBS LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL, LAMBS LANE, SPENCERS WOOD

Proposal: Full application for the retention of an existing single storey modular building for a temporary period of 7 years. (Retrospective)

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 201 to 220.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the supplementary planning agenda included clarification relating to the resource base and the seven year permission period.

Bill Soane queried how the site had managed to get three additional years of use without returning to the Planning Committee, and queried whether any permission granted should now be for 4 years rather than for seven. Adriana Gonzalez, case officer, stated that she did not know the details regarding why this application had not come forward until now, and confirmed that the permission as proposed would grant seven years of permission from the date of the decision. Adriana added that the seven year permission would allow further assessment of the structure and potential future options under the maintenance order. Justin Turvey, Operational Manager – Development Management, confirmed that the seven year permission would allow time to further assess future standards and needs of the site.

Stephen Conway wished for comments to be passed on regarding the Committee's concern over the time taken to bring this application forward for consideration.

Carl Doran commented that these buildings needed to be replaced properly, and he hoped that a permanent solution could be found in future.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey commented that these facilities were struggling to be replaced due to tight budgets for schools.

RESOLVED That application number 212228 be approved, subject to conditions and informative as set out on agenda page 202.

47. APPLICATION NO.212509 - 160 READING ROAD, WOKINGHAM, RG41 1LH

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a 2no.storey plus loft level dwelling with an integrated garage to include 12No roof lights following the demolition of existing bungalow including alterations to the vehicular/pedestrian entrance.

Applicant: G Lupton

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 221 to 244.

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

- Reference to three additional neighbour comments received after the report was submitted for the agenda;
- Amended condition 4.

Imogen Shepherd-Dubey, on behalf of Wokingham Town Council, spoke in objection to the application. Imogen stated that the proposals were for a large three-storey house including five bedrooms. Imogen added that the ridge height of the proposals would be 2.5m higher than that of the adjacent properties. Imogen stated that the other properties in the area were all two-storey family homes with no larger buildings in sight. Imogen stated that the proposals were downhill from neighbouring buildings, and the diagrams provided did not represent the street scene adequately. Imogen suggested that Members may wish to visit the street to get a true sense of the street scene and the character of the area. Imogen stated that the Town Council was grateful for the removal of the external garage and the rear dormer window proposals, however the third floor windows and the third floor useable space remained. Imogen was of the opinion that the height and massing of the proposal was not in keeping with the surrounding character of the area. Imogen was of the opinion that the proposals did not meet CP3a of the core strategy, and she did not want this application to set a precedent for larger properties of this nature outside of town centre settings.

Peter Mathers, neighbour, spoke in objection to the application. Peter stated that the existing bungalow at 160 Reading Road was not much smaller than the two-storey house situated at number 158 Reading Road. Peter stated that the proposal was for a property which was substantially higher than both numbers 158 and 162 Reading Road, and would have an overbearing nature that would disrupt the downward trajectory of the houses which followed the slope of the road. Peter stated that an officer report for a pre-application care home on the site address last year stated concerns relating to the centre section of the building being of three-storeys in height and being considerably higher than existing properties. Peter stated that this application would allow a building of a similar height, and therefore approval would be inconsistent with the approach taken last year. Peter stated that the proposals included eight roof lights and two small round windows in the roof which he felt was excessive. Peter raised concerns that the storage areas within the proposed third-storey may be used as bedrooms in future. Peter asked that the number of roof lights be reduced, and removed completely from side elevations, with the remaining roof lights to be obscured glass. Peter was of the opinion that the applicant had failed to provide examples of similar properties in the area in terms of height and the amount of glazing in the roof, and this was because these properties did not exist. Peter stated that the vast majority of properties in the area were of two-storey height. Peter welcomed redevelopment of the existing bungalow as it was in a state of disrepair, however the proposed application was overdevelopment in his view.

Peter Lindley Hughes, agent, spoke in support of the application. Peter stated that the proposal was for a sympathetic in-keeping scheme of high quality, to replace the 1960's existing dwelling which no longer served the needs of the existing family and was in desperate need of replacement. Peter stated that the applicant had collaborated with the local planning authority to ensure that the scheme was suitable in terms of material matters and local planning policy. Peter stated that the rear dormer windows had been removed via updated plans, which were the main issue for the massing and overlooking. Peter stated that in the absence of a garage, the parking proposals had been incorporated within the dwelling massing. Peter added that the proposals were for a three-storey dwelling with two-storey massing. Peter stated that following further consultation, no additional material matters were raised for consideration and the applicant was content

that the proposals were suitable for the location. Peter stated that the Environment Agency classified this as flood zone risk 1, which was the lowest classification of at risk areas, and a flood risk assessment had been carried out and had indicated that no level of mitigation solely on the applicant's property would not be able to remedy the wider issues within the area. Peter stated that during the detailed design phase, additional surface water flood mitigation measures were likely to be introduced which could also have benefits for neighbouring properties. Peter was of the opinion that the design was of high quality whilst fitting in with the character of the area, and would meet the needs of the applicant whilst providing surface water mitigation measures.

Rachel Bishop-Firth, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Rachel stated that whilst she supported the redevelopment of this site to replace the existing bungalow, she was concerned that the current proposal was not in keeping with the surrounding area. Rachel stated that the buildings on this stretch of the Reading Road were all one and two storey homes, and whilst some properties have had a loft conversion this had mainly occurred where the existing property was a bungalow. Rachel stated that this was not an area where three storey homes were being built. Rachel stated that the proposals would be 2.5m higher than the neighbouring dwellings, which would be out of keeping with other homes and would set a dangerous precedent for the area. Rachel added that the blocky design of the house added to the bulk of the proposed development, which would be out of character with other properties in the area. Rachel urged the Committee to refuse this application.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey was of the opinion that the proposal was three-storeys and was out of keeping with the character of the area.

Stephen Conway commented that the proposals would be substantially higher than neighbouring properties, and felt that a site visit would be beneficial for Members to get a sense of the potential relationship. Simon Taylor, case officer, stated that he had visited the site and the dwellings were set back with a slope through the site, and the proposals were not felt to be excessive in terms of height relative to other properties.

Andrew Mickleburgh was of the opinion that there was no substitute for a site visit to get a better sense of the street scene and potential relationship between the dwellings. Andrew raised concerns that the proposed building works may create additional flood risk, queried whether there were any details regarding the increase in massing, and commented that the increase in glazing of the roof space would have an impact on the character of the area. Simon Taylor commented that the site sat in a one in 100 year surface flood risk zone, and sustainable drainage details would ensure that there was no adverse impact on surface flood risk compared to the current situation. Simon added that there would be some overshadowing, however this would not be sufficient to warrant refusal and the proposals met the 45 degree line test. Simon stated that the proposals would be higher than most properties on the street however this was not felt to be unacceptable. Simon stated that massing and volume were considerations within a countryside setting, and as this application was in an urban setting and it met the front, rear, and side guidelines the proposals were considered acceptable and policy compliant.

Carl Doran raised concerns relating to the height of the proposal, and worried that this would set a precedent for future applications if approved. Carl queried why this application was being considered so quickly after a small consultation period, and queried whether there was any way that the storage areas would remain as such in future as opposed to being used as a bedroom space. Simon Taylor stated that the application had been re-

consulted, which was not necessary however it allowed for neighbours to view and consider proposed changes to the application. Simon added that the consultation ended on the agenda publication date, and the applicant would have had to wait a further month prior to consideration of their application whilst no additional issues had been raised as part of the re-consultation. Simon stated that the 1.5m high windows were considered as acceptable and the extent of overlooking had been sufficiently minimised.

Angus Ross was of the opinion that the Committee were required to balance the inevitable redevelopment of the street scene to meet the current needs of residents against any potential harm.

Sam Akhtar stated his concerns in relation to surface water issues as a result of development, overlooking issues as a result of increased glazing, height of the proposed dwelling in comparison to neighbouring properties, and the change to the street scene that this application would cause.

Stephen Conway commented that the Committee may have differences of opinion to officers when subjective matters were being considered.

Stephen Conway proposed that the item be deferred to allow a site visit to be undertaken to consider the proposed development's relationship with neighbouring properties and the overall street scene. This proposal was seconded by Chris Bowring and upon being put to the vote the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED That application number 212509 be deferred, to allow a site visit to be undertaken to consider the proposed development's relationship with neighbouring properties and the overall street scene.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH WELLBEING BOARD
HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2021 FROM 5.00 PM TO 6.05 PM**

Present

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

Also Present:

Madeleine Shopland	Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist Public Health
Ingrid Slade	
Phil Cunnington	
Laura Vicinanza	Regional Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer Alzheimer's Society
Mark Robson	Integrated Networks Development Lead

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Graham Ebers and Councillor John Halsall.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 June 2021, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

17. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

18. COVID UPDATE

The Board received an update on Covid.

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

- Ingrid Slade outlined the current Covid rates across Berkshire. The case rate per 100,000 population for Wokingham, for the week 1-7th October, was 395.6. This was on an upward trajectory, as was the case for several of the neighbouring councils. The rate in the over 60's was currently on its way down and was around 120.6.
- Residents were living two different pandemics. There were a large number of Covid cases in the school age population, mostly within the secondary schools. For those without school age relatives, many were living with less restrictions. Wokingham's Children's Services Task Force was working closely with schools and headteachers and were being very proactive in testing. This would help to identify further cases and to prevent onward transmission.
- Councillor Hare questioned whether cases were likely to continue to increase and what impact winter might have. Ingrid Slade commented that the rate was currently on an upward trajectory. Some factors may have an impact on rates going into winter, including half term holidays and the Schools Immunisation Team going into the secondary schools to provide Covid vaccinations.
- Councillor Howe commented that 30% of children had been vaccinated and asked what was being done to continue this. He was informed that Wokingham had the highest uptake in vaccinations in Berkshire West in 12-15 year olds. There was a clear vaccination programme within the secondary schools. Board members were reminded that a vaccine could not be given within 4 weeks of a positive diagnosis. Further work on ensuring a good vaccination offer was available for those children who were affected by this, would be undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the update on Covid be noted.

19. WOKINGHAM HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY INTO ACTION AND ASSOCIATED ACTION PLANS

The Board received the Wokingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Associated Action Plans.

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

- The action plans would be reviewed annually.
- Prior to the pandemic, extensive work had been undertaken across Berkshire West regarding the development of a Berkshire West wide Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Ingrid Slade went on to highlight the five high level priorities identified for Berkshire West. Work had been undertaken locally to identify how these were relevant to the Wokingham Borough population.
- Local sub priorities in Wokingham Borough were:
- Priority 1- Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people -
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Cancer
 - Covid recovery
- Priority 2 – Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives –
 - People with learning disabilities
 - Unpaid carers
 - Youth offenders
 - Substance misuse
 - Domestic abuse

- Priority 3 – Help children and families in early years –
 - SEND and inclusion
 - Early intervention and prevention
 - Safeguarding
- Priority 4 – Good mental health and wellbeing for children and young people –
 - Reduce waiting time
 - Covid recovery
 - Prevention and early help
- Priority 5 – Good mental health and wellbeing for adults –
 - Loneliness and social isolation
 - Dementia
 - Loneliness and social isolation Covid 19 recovery
- More partners were being brought together than under the previous Wellbeing Strategy. The Groups that would be responsible for the delivery of each priority, were highlighted. It was proposed that these report into the Wellbeing Board via a Steering Group. A paper would be provided at the November Board meeting regarding the Steering Group composition.
- Susan Parsonage asked about the reporting of the sub groups. Ingrid Slade indicated that it was expected that each of the nine partnership groups would report to the Steering Group on a quarterly basis, in a staggered fashion. The way in which the update report was delivered would be standardised over time. There would be a focus on outcomes. The Steering Group would determine exception reporting and would report to the Wellbeing Board.
- Katie Summers questioned whether a smart delivery approach would be taken and was informed that the action plans were for a year and would be reviewed and amended as required going forwards.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy (noting the methods and outcome of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy Public Consultation included for reference) be approved;
- 2) Wokingham's Health and Wellbeing: Strategy into Action including the priorities for focus within the Borough governed by the Board be approved;
- 3) the proposed change to the local governance structure (page 20 of Wokingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy into Action) be approved;
- 4) Wokingham's Strategy into Action – Action Plans be noted. These plans will be dynamic and continue to develop, they will form the basis of quarterly reporting into the Strategy into Action Steering Group.

20. 'FROM DIAGNOSIS TO END OF LIFE: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF DEMENTIA CARE AND SUPPORT' ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY REPORT AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WOKINGHAM

The Board received a presentation from Laura Vicinanza, Regional Public Affairs and Campaigns Officer Alzheimer's Society, on 'From diagnosis to end of life: The lived experienced of dementia and support' from the Alzheimer's Society.

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

- The report analysed the gaps between what care and support the current guidance and legislation afforded people with dementia and what care and support they were actually receiving from diagnosis until the end of life. The Alzheimer Society had made specific recommendations to local authorities on how to address the care and support needs of those with dementia.
- The report had been researched and written prior to the pandemic.
- The Alzheimer Society was pleased that supporting people living with dementia and their carers as a group of people at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives had been identified as a priority in the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- The report had been structured into different sections; diagnosing well; supporting well; living well; and dying well.
- Laura Vicinanza highlighted how evidence had been gathered.
- A key theme across all stages of the pathway was a sense of disjointed and fragmented care.
- Examples of best practice had also been included within the report.
- **Diagnosing well** – The Board noted key findings with regards to diagnosing well. Recommendations around this area included:
 - CCGs to have a dedicated dementia lead to train GPs on referral criteria and diagnosis;
 - Multidisciplinary team meetings between memory service clinicians, neurology and neuroradiology;
 - Clear referral pathways to enable access to Allied Health Professionals;
 - Memory services to include dementia adviser services, with people automatically referred to the service unless they opted out;
 - Access to follow-up opportunities to discuss diagnosis.
- Nationally, diagnosis rates had decreased during the pandemic. Referrals from primary care to the Memory Services had also decreased. A backlog in assessments would worsen wait times.
- People needed to be able to access their GP, face-to-face, to discuss concerns with cognitive impairment or memory. In addition, Secondary care specialist diagnostic services needed sufficient workforce and resources to cope with the current and expected backlog of appointments.
- **Supporting well** - The Board noted key findings with regards to supporting well. Recommendations around this area included:
 - All people should have a named care coordinator;
 - Appropriate and tailored post-diagnostic support interventions for people with dementia and their carers;
 - Integration of dementia adviser services within primary care;
 - Clear local responsibility for advance care planning.
- **Living well** – The Board noted key findings with regards to living well. Recommendations around this area included:
 - Straightforward methods of booking day care and overnight care in advance;
 - Accessible lists of recommended local respite care services;
 - Care homes to have enhanced access to professionals through local multidisciplinary teams;
 - All professionals trained to at least Tier 2 of the Dementia Training Standards Framework.
- The pandemic had had an impact on those with dementia. A deterioration in mental health and cognitive decline had been seen, due to restrictions around social contact, particularly for those living in care homes. In addition, the numbers of people receiving care plans or care plan reviews over the last year had decreased.

- The pandemic had exacerbated many issues that carers had already been facing. During the pandemic many carers had reported that their caring responsibilities had significantly increased during lockdown.
- **Dying well** – The Board noted key findings with regards to dying well. Recommendations around this area included:
 - Manage hospitalisations through integrating services, upskilling care home staff and increasing access to out-of-hours specialist support;
 - Local multidisciplinary teams should be formed to assist local care homes, and include palliative care teams;
 - Local services should be set up to ensure that professionals involved in end-of-life care can easily and quickly access advance care plans.
- Councillor Hare asked about support for carers, particularly during the early stages of a loved one receiving a dementia diagnosis. He went on to comment that it was good for carers to be able to take respite. Many felt guilty about taking time away from their loved one. Laura Vicinanza emphasised that carers needed to be supported so that they could understand how to deal with dementia. She agreed that taking respite was important for carers and that if they did not have access, it could have a very negative impact on the carer.
- Matt Pope indicated that Laura Vicinanza had had discussions regarding the report recommendations with officers and these would be incorporated in the dementia workstream. Work was being undertaken regarding the formation of a dementia alliance across the Borough.
- Katie Summers stated that the CCG had done a lot of dedicated training around dementia for GPs but that this could be reaffirmed. Multi-disciplinary meetings were already in place but that Memory Service clinicians could be incorporated. She went on to state that the Memory Service already included Dementia Advisors.
- Katie Summers questioned whether the report had been shared with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust and Royal Berkshire Healthcare Trust as major clinicians and was informed that it had been presented to the Health and Wellbeing Boards. Katie Summers commented that the Royal Berkshire Hospital was looking at their clinical services strategy and it was a good opportunity to shape how the major local providers took forwards the recommendations from the report.
- Dr Milligan outlined some of the measures already in place around dementia. She emphasised the importance of the voluntary sector.

RESOLVED: That the presentation on 'From diagnosis to end of life: The lived experience of dementia and support' from the Alzheimer's Society, be noted and Laura Vicinanza be thanked for her presentation.

21. ICP UNITED EXECUTIVE CHAIR'S REPORT

The Board considered the ICP United Executive Chair's Report.

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

- Matt Pope commented that the update was a means of keeping the Board up to date with the Integrated Care Partnership Board to ensure a read across between the two.
- Matt Pope suggested that an overview of the Board and its priorities be provided at the next Board meeting. Katie Summers suggested a workshop would be helpful.
- It was noted that the report was out of date because the agenda had been carried forward from the previous meeting which had had to be cancelled.

- Meradin Peachy commented that discussions had been had about the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the governance between the ICP and Wokingham regarding the strategy.

RESOLVED: That the ICP United Executive Chair's Report be noted.

22. FORWARD PROGRAMME

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

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LICENSING AND APPEALS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.25 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Stephen Brown, Interim Assistant Director Place Services
Moirra Fraser, Policy and Governance Officer
Sean Murphy, Public Protection Partnership Manager
Julia O'Brien, Principal Officer, Compliance and Enforcement
David Thrall, Interim Public Protection Consultant

Others Present

David Lucas, Licensing Consultant

9. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Abdul Loyes.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Matters arising

In relation to the resolution on Item 7, Councillor Kerr asked if the drivers that had already paid the fees had been refunded.

Stephen Brown, Interim Assistant Director for Place Services stated that refunds had not taken place.

Members were interested to know when a decision was taken by the Executive not to subsidize the fees and not to refund those that had already paid the fee.

Sean Murphy, Public Protection Partnership Manager confirmed that the Licensing and Appeals Committee had made a recommendation to freeze the fees at the previous year's levels. However, he pointed out that it was not within the Licensing and Appeals Committee gift to make a decision on fees, decisions relating to subsidising fees sat as Executive function of the Council.

Stephen Brown confirmed that no formal decision had yet been made.

Members expressed serious concerns that the Executive had not been formally asked to consider a recommendation put forward by the Licensing and Appeals Committee, and questioned the legality of it.

The Chairman asked Officers to investigate this issue and make sure that the proper governance arrangements be put in place in relation to this recommendation. He asked that the outcome be reported back to the next meeting.

11. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

13. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

14. ADOPTION OF THE STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES

David Lucas, Licensing Consultant presented the report, outlining the proposed Statement of Gambling Principles.

David Lucas informed that the draft document, including the amendments suggested at the last meeting, had gone out to consultation. The comments which were received were included in the appendix, including responses to those comments.

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

- Councillor Dennis asked that acronyms such as 'MCA' on page 12 of the agenda be avoided and that the full wording be used;
- Councillor Fishwick noted the low response to the consultation. He suggested that stakeholders be asked directly if they had received the consultation and if they had any comments. He believed that the comments from the Head of Adult Safeguarding were relevant;
- David Lucas stated that he agreed with the comments listed on page 13, and he could amend the wording, providing this was clear;
- Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey expressed concern that gambling was an addictive activity and wondered if there was a safe level of gambling and whether this should be included in the document;
- David Lucas explained that Public Health was not one of the objectives within the Gambling Act, as such this could not be included in the policy;
- Councillor Younis was interested to know how to measure and ascertain that the licensing objectives were being met. He also asked if there had been a review of the effectiveness of the policy in the last three years;
- David Lucas explained that gambling operators were regulated by two bodies: the local licensing authorities and the Gambling Commission. The Gambling Commission regulated gambling operations and local licensing authorities regulated gambling premises. The measurement of how the objectives were being promoted was divided by the two regulators. The Gambling Act was of a permissive nature, with reviews powers which enabled control. The review powers were rarely used as concerns over premises licenses relating to the Gambling Act were uncommon. He pointed out that this was different from issues in respect to operators;
- In response to a question David Lucas stated that the statistics around the number of applications (granted or refused) and the number of reviews would give an indication if the objectives were being met or not;

- Sean Murphy stated that the number of gambling premises in the Borough was low and decreasing due to some betting shops closing down. Also, the number of reviews was very low;
- In response to a question Davis Lucas stated that consultations in respect of Gambling Policies generally did not attract many responses. However, the Gambling Commission and operators scrutinized them carefully;
- Councillor Kerr agreed with the comment made in relation to the wording 'vulnerable adult centres' in that it would be clearer to use the wording 'vulnerable adults'. She also suggested including the expression in the glossary;
- In response to a comment, David Lucas stated that there were very few contested gambling premises licences nationally. However, the Policy had to be in place and was used by the Licensing Authority and other responsible authorities to guide them in how to administer licences;
- It was ascertained that there had been an issue in the labelling of the appendixes within the agenda papers;
- Councillor Bowring was in favour of keeping the wording 'vulnerable adult centres', he pointed out that this was the wording used by the Gambling Commission Guidance, and also there was a link to the Guidance;
- David Lucas explained that this was a stand alone document and that different language could be used, as long as this was clear.

Upon being put to the vote, the majority of Members voted in favour of the adoption of the Statement of Gambling Principles, including the amendments listed on page 13 of the agenda.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Licensing and Appeals Committee notes the outcome of the consultation; and
- 2) The Licensing and Appeals Committee recommends to full Council that the Statement of Gambling Principles be adopted, with the amendments as discussed during the meeting.

15. ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Sean Murphy presented the Annual Report, which outlined the licensing activities undertaken during the 2020/21 financial year.

The report drew attention to the impact of the Covid pandemic onto licensing. In particular, the decrease in the number of taxi and private hire licences compared to previous years. It was not certain if this change was long term or if drivers would come back.

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

- In relation to the RAG status on page 62 of the Agenda, Councillor Burgess asked why this was Green, given that for most of the year the target had not been met;
- Sean Murphy stated that that this was an annual target, and most of the survey had been undertaken in the last quarter;
- Councillor Burgess asked for information in regard to the budget implications of having significantly fewer licence applications;
- David Thrale, Interim Public Protection Consultant confirmed that there were budget implications with a reduction in income. The impact on future years was linked to the pandemic and was not yet known;

- Sean Murphy stated that there had been support for loss of income for the Local Authority in the last two years, but it was not certain that this would continue. Also, there were some signs of a recovery with some people coming back to trade;
- Councillor Kerr asked if there were any figures around complaints to the PPP. Sean Murphy agreed to investigate and circulate this information to Members;
- In response to a question David Thrane stated that he did not anticipate problems arising as a result of Wokingham leaving the PPP. Plans were currently underway to deliver the licensing function in Wokingham. These plans included putting together a Licensing Team and a Licensing Manager;
- In response to a question Sean Murphy stated that the other PPP Licensing Authorities had also seen significant reductions in licences. Some of the reasons for the reductions in taxi and private hire licences were linked to the airport runs, the hospitality industry and corporate functions. Also, it was believed that some drivers had retired or moved to food delivery, which was an area of boom during the pandemic period.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

16. TAXI LIAISON MEETING UPDATE

Moira Fraser, policy and Governance Officer presented the Taxi Liaison Meeting update. She stated that the drivers' participation to meetings was improving.

Moira Fraser asked the Committee to consider whether or not to continue to suspend the age limit for vehicles for another year. The trade had argued at the meeting that vehicles had travelled less during Covid, therefore they felt that the period should be prolonged.

The trade raised the issue of Wokingham drivers not being able to use bus lanes in Reading. It was ascertained that drivers could use some of bus lanes only.

The trade continued to argue that the competition with Uber was unfair. However, the legal advice was that Uber had the right to operate in Wokingham. The Local Authority's only power was if Uber drivers contravened the law, for example by parking illegally or plying for hire.

Councillor Firmager believed that Wokingham should continue to lobby to get Wokingham drivers to be able to use all of Reading's bus lanes.

Councillor Burgess proposed that the suspension of the age of vehicles be continued for another year. She was seconded by Councillor Kerr.

Councillor Kerr stated that having vehicles operating for another year was not more polluting to the environment, as compared to the impact on emissions related to having to produce a new vehicle.

In response to a question, Sean Murphy was of the opinion that the Licensing and Appeals Committee could make and alter conditions on the Taxi and Private Hire Policies. However, fees subsidy decisions were within the remit of the Executive.

Councillor Ferris was in agreement that Wokingham should support drivers' plea to use Reading's bus lanes, and Councillor Younis added that such discussions needed to take place at a high level. Sean Murphy agreed to follow this up.

In response to a comment, Julia O'Brien, Principal Officer Compliance and Enforcement stated that the Taxi and Private Hire Policies were being reviewed and would be brought for consideration to the January meeting of the Committee.

In response to a question Julia O'Brien stated that West Berkshire did not have an age limit for vehicles and Bracknell had an 8 year limit for private hire and 10 years for hackney carriages. Sean Murphy added that discussions around age limits and conditions would take place in January when the policies were due to be considered.

Councillor Younis was of the opinion that there should be consistency in relation to vehicles' policies, given that vehicles travelled on the roads of neighbouring authorities. He also believed that black cabs and private hire vehicles should be allowed to use bus lanes.

Sean Murphy stated that there was consistency within the local authorities in relation to convictions.

There was a debate in relation to the mechanism to be followed in order to put forward the recommendations arising as a result of discussions at the meeting. It was proposed that these recommendations would be put in the formal report to the January meeting.

Councillor Bowring expressed concern that the decision on the age condition for vehicles did not relate to an agenda item. However, there was no consensus on this.

Members were of the opinion that due to the fact that the vehicle age suspension had finished on 30 September, a decision was needed on this issue was needed urgently.

The advice from Democratic Services was that a decision be undertaken and that if subsequently it was ascertained that further approval was needed, this would be arranged.

Upon being put the vote most Members voted in favour of continuing with the vehicle age suspension for a further year.

Councillor Burgess asked for an update on:

- Conversations with Transport for London (TfL) in relation to Uber
- The fee structure audit
- The request to treat school transport differently

Julia O'Brien stated that there had been various attempts to engage with TfL, but unfortunately there had been no responses. She agreed to try again to speak with someone.

Moira Fraser stated that the trade had argued that school transport did not operate all year round and as such should be given a discount on their fees. However, it took the same amount of time for Officers to process applications for school transport licences, therefore it was not possible to offer a reduction on fees. Julia O'Brien added that there would be an opportunity to discuss school transport, as part of the policy being considered in January.

In response to comments, Sean Murphy stated that he would work with Officers at a senior level, and the relevant Executive Members to promote the use of Reading's bus lanes by Wokingham drivers.

The Chairman expressed concern that Wokingham was not able to offer a reciprocal arrangement as Wokingham did not have many bus lanes. He also pointed out that Reading was keen to protect the interest of their own drivers and urged Officers to be cautious in relation to this issue.

Moira Fraser stated that she would circulate the audit breakdown of fees which had been submitted to the PPP. Sean Murphy pointed out that this methodology might change when the service moves to Wokingham. David Thrale stated that initially there would be no changes to the methodology as the same computer system would be used.

RESOLVED That;

- 1) The age restriction for vehicles be suspended for a further year;
- 2) Officers would continue to try to communicate with TfL about Uber related issues; and
- 3) Sean Murphy would liaise with senior officers and the relevant Executive Members in relation to the use of Reading bus lanes by registered Wokingham drivers.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.50 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Other Councillors Present

Paul Fishwick
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

49. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Gregor Murray.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen was unable to attend the meeting in person but took part virtually.

Councillor Laura Blumenthal, Deputy Executive Member for Equalities, Poverty, the Arts and Climate Emergency, attended on behalf of Councillor Murray. In accordance with legislation Councillor Blumenthal could speak on any item but was not allowed to vote.

50. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 30 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Leader of Council.

51. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following Executive Members declared general personal interests in the items on the agenda:

- Councillors John Halsall and John Kaiser on the grounds that they were unpaid Non-Executive Directors of Optalis Holdings Ltd;
- Councillors John Kaiser, Stuart Munro and Wayne Smith on the grounds that they were Non-Executive Directors of WBC Holdings Ltd.

52. STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF COUNCIL

The Leader of Council made the following statement:

Since last we met, David Amess has been brutally murdered during a constituency surgery and James Brokenshire lost his battle with cancer. Our thoughts are with their families.

Our hearts also go out to our friend and colleague Gary Cowan in his time of sorrow at the sad loss of Katy, his closest friend, wife and long-time supporter of local democracy.

As the first Council Leader who declared a climate emergency, I am delighted that COP26 will this week address the most important issue facing our world. I am very proud of what we at Wokingham have achieved and will be achieving as our contribution. I hope and pray that there will be tangible outcomes in which we can participate, and which will accelerate our own ambitions.

Covid rates in Wokingham in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs have steadily been increasing, above the national and southeast average. It seems now to be flattening off. The increasing rates have not affected hospital inpatient rates or death rates from Covid-19.

Most cases in England, Berkshire and Wokingham are in the 11- to 18-year-old group who haven't as yet all been vaccinated.

The Delta variant is circulating widely with national restrictions advisory for face coverings, twice weekly LFT testing for those who work or above primary school age, more testing if you are a contact and isolate if you are positive.

West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading were all affected by the apparently high rates of false negatives at the Imensa Laboratory.

What can we do? Vaccination is the most important action to promote. Encourage anyone and everyone who is eligible to have all the vaccinations. Boosters are being offered for all those over 50 or clinically vulnerable, health and social care staff, when they reach six months post the second vaccination. If a resident is due for a vaccination and they have not heard from the GP they can either visit a walk-in site or book an appointment through the national booking site. NHS providers are arranging vaccination of their own staff with social care staff using the National Booking Service.

Young people aged 12 to 18 are being offered one dose of vaccination. These also can be booked via the national booking site. The school immunisation service is visiting all schools in turn to vaccinate 12 to 16-year-olds. There will be a significant number of children unable to attend these due to isolating at home with Covid-19. Catch up clinics are being arranged, and they can access the national booking service. This age group cannot visit a walk-in centre.

Wokingham has above national uptake rates of Covid vaccinations.

The only message is that please use face coverings where encouraged to do so and remain cautious in your contact with others.

We have been notified that we shall be subject to a Ward Boundary Review within Wokingham Borough for elections from 2024. Whilst there are options, what is clear is that our current system will have to change. All Councillors have now been briefed on the process and the Council has some work to do to agree a consensus on the way forward.

The extent to which poor financial management has crippled Slough Borough Council makes horrific reading but emphasises how robust controls and disciplines throughout our organisation are essential.

The administration cannot make spending commitments outside the MTFP without a supplementary estimate. Other Members and Officers need to be aware that any such commitments can only be recommendations to the Executive. We were assessing the budget yesterday and will not really know what it means for us for some time.

In common with many other local authorities, we are experiencing cost pressures arising from an over-heated economy and issues with the supply chain. We are experiencing the pressures most acutely within the construction industry in terms of both material costs and

labour. We will also become exposed to the well-publicised increase in utility costs, in particular gas and electricity.

The Council is largely protected from the increase in energy prices for this financial year as the price of supplies has been locked-in within the terms of the contract and the sustainability of the supplier is confirmed. However, there will be a significant impact on the MTFP which we are in the process of formulating following the annual review of charges in the gas and electricity supply. We estimate the impact to be in the region of £600k. Some of our revenue income lines are becoming increasingly challenging this year as they are dependent upon income from asset construction, and I expect we will have to remove the £700k pa additional income target we initially factored in for the next year. From a broader perspective we will need to keep a close eye on general inflationary pressures across the Council, pressures already alerted by the Bank of England Monetary Committee.

We have already conducted an initial review of our Capital Programme for this year and draft proposed Capital Programme for the next three years. It currently tells us that whilst many of the current works in progress are protected by fixed price contracts, it is highly likely that those not yet tendered will see an increase when future bids are received. We have already identified additional pressures on specific capital items of up to £10 million, and this assumes that where we have general work programmes we will have to stop once the budget has been exhausted. It also assumes that we will not be facing a similar demand-led cost increase in the highways sector, which will be another area to closely watch.

It therefore remains incumbent on us to factor these pressures into our financial planning assumptions and take the necessary measures needed to balance our ever-tightening budgets. Good financial management and rigour has been a hallmark of this Council over many, many years and the coming years will provide yet another test for our capable Officers and Councillors. Regrettably well-meaning spending desires arising from committees and working groups outside of the Executive will have to be considered by Executive in this challenging financial context.

The Oaktree School is suffering a delay in the provision which will impact on pupils and the MTFP.

I am particularly sensitive about the Twyford library project as I have initiated it, negotiated it, arranged for funding and planning permission. I am not surprised by others claiming credit, however concocted, as it is a fabulous project. However, as I have been intimately involved with it, it is necessary that it has the greatest scrutiny. In the meantime, I need to point out that there is still an existing library there which has recently been refurbished.

53. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted.

54. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

54.1 Paul Fishwick asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

At the 17th September 2020 meeting of Council I asked a Member question, Item 65.3 refers, related to the Winter Maintenance Plan.

The Highways Winter Maintenance Plan indicates that it will be reviewed annually. On that basis, what additional walking and cycling routes will be included in the 2021/22 Plan to ensure that these routes are safe and usable throughout the winter period for pedestrians and cyclists?

Answer

The Highways Winter Maintenance Plan has been reviewed as it is each year and considers the following factors:

- Skidding accidents, where freezing conditions have been cited in Thames Valley Police Personal Injury accident reports
- The location of on-road, shared or dedicated cycle routes
- Bus routes
- Known wet spots
- Bridge-decks, viaducts etc.
- Partnership working with the Highways Maintenance Term Contractor, that is Volker Highways, other departments of the Council and other contractors etc.
- Previous snow events and their impact on the Borough and its residents.
- Comments from parish and town councils, Members and residents.
- Requests for additional salt bins from parish and town councils, Members and residents.
- Car parks; and
- Obviously we have looked at Coronavirus as well.

Based on the number of issues identified in relation to cycling and walking in the Borough during the review we have not identified a need to change our existing approach at the current time. The issue we have got is that the low volume of use and nature of cycle routes in the Borough means that salting dedicated routes would not be effective as re-freezing would be likely to occur shortly after application, because the number of cycles using them is not high enough. We will, of course, continue to monitor cycling levels and if routes are identified that would benefit from salting, they will be added to the secondary salting network.

It is worth noting that we have obtained ten small push along gritters which were purchased last year and have really helped to improve our ability to grit the pedestrian areas evenly and efficiently in our town centres and these could be used on dedicated cycle routes as well.

Supplementary Question

The current HGV driver crisis has impacted on the green waste collection service. How will winter maintenance be continued whilst still maintaining other Council services?

Supplementary Answer

I am not sure it is directly connected to the question but I think it was announced today, if not yesterday, that the green waste collection is back to normal and that we have restarted it and I don't foresee any issues with the gritting.

If you have any issues, of course, Paul I would be very happy to hear from you.

54.2 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Looking at the Bus Service Improvement Plan - our new housing estates are filling up with residents and we have bus shelters along the main roads, but as of yet, no bus services to these neighbourhoods.

Understanding that this Council has declared a Climate Emergency, we need good public transport to be an alternative to persuade people out of their cars and that cycling and walking does not work for everyone, especially in bad weather. To be useful, the bus service needs to run in the evenings and at weekends and they were supposed to be available when people started moving in. So, when are we likely to see a regular bus service in these new estates?

Answer

The Bus Service Improvement Plan as you will have seen from tonight's agenda is a high-level strategy, it is not intended to provide detailed amendments and delivery dates for every bus service in the Borough, but you can see from it how much we do actually spend on bus services. It is a considerable amount of money in order to try and encourage people to use bus services and provide appropriate services for them.

Development in Shinfield and Spencer's Wood has already been provided with additional bus services to serve new homes in Croft Gardens and the Thames Valley Science Park. In North Wokingham the 121 service was amended to re-route the bus through Mulberry Grove using S106 funding to cover the costs. Both bus services have developer funding until 2026 to try and establish commercially sustainable services, although the pandemic has had a significant impact on passenger levels and growth.

Currently passenger recovery rates are 65% of the pre-Covid level, bus services need to recover before new services are added. Adding new services when passenger demand is low results in high operational costs and low on-board revenue. Ultimately, where passenger demand is low there is a risk that developer funding will be exhausted before the service can be established so we need to try and introduce it at the right time so that it has got a chance to be established before we run out of developer funding because the last thing we want is to have to withdraw a service because it is not viable at the end of the developer funding.

Bus services for new developments will be addressed as part of the Enhanced Partnership agreement. The Enhanced Partnership agreement will provide greater detail on the frequency and days of operation of bus services along with commitments to delivery dates. The agreement will be available on 1st April 2022. As you will see we have some pretty ambitious targets in terms of improving the bus services, improving integration, improving fares, improving ticketing and really actually making the bus services as good as we can.

Supplementary Question

It is good to know that you are at least thinking about bus services and I realise that it is not a complete thing yet and it is good to know that they are improving.

The thing we have in Wokingham is that there really isn't a very good evening bus service, everything sort of stops about 8pm. I believe the last bus to Woosehill leaves town at 19:05 and if you were a commuter coming out from London that is a little bit early for you. Also, if you are living on Finchampstead Road there is no bus service. In Barkham, I think, the last bus is about 8pm.

If we want people to leave their cars at home this is kind of crucial to the climate emergency; to provide an alternate public transport service that people can choose so that they don't use their cars. I would really like to know what is the plan, particularly in the run-up to Christmas and when there is poor weather? What are the alternatives we are providing for people other than using their cars, particularly in Wokingham?

Supplementary Answer

I agree with you Imogen, my profession is transport and one of the things that is very clear from transport theory and reality is that the more frequent you have services and the more convenient they are, for where people want to go, the more people use them. That is undoubtedly correct, but we do have to get to a position where the bus services are viable and economic.

As you see the Bus Service Improvement Plan will roll out things we have been talking about. Things like the bus service to Winnersh Triangle station which shuts off too early for anybody using it for commuter purposes. Those sorts of things are important to try and see if we can work with Reading Buses, and other bus providers, to make sure that we get services that match, as much as possible, the desire so that they get more passengers, we get more usage and in the end we provide a bus service that is viable. I think that is the key message.

So, I am on the same page as you as far as frequency and timing is concerned but we cannot afford to spend unlimited amounts of money on buses unfortunately. We already spend £810k a year on supporting bus services. We spend almost £1m on concessionary fares and we also spend over a £100k towards community transport and volunteer services. We also spend about £400k from S106 on supporting bus services. These are very significant amounts of money. John has given a very good summary of where the finances of the Council are. We need to get these bus services frequent, and we also need to get them viable so that they are operable and provide the bus companies with a revenue that means that they can continue to deliver them.

55. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FY2021/22 - QUARTER TWO

The Executive considered a report setting out the expenditure for the second quarter of the current financial year and the forecast outturn positions for the Council's net revenue expenditure, its General Fund Balance, the Housing Revenue Account and the School's Block funding.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing advised that in addition to the financial challenges mentioned in the Leader of Council's earlier statement there were also pressure on the schools' budgets and the areas covered by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which had a forecast overspend of £9.6m. This figure was likely to rise because of the increase in pension contributions for school staff and the much-deserved salary

increase for teachers. The Council would also have to bear the increase in gas and electricity costs, which was estimated to be in the region of £500k. Councillor Kaiser advised that efforts were being made to reduce the deficit in the Dedicated Schools Grant through the provision of a SEND school, Oaktree. Unfortunately, the DfE had advised that they would be postponing this provision which had the effect of costing the Council £1m pa until the provision was available.

Councillor Kaiser also highlighted the end of September position and the forecast overspend of the revenue budget, as set out in the report, and pointed out that the overspend was only 0.3% of the initial budget, and half of that was due to Covid. In addition, Councillor Kaiser drew attention to the two supplementary estimate requests and the reasons for them.

In relation to the deficit in the DSG Councillor Munro queried whether the deficit would increase year on year, particularly as the Council was responsible for the provision of services but did not have any authority over academies etc? Councillor Kaiser explained that because the DSG was outside the Council's revenue account the deficit could increase year on year but at some point, accountability for it would be required. The Government had stated that more money would be available for schools however it was unknown whether this would assist in reducing this deficit.

Given the importance of the new homes bonus to the Council Councillor Smith queried whether the Council should be taking the matter up with the relevant Government department? Councillor Halsall confirmed that he had alerted the four local MPs to the Council's financial situation including the impact of increased gas and electricity costs, the DSG, the new homes bonus and also the Health and Social Care Bill.

Councillor Kaiser commented that although there were a number of pressures the Council was still in a strong financial position, including having a high level of non-specific usable revenue reserves.

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), as illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report, be noted;
- 3) a supplementary estimate of £151,270 for the Equalities and Diversity programme be approved;
- 4) a supplementary estimate of £250,000 for the re-integration of Trading Standards and Environmental Health to WBC be approved. This money was identified in last year's Medium Term Financial Plan to be spent in 2022/23 however the project costs are forecast to now be spent in 2021/22 rather than 2022/23.

56. CAPITAL MONITORING 2021-22 - QUARTER 2

The Executive considered a report setting out the progress made by the Council in delivering its capital programme in the current financial year and the position as at the end of the second quarter.

The Executive Member for Finance and Housing went through the report and reminded the meeting that the capital budget was used to deliver a large number of projects including roads, schools etc. Councillor Kaiser went on to explain the underspend of £8.1m, which had been achieved through budget savings that had been identified in a number of areas, as set out in the report.

Councillor Kaiser drew Members' attention to the fact that the Public Loans Board was currently consulting on changes to their methodology for lending money and this may result in implications for the Council.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the proposed rephrasing to the Capital Programme following the 'in-year' review, as set out in paragraph 3 and Appendix B, be noted and approved. There is no financial / service impact from the reprofiling of budgets into 2022/2023;
- 2) the position of the Capital Programme at the end of Quarter 2 (to 30 September 2021), as summarised in the report below and set out in detail in Appendix A, be noted;
- 3) the successful application for external funding of £98k, for allocation to new capital schemes to put in place a heat decarbonisation plan for four Leisure Centres, Bulmershe Secondary School and Waterford House (as set out in paragraph 7 of the report) be noted.

57. BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP)

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which sets out the Council's high-level ambition for future bus services to meet local need.

During her introduction the Executive Member for Highways and Transport explained that this was the next phase of the BSIP which was being driven by a statutory timetable and was required to maintain the Council's current bus service funding from the Government. This phase required the Council to produce and approve a BSIP, which was a high level document that contained some aspirational and ambitious policies, by 31 October 2021. It was noted that discussions had been held with bus companies and other providers to find out the extent of transport that was available in the Borough and what these providers intended to include in their improvement plans.

Councillor Jorgensen advised that by having a BSIP the Council would be able to bid for future funding opportunities as part of the £3bn transitional plan for bus services and other funding may be available based on how ambitious it was felt the BSIP was. The intention was to enable local bus services to recover to pre-pandemic levels and then facilitate continued growth in bus passenger numbers as well as providing the right level of bus provision in the right place that would support continuous economic growth of the whole Borough and the wider Thames Valley region. To this end the Council would be looking at

end to end routes rather than between individual towns and villages. Improving accessibility to transport services and local bus networks and achieving a greener bus network to provide an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions was also due to be considered.

Councillor Jorgensen further advised that the BSIP also included some ambitious targets in relation to journey times, punctuality, passenger growth and customer satisfaction. The delivery policies contained in the BSIP, and set out in the report, were also highlighted.

RESOLVED: That it be agreed that Wokingham Borough Council publish the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) document by 31 October 2021.

58. COMMUNITY DELIBERATIVE PROCESS FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY PROPOSAL

The Executive considered a report setting out a proposal for the delivery of a Community Deliberative Process for Climate Emergency.

The Deputy Executive Member for Equalities, Poverty, the Arts and Climate Emergency introduced the report and reminded the meeting that the Executive had previously decided to engage local residents and businesses in a community deliberative process for the climate emergency. After extensive review a proposal had been developed, as set out in the report.

Councillor Blumenthal confirmed the importance of constantly engaging with residents to get the behaviour change that would be required for the Borough to be net zero carbon by 2030 and this involved listening to their needs, concerns and ambitions. The proposal had been designed to enable the Council to engage with a diverse range of people across the Borough and it was intended that residents would start engaging with the deliberative process in the new year.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the proposal to deliver a Community Deliberative Process for the Climate Emergency through deliberative peer groups and e-panels to engage the community with the Council's response to climate change be approved;
- 2) £46,000 be approved to fund the delivery of Community Deliberative Process for the Climate Emergency as described in the proposal (as set out in Appendix A to the report);
- 3) the key objectives and outcomes of the process for wider engagement with the community to empower stakeholders including but not limited to, Wokingham Borough residents, young people, community groups and the business community to play as full a role as possible in achieving a net-zero carbon borough by 2030 be noted;
- 4) that it be noted that the outcomes and recommendations from the process will be taken to Council next year with the commitment that their feasibility will be explored by Officers. Officers will report back to Council to inform which recommendations will be incorporated into the Climate Emergency Action Plan to support further action.

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