

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2021 FROM 7.30 PM TO 10.35 PM**

**Members Present**

Councillors: Keith Baker (Mayor), Abdul Loyes (Deputy Mayor), Sam Akhtar, Parry Batth, Rachel Bishop-Firth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Shirley Boyt, Jenny Cheng, Rachel Burgess, Stephen Conway, Phil Cunnington, Peter Dennis, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, John Halsall, Jim Frewin, David Hare, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Graham Howe, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Sarah Kerr, Tahir Maher, Morag Malvern, Charles Margetts, Rebecca Margetts, Adrian Mather, Andrew Mickleburgh, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray, Barrie Patman, Jackie Rance, Angus Ross, Daniel Sargeant, Ian Shenton, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Caroline Smith, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane and Alison Swaddle

**Members In Attendance Virtually**

Councillors: Anne Chadwick, Carl Doran, Maria Gee, Guy Grandison, Pauline Jorgensen, Simon Weeks and Shahid Younis

**54. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Prue Bray and Gary Cowan.

**55. Minute's Silence**

The Council observed a Minute's Silence in memory of Sir David Amess.

**56. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

Clive Jones commented that the Minutes did not include the response from the Leader of the Council to Mr Meadowcroft's supplementary question, and referred to 4.2.9.9 of the Council's Constitution. It was clarified that this rule applied to questions submitted in advance of the meeting and not to supplementary questions asked during the meeting.

Jim Frewin referred to the supplementary answer provided to his question. The Executive Member had agreed to return with an action plan regarding the SEND school. Jim Frewin asked that this be reflected. *Note: following the meeting it was clarified that an action plan had been requested but the Executive Member had not specifically indicated that it would be provided.*

**57. Declarations of Interest**

The following Members declared a general personal interest relating to items on the Agenda:

Councillor John Kaiser declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that he was a

Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Stuart Munro declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Wayne Smith declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of WBC Holdings Ltd.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes.

Councillor John Halsall declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis.

## **58. Statements by Group Leaders regarding Carol Cammiss, Director Children's Services**

### **John Halsall, Leader of the Council:**

I think it is Derby's gain for our loss. Carol Cammiss came to Wokingham Borough Council just over three years ago, initially on an interim contract. Her talents were quickly recognised, and she was promoted to being a Director of Children's Services. Carol has been a force of nature. She has transformed a position where the Borough has been an Ofsted level of 'Requires Improvement' to being 'Good' in provision of SEND services. She reorganised staff to greatly reduce the number of interim staff. In the meantime, she has created an environment where people want to come and work in our Children's Services at Wokingham. Carol has stewarded Children's Services during the pandemic which has had an enormous impact on our educational system, as we all know from our residents. Carol has overseen continuity of education to our 22,000 school children, against many different challenges. She has worked tirelessly to put our schools together, and work together to get children vaccinated, which has meant considerable work for our health partners, organising delivery of jabs. Carol has started new initiatives such as a division addressing mental health needs. She has chaired and represented Wokingham on boards, with our partners on health and wellbeing and our partnered staff. All this she has done with great energy, great intellect, and force of application, to ensure that there has been consistent delivery. Carol has an understanding of what it takes to be a true Director, providing leadership, architecting structure and motivation to all those around her, as well as attention to budgetary control. My Executive Member for Children's Services has appreciated Carol's ability to be frank, objective, and have the mindset to get things done. All of those who have come into contact with Carol, have seen her demonstrate openness, integrity, a willingness to be challenged in order to get the best for the children. Carol leaves a very positive legacy upon which her successor and team can build. Carol is deservedly moving to a bigger job in Derby, and we are sure that her talents will carry her through to bigger roles beyond that. Carol, we wish you all the best for the future and wherever that takes you and thank you for what you have done for us.

### **Clive Jones, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group:**

Sadly, we are losing Carol, our Director of Children's Services, in just a few days' time. She will be leaving for pastures new and an authority that is somewhat bigger

than Wokingham. All of the Liberal Democrat councillors wish her well in her new role. She has done an absolutely fantastic job, turning around the department which had been struggling for a number of years, and could prior to her arrival, have been taken over at any time by Ofsted. Under her calm, clear, confident, and determined leadership, things have been changed for the better, and she leaves us in a much better place than she found us. We are grateful for what she has done for Wokingham Borough Council and our residents, and we wish her well in her new role.

**Rachel Burgess, Leader of the Labour Group:**

I would like to echo my fellow councillors' comments and thank Carol. She has made a fantastic contribution in her three years with us. She has really made a difference to Children's Services, so thanks to Carol and we wish her all the best with her future endeavours in Derby.

**Jim Frewin, Leader of the Independent Group:**

In my short time as a Councillor, I have had very little contact with Carol, but my esteemed Independent colleague, Gary Cowan, and my predecessor as Leader of the Independent Group, Richard Dolinski, both hold her in great respect. I can think of no higher accolade so thank you very much.

Carol Cammiss thanked Members for their kind words.

**59. Mayor's Announcements**

There were no Mayor's Announcements.

**60. Public Question Time**

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

**60.1 Nicholas Marshall asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to technical problems Mr Marshall was unable to be connected to the meeting and therefore the following written answer was provided:**

**Question:**

As a cyclist I am acutely aware of the parlous state of our roads, constantly obliged to stare at the road ahead - scanning for cracks and holes in order to avoid injury to myself and damage to my wheels. Anyone observing a garden can see the effects of excessive dry spells, leading to shrinkage of the ground, whilst periods of saturating rainfall causes swelling and warping. Applied to the highway, it's clear that the increasing intensity of climactic conditions is putting stress on the road layer.

Variations in the water table cause heave and shrinkage. Water ingress and freezing obviously compound the problem. It's becoming increasingly clear that climate change is a factor because even recently constructed pathways and cycle tracks are degrading rapidly, which cannot be ascribed to the burden of heavy traffic.

My question is what policies has the Council formulated to relieve stress on the existing highways, to ensure new construction meets climate change proofed standards and for seeking alternatives to an over reliance on road-based distribution?

**Answer:**

The Council has in recent years substantially increased investment in planned structural maintenance of its road network. Prior to 2019 the Council spent approximately £2.1 million on planned maintenance each year whereas we are now averaging just under £6 million per year and have plans to continue this level of investment in future years. As a result of this approach, we have seen an improvement in our road condition, and we are currently in top third of local authorities in terms of road condition.

Alongside this investment the Council is currently developing an updated Local Transport Plan which we will be consulting on in 2022 and will ask residents where they think our focus should be in future. Further to this, we are in the process of producing a number of new documents and plans that will also shape the future of Transport in the Borough; including a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) a Low Carbon Transport Strategy and an EV Charging strategy.

The Council also runs an Innovation Forum in partnership with our term contractors Volker Highways and WSP that looks at new ways of working including the latest materials, you may be aware that we trialled plastic kerb stones last year. We are aware through this group of a number of new surfacing materials such as plastic roads and will consider running trials where and when it is appropriate to do so.

**60.2 Andy Croy asked the Leader of the Council the following question:  
Question:**

In December 2019, before the pandemic, 2,641 households in Wokingham Borough were in receipt of Universal Credit.

The latest provisional figures, for May 2021, show 6,547 households in receipt of Universal Credit. It should be remembered that prior to the pandemic, over 40% of households in receipt of Universal Credit contained one or more people in work.

Since May, the opening up of the economy will have reduced the number of households receiving Universal Credit. Assuming 5,000 of the Borough's least well-off households are still in receipt of Universal Credit, the recent £20 a week cut to Universal Credit will have taken £100,000 per week out of the budgets of our poorest families - at a single stroke increasing the levels of poverty experienced by thousands and thousands of families in our Borough.

What formal representations has Wokingham Borough Council made to the Borough's four Members of Parliament to stress the need to maintain or restore the £20 a week Universal Credit uplift?

**Answer:**

The Council, along with our voluntary and community sector partners are developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy to help address the hardships faced by residents in the Borough on the back of the Covid 19 pandemic. This strategy works alongside the Recovery Strategy and the Equalities Plan in addressing the challenges faced by residents: tackling inequality.

The development of this strategy is underpinned by a Cross Party Working Group, and is being co-designed, co-produced and co-delivered with our VCS partners and their continued engagement and contribution is critical to delivery of the strategy over the five years.

According to the latest information provided by the DWP to the Council, there are 3,630 Wokingham residents in receipt of Universal Credit, of which 1,427 are on Council Tax Support. This information, along with insights identified by working with VCS groups, has been and continues to be crucial for ensuring that we understand how best to support our residents. The support has included the allocation of numerous forms of financial assistance to those who have suffered financial hardship throughout the course of the pandemic.

Addressing hardship across the Borough is a key priority for me and I see this strategy as a tangible step on the journey, to not only understand the needs of our residents, but to also make clear commitments about how we as a local authority, in conjunction with our VCS partners can work together to make a real difference to local people's lives.

As you know I have been actively lobbying Government, particularly since the onset of the pandemic, to get the best deal for Wokingham residents and I will continue to do so.

**Supplementary Question:**

That sounds like no, and I have to say I am quite stunned that the Borough has not made any formal representation about the scoring of Universal Credit. The Borough's Anti Poverty Strategy, such as it is, is going to be totally inadequate in terms of making up for the loss of £20 a week uplift, is it not?

**Supplementary Answer:**

The Council is working in partnership with the VCS to develop an Anti-Poverty strategy that will help address the hardships faced by residents in the Borough on the back of the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Council is working in conjunction with the Voluntary and Community sector to ensure the strategy meets the current and future needs of our residents.

As part of this work, the Council is working closely with VCS groups to ensure the Household Support Grant can support those most in need over the coming weeks and months. For example, the provision of food vouchers for families in receipt of Free School Meals in school holidays, this includes the recent October half term and the upcoming Christmas, February and Easter breaks.

The Council and VCS are also working in partnership to ensure the Household

Support Grant is used to reduce the impact of rising fuel prices through a targeted support model, which includes working with residents to provide advice and help as residents need it during the winter months.

### 61. Petitions

The following Member presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

The Mayor's decision as to the action to be taken is set out against the petition.

Rachel Burgess	<p>Rachel Burgess presented a petition asking for a Safer Crossing at the Rectory Road and Wiltshire Road junction containing 66 signatures.</p> <p><b><i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport</i></b></p>
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### 62. Adoption of the Statement of Gambling Principles

The Council considered a report regarding the Adoption of the Statement of Gambling Principles.

It was proposed by Barrie Patman and seconded by Norman Jorgensen that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

Rachel Bishop Firth commented that it was unfortunate that the Council could not go further in the way in which it regulated gambling in the Borough due to restrictions by central Government. She commented that some councils were going further to limit the negative impact of gambling, training council officers on what they could do to ensure that gambling operators followed the law, strengthening the prevention of underage gambling and promoting gambling self-exclusion schemes. In addition, some Health and Wellbeing Boards had developed strategic approaches to problem gambling.

Chris Smith sought further explanation of gaming machine categories A, B, C and D. It was indicated that this information would need to be provided by the Licensing Team, and then circulated to Members.

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations in the report were approved. The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar		Keith Baker
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		

Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Graham Howe		
Clive Jones		
Norman Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Sarah Kerr		
Abdul Loyes		
Tahir Maher		
Morag Malvern		
Charles Margetts		
Rebecca Margetts		
Adrian Mather		
Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Barrie Patman		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		

**RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the Statement of Gambling Principles and the consultation responses received, be considered;
- 2) the Statement be approved for adoption and publication by the 31st January 2022.

**63. Member Question Time**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Mayor invited Members to submit

questions to the appropriate Members.

**63.1 Rachel Bishop-Firth asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**

**Question:**

I have a question about our garden waste disposal.

We have an increasing number of homes being built with small gardens but have just one standard garden bin size which is 240 litres. For those with small gardens this is difficult to store and would take a long time to fill, which is why in some other Council areas, this is the largest garden bin size available.

We also have the brown bags for garden waste, but for those with the smallest gardens these disintegrate before they are full. I have had a resident raise with me that those with arthritis find these bags very hard to use.

Other councils have services which better suit residents with small gardens. For example, Braintree District Council issues bins in 140 litre and 180 litre sizes as well as a 240 litre garden bin for those with the largest gardens.

What steps has Wokingham Borough Council taken to look at how we can best handle garden waste disposal for residents who have smaller gardens?

**Answer**

I totally agree with you and acknowledge that there are smaller gardens in the Borough, especially in newer developments. I will therefore undertake a feasibility assessment of smaller bins for the collection of garden waste over the winter period and all being well these will be rolled out in 2022/23.

**Supplementary Question:**

I am really pleased to hear that steps are now being taken on behalf of those who live in more modest homes. We know that residents who have arthritis have reported struggling with the green bags, which were introduced without consultation with residents. What steps will be taken in the process this time to consider residents who have medical conditions or a disability?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Assisted help is available for those that need it, and all you have to do is ask.

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

**Question:**

Decentralising renewable energy generation is key to us decarbonising energy in order to reduce demand on the grid. We are pleased that this Council has agreed with the Lib Dems and enacted the requests made in the Lib Dem motion supporting the Local Electricity Bill, which is a start.

More needs to be done, and we need to help residents install solar PV on their own

properties. Many households do not have large amounts of disposable income and it is quite daunting with many cowboy installers out there.

Local authorities up and down the country have been working with an organisation called Solar Together. Solar Together is a group-buying scheme for solar PV and battery storage. It helps make this technology more accessible and more affordable. Local authorities work with Solar Together to promote the scheme in the area. Homeowners register their interest; the company organises a reverse auction and installers are pre-vetted. Residents then get their personal recommendation and are asked if they wish to accept the recommendation or not.

This is a simple thing to do to enable more of our residents to generate their own renewable energy. Will this Council commit to enabling a scheme like this for our residents?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question, Sarah and in short, subject to due diligence, the answer is yes.

The Council has been exploring the Solar Together scheme since June 2021 as an opportunity to encourage residents to install solar panels and solar batteries in their homes. Residents living in one of the participating council areas and who own their own house can register for the Solar Together group-buying scheme. This increases the bargaining power to ensure the most competitive offer from the pre-vetted suppliers available. The scheme also guarantees the quality of the suppliers as they have to go through a detailed assessment process. The scheme thus provides a more affordable price for good quality installations, reduces energy bills and carbon emissions of residents taking part, while increasing the number of PV's across the Borough.

However, for the scheme to be viable, it must be delivered by partnering with other local authorities to achieve the demand needed to attract a suitable and competitive offer from providers. Essentially the scheme operates on a direct marketing approach to homeowners and requires in the region of 100,000 homeowners to be targeted to generate the take-up required. This means that to take advantage of the scheme the Council will need to work with other local authorities to achieve the critical mass to make the scheme viable. Officers are currently engaging with the Energy Hub and with Berkshire neighbours to identify opportunities to collaborate and set up the scheme. There is significant interest in taking this forward, but it will take some time to align timescales and approval processes in each participating local authority.

Over the last year, the Council has been exploring other schemes that will help us address the challenges of future energy capacity, retrofitting, and generating more renewable energy locally, to mention some:

- We have spoken with Lendology, a not-for-profit lender that works with homeowners to fund home repairs and improvements;
- We have also spoken with Retrofitworks;
- I have had initial conversations with an organisation called Raleigh and another call In Range, and we have also worked to set up a Community Energy Fund.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you for saying that this will be taken forward. It would be good to be kept updated on the progress. Have you got any plans specifically for low-income home owners that would like to look at reducing their energy costs through having their own renewable energy?

**Supplementary Answer:**

We have a trial in place at the moment in one of the social houses across in Stuart Munro's ward, Riseley. That trial is ongoing at the moment. There are residents living in the house. We have installed solar PVs. We have installed an air source heat pump and batteries. We are using it as a test bed and other authorities are interested in the trial results. We need the trial to run a little bit longer at the moment, as we need to see how it impacts energy use over the winter, and what the net impact of solar generated over the summer has to offset energy use over the winter.

We are also looking at what we can do with the housing stock that we have. We have 2,500 owned houses across the Borough, and we are looking at opportunities that we can do with them. Some of the organisations that I have spoken to, Raleigh in particular, have a scheme that is live at the moment, particularly focused on housing stock for low-income families.

**63.3 Stephen Conway asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:****Question:**

Will the Executive Member for Finance provide the Council with details of the current shortfall in funding for Twyford's new library? At the Executive meeting on 30 September, the item relating to the lease for the new library was pulled at the last minute on the grounds that rising costs necessitated a 'pause' to review the budget. I would like to know how much the project costs are likely to exceed the already agreed budget so I can better understand what needs to be done to address the problem?

**Answer:**

The budget agreed in the MTFP was £720k and the estimated costs of the works calculated following the post tender return update was just over £1million. This represents an increase of almost 40%, which as you know, is why the 'pause' was introduced. As a responsible Council that takes our financial management very seriously, as you and others would no doubt expect. I did say that I would do all in my power to ensure that the Council looked at the problem to enable early delivery of the library, and as a result we are seeking to contain costs and bridge the gap through value re-engineering and exploring income generation opportunity from the overall site, which you will be glad to know does not involve the disposal of any of the Council's assets, quite the contrary. It will provide enhanced facilities for the residents of Twyford and deliver additional income to help provide a sustainable and valuable asset, which the new library would no doubt become. It is my intention that the outcome of this work will be presented to Executive in January 2022 for consideration, which will also include the delivery of a suitable lease.

**Supplementary Question:**

Will you agree to meet with me, either face to face or via Teams, to discuss some ideas that I have for bridging the funding gap?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Yes, I am quite happy to do that. The work is ongoing. I can assure you that we are almost there.

**63.4 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:****Question:**

I wish to acknowledge the professionalism of our Borough's Civil Parking Enforcement team. They are a key part in the strategy to help manage parking and crucially, in many locations, such as outside schools, to help make our streets safer. Some initiatives have helped to address parking related safety issues. But all around the Borough serious problems continue. Regrettably, the often-heard phrase 'an accident waiting to happen' remains all too true in many locations. Could the Executive Member for Highways please outline the Borough's strategies and tactics for tackling this issue – including timings for actions?

**Answer**

It is a bit difficult to be specific as I am not entirely clear of the locations being referred to here, but certainly I and the Traffic Management Team and the Road Safety Team would be interested in hearing of any specific locations and problems. A lot of the problems are specific to individual schools and individual roads, so if you can give us some actual examples, we will be delighted to dig into them, and see what we can do to reduce the risk.

We are aware of some issues with parking and as you say we have been proactively trying to manage these and keep our children safe. I can also remind you that we can target our Parking Enforcement guys to particular areas. I recently targeted them at Hawkedon School and Loddon School for example, where we were having problems with parking that was causing a danger to children. If you can report these to us or the Parking Enforcement guys, we will be happy to adjust the schedule so that they can visit particular schools and particular risk areas.

As you can appreciate, we have to depend on the expertise and experience of our officers, and as you have said they are very good. That needs to be used to prioritise schemes and we need to address those locations where there is a collision history first before looking at those where others feel there may be one in future. There is plenty of things we can do. We can put in parking restrictions. We have already done that around Loddon School recently and we have put in some speed limiting chicanes around Hillside School. We have also put barriers in to stop children running in the road, but this is a very specific answer to a very specific problem.

**Supplementary Question:**

I will certainly get back to you with specific locations in Earley, and I appreciate why your answer does refer to the specificity of a lot of the questions. I am very

interested in whether any of the following potential measures have been evaluated and decided upon, for instance converting many of the single and double yellow lines outside schools to 'No loading' zones, taking effective action to considerably reduce the length of time it still takes to get Traffic Regulation Orders. This took about two years outside Loddon School. Any plans for the use of fixed or mobile CCTV cameras, such as those used in Reading, to identify offenders, whether the pre Covid trial to try to change behaviour in parking is going to be followed up. Have any of these been evaluated and decided upon?

**Supplementary Answer:**

Quite a few of those have been addressed. We were about to try fixed and mobile CCTV enforcement when Covid hit, and we will certainly be picking it up as the pandemic passes. We had to stop it as we had to prioritise work in other areas. The TRO timescales have had a lot of work on them, and we have set a TRO timetable where the TRO's will be done on a regular cadence and restrictions will be put in the next TRO that is ready to go, rather than what was happening before, where we were continually putting new things into a TRO and driving the timescale back. It is a much better process now. I have not looked in detail at 'No Loading' and I will look at that and take that away.

**63.5 Jim Frewin asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question:**

As Members are aware in the past few years Shinfield has been subjected to significant development on what was a semi-rural community. Some of the key routes are still on semi-rural roads and others widely recognised as needing uplift due to significant safety concerns arising from the increased traffic levels.

As one example, in 2008 it was recognised that the junction between Church Lane and Basingstoke Road required 'uplift'. This was approved some 6 years later in 2014, as part of various local area development conditions. We are still waiting, nearly 14 years. In my short time as a Councillor, residents, and Councillors have been promised at least four dates for work to commence, others tell me it is many more than this.

All have been missed, the latest being Summer 2021. We are now being led to believe early 2022 but understandably we have little trust in this. There are multiple other areas of highway safety concern, especially in the areas adjacent to our schools. Hyde End Lane being one prime example.

My question is when will this Council give priority to the safety of Shinfield school children and other Shinfield residents by actually delivering what they promise, when they promise?

**Answer:**

The Council takes the safety of all residents very seriously, particularly the vulnerable; however, there are no infrastructure improvements planned for Hyde End Lane. In the case of the Church Lane/Basingstoke Road junction improvement, the Council is not the deliverer as the work, as you know, it is for Taylor Wimpey and we

have been pressing the developers to complete the works. We cannot complete them. They have to be done by the person who is responsible, and unfortunately you cannot force developers to finish work at a particular time. We are pressing them hard, understand the problem, but it is not something we can really do ourselves.

Whilst there have, as you say, been delays in progress, following the compliance initiatives the developer is due to award a contract for the work towards the end of this month for the scheme's delivery. The Council is working with the developer to ensure planning obligations are completed and we are expecting commencement as soon as possible and we will be happy to apply pressure to secure compliance.

**Supplementary Question:**

Given the direction of the Local Plan update, trust in councils delivering what we promised is important to residents, especially Shinfield, where we are patiently waiting for developers to provide us with promised sports pitches and a supermarket, a supermarket that is so long overdue, it is now being rebranded and promised again under a different planning application. My supplementary question is, how will this Council reassure all residents, and especially Shinfield residents, that what we promise during planning will be delivered?

**Supplementary Answer:**

I cannot really answer a question on planning. It is obviously a question for someone else, but I can assure you that I am very happy, as you know, to come and talk to residents. I have been talking to quite a few residents over the last few months in Shinfield, and I believe that we have actually found some sensible solutions to some of the problems that they have outlined. So, I am very happy to again come with you and meet residents to talk about any highways problems that they have got and what we can do to fix them.

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

**Question:**

Why were 60 houses in Woodward Close not included in the traffic modelling for the Winnersh relief road when it was done for the SEND school and the 83 homes proposed by the Council behind the school?

**Answer:**

I am uncertain which 60 houses are referred to in this question, and I understand Officers have been trying to get clarification from you via email. In the absence of a response, I have the following comments regarding traffic modelling and the relationship with the consented and emerging proposals.

As every case must be considered on its merits at the time an application is determined; any necessary mitigation will be identified and addressed for that proposal at that time. Any future Local Plan proposals which are not adopted as policy at the time an application is determined could not be factored in without showing predetermination, nor indeed would the details be fully known for an assessment to be made in any event. In a nutshell the current time must consume

its own smoke and the future remains speculation which cannot be addressed unless there is an adopted policy.

The Winnersh Relief Road and associated road projects have all been assessed in line with the adopted Core Strategy and any committed development at the time of assessment for planning. This is a benefit of having a Local Plan as it allows assessments to consider allocations proposed, and for the opportunity to assess traffic impacts on a strategic scale rather than on a piecemeal basis. Following the Executive decision on Friday associated with the emerging Local Plan, we can begin to consider the potential for proposed draft policy allocations in line with the emerging strategy. It has not been possible until that information is available, for us to consider, subject to confirmation through the plan making process.

**Supplementary Question:**

You do realise that I am asking about the traffic modelling and not necessarily the Plan, and therefore it should have gone to Highways and not to you? It is 1-58 Woodward Close, as I told you, and the two named houses and the lower numbers of Woodward Close, and they were not included in that. Where are you planning on putting these houses since it is overwhelming the Winnersh Relief Road roundabout and how were you planning on getting the people in and out of Woodward Close in the process?

**Supplementary Answer:**

If you have any concerns, please raise them when we start the consultation next week. I presume you are referring to Winnersh Farms, and they will be addressed by the Officers.

**63.7 Michael Firmager asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question:**

At the junction of Sonning Lane and the A4 there have recently been a couple of accidents. Thankfully there have been no fatalities. This is a particularly dangerous road.

Please can you advise the number of accidents there since the year 2000 and what safety measures can be taken?

**Answer:**

A total of 17 personal injury collisions were reported by Thames Valley Police in the past 21 years, 4 of which involved serious injury with the remaining 13 reported as slight injury. As the elected member for Sonning states, thankfully none have resulted in a fatal injury.

Road safety benefits are the result of consistent and formal appraisal, coupled with targeted investment at those locations where interventions can make a difference. The formal appraisal of Local Safety Schemes sites is based upon a period on the five most recent years of data, and this shows that in this case only one 1 serious injury collision was reported in 2016 and there have been none since. Consequently, this junction would not be a location that would be prioritised as

needing any specific intervention, with too few collisions to determine if an engineering intervention should be implemented.

It is worth noting that the A4 Bath Road should not be regarded as a dangerous road. The section of A4 in Wokingham, between the Reading and Maidenhead boundaries, carries over 20,000 thousand vehicles each day including freight, commuter and leisure traffic and yet saw the number of serious collisions more than halved in a recent three-year study period (2015-18). The traffic safety on the section of this route within Wokingham is one of the most improved routes in the country, according to a 2020 report from the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) which undertakes annual Crash Risk Mapping across the country's strategic (SRN) and major (MRN) roads.

The reason for this improvement stem from a combination of minor improvement schemes and signing/lining measures, as well as our highway maintenance activities such as resurfacing, and winter maintenance implemented in the study period.

We will of course continue to monitor the safety record of this junction and prioritise it for a formal appraisal should the number of incidents increase significantly.

**Supplementary Question:**

One of the accidents, a young lad, suffered a double broken leg, and I would consider that a pretty dangerous incident, a life changing event for that poor boy, so I do not really recognise that particularly. I want to drag it out a bit more about the road. Are you able to give more details on the number of accidents and measures taken for the rest of the A4, not just that particular junction as well? They are all kind of linked. Warren Road is another, there is so many of them, South Drive, so many along that road which are potential death traps really.

**Supplementary Answer:**

I do not have that data to hand. I do not have statistics for that whole road, but I will be happy to get them for you. I think what you have got to remember is that the volume of traffic on that road is very significant, and sometimes where roads feel unsafe because of the volume of traffic, they are actually, in proportion to the amount of traffic, safer than you might think, but I will certainly find the statistics. I will ask Officers to respond to you. We can have a chat about any particular concerns you have following that.

**63.8 Sam Akhtar asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities the following question:**

**Question:**

Residents in my ward have complained of fireworks being let off at unsociable hours last week. Myself and a number of residents were woken up on a weekday at 3am by the loud bangs from these fireworks. What is the local authority doing to clamp down on this sort of behaviour?

**Answer:**

In England and Wales, enforcement of firework law is split with the enforcement for; retail and wholesale storage, safety, and prohibition of sales to minors, falling under

local authorities. Unreasonably late or child use of fireworks fall under the Police.

Firework usage should cease by 11pm and except for :

- Midnight – Guy Fawkes Night
- 1am – the night of Chinese New Year, Diwali, and New Year's Eve

Long standing arrangements for dealing with anti-social behaviour by the Council is currently restricted to weekly office hours, with little or no service available in the evenings or at weekends, when anti-social behaviour more frequently occurs.

From April 2022, the Council will launch a 7 day a week ASB service, which will provide evening, weekend, and Bank Holiday capacity for dealing with anti-social behaviour. The new service will enable a much more coordinated prioritised and mutually supportive arrangement for issues of public concern, such as this, outside of officer hours. I very much intend that the new service will be able to quickly respond to a greater number of issues that are of concern to local people, and in many cases bring about a speedier resolution.

#### **64. Minutes of Committee Meetings and Ward Matters**

##### **64.1 Maria Gee asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

###### **Question:**

During the Full Council meeting on 19 November 2020, I brought forward a Motion for a comprehensive policy on A Boards and other pavement obstructions, because in Wokingham Town Centre, which is predominantly Wescott ward, there was a problem for pedestrians, especially the users of wheelchairs and those with sight impairments. At that time Councillor Jorgensen felt that the existing policy was adequate, but the Council would expand that policy to include bollard covers. She stated that officers would put the amended policy out to public consultation to ensure that the views of groups representing disabled people, impacted residents and shopkeepers, were captured, and any substantive issues with the current policy were addressed. It is now one year on, and despite several emails from one of my residents and me, we are still none the wiser about what is being proposed. Please could Councillor Pauline Jorgensen advise when the new policy will be drafted, when it will be put out for consultation, and the proposed implementation date?

###### **Answer:**

I have seen the flurry of emails about this subject, and I need to ask the Officers for a specific date for you, so I cannot give it to you now, but I will certainly give it to you after the meeting.

##### **64.2 Daniel Sargeant asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:**

###### **Question:**

At the HOSC, there was a report from David Birch and Matt Pope on Adult Services.

Can you explain the huge savings achieved, and will they need to downgrade the service to achieve these?

**Answer:**

Yes, you are correct. Basically, we have managed to make significant savings from Optalis over the last few years, totalling a sum of over £2.5million, which has been returned to WBC. The answer to how has this been done is, I have sat in this Chamber and explained the change of focus of Optalis, which has taken place. Two years ago, it was on rapid growth and expansion. We have asked and pushed for a refocus instead, on becoming a better provider, providing better care and better quality just to local residents. The result of that has been a renegotiation of the management contract with RBWM. The refocus of service has also led to less expenditure on things like marketing and management. We have also slimmed down the management structure of the service. For example, we have gone down from three boards controlling it, down to one, which I think will actually improve the service by making it more nimble, more agile, quicker to respond and quicker to move things forward. The answer to your question is that I would have absolute confidence that we can continue to make this level of savings going forward and that we can continue to improve the quality of what Optalis does.

**64.3 Rachel Burgess asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**

**Question:**

There has been a lot of disappointment amongst many of my residents and others actually, with the heavily promoted so-called ice rink at Cantley Park, in my ward. Many were expecting real ice and I think in general there was just a lot of disappointment about the quality of what was provided. So, can you ensure that residents who are unhappy with the quality of the rink, and that it was not what was advertised, when they brought tickets, are entitled to a refund?

**Answer:**

Yes.

**64.4 Imogen Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**

**Question:**

I am going to ask a question about Cantley as well. They have just installed some new EV chargers in the car parking area at Cantley, and I am told they are only working at the time the café is open. Can I ask what is the point of an EV charger that is only open when the café is open, and is this going to get fixed?

**Answer:**

Thank you very much for bringing that to my attention. I will certainly enquire and get back to you on that one.

**64.5 Rebecca Margetts asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:**

**Question:**

At the Executive meeting on 28 October, it was stated that the Oak Tree School was being delayed. Are you able to give me an update?

**Answer:**

In early August of this year the Department for Education (DoE) had indicated that the project for Oak Tree was on track to open in September 2022. Members may or may not be aware that the Oak Tree SEND school is a joint project with Reading to house 25 children from each Borough, giving 50 in total, and has been some years in the planning.

At the end of August, the DoE indicated that there could be a delay on opening, and on further investigation we found out it could possibly be delayed until September 2023. It appears that there could be technical difficulties with planning, contractors, and procurement. The implications are that the children that are eligible for entry in September 2022, need to be accommodated elsewhere, and this is a statutory driven obligation. Also, once those children have been accommodated elsewhere, that is it for their school career. They cannot just change back if Oak Tree becomes available again.

Under the guidance of Carol Cammiss, who of course I have to mention, we have kicked into action with Officers, the Leader and the Deputy Leader in his role of Finance, together with our opposite numbers at Reading, met with the DoE, and the mobilisation also involved efforts from our MPs, going right up to the Minister of Education, Nadhim Zahawi, I hope that I have got that right. The bottom line is that Oak Tree will not be in open in September 2022. We have explored every possible avenue to get that done. It is now targeted to be open in Easter 2023, so that we would be ready in September 2023. We are in close discussions with the Department for Education to ensure delivery at that time, and we are also in discussion with them, very closely, for any consequential cost implications, and we are expecting full confirmation from the DoE before the end of November.

**64.6 David Hare asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:****Question:**

Hawkedon residents are concerned about the eventual site of the proposed MUGA, and would appreciate being able to have an input in a public consultation so that they know that their concerns and expectations are understood in the planning application?

**Answer:**

I will certainly enquire, and I will get back to you on that one.

**64.7 Shirley Boyt asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:****Question:**

The question relates to the minutes of the Executive on 28 October, more specifically the Local Bus Service Improvement Plan. Under the heading of bus stop

infrastructure, it states that WBC has a bus stop policy and that bus stops are given a Bronze, Silver or Gold rating, and will be upgraded in line with these standards when funding is available. I cannot locate a copy of the Policy on the website, so I have no idea of the criteria for each level, but I would like to ask whether the bus stops that are managed by local Parish and Town Councils have also been rated, and more importantly when the aforementioned funding is available, will the many substandard bus stops in Woodley and Earley be upgraded along with those in other parts of the Borough? I have a second part to the question, which is also to do with bus stops if I may, which is that the new plan does not give any real priority to installing kassel kerbs which enable those with mobility issues to easily access buses. In the Transport Plan of 2011-2016, the Public Transport Plan, it was recognised that, infrastructure and services do not always cater for residents with special needs or restricted mobility. Under the key objective two, in that plan, there was a commitment to improve points of access to the public transport network e.g., kassel kerbs and bus shelters. Can you please reassure our disabled and elderly residents that this is still a key objective of the Council?

**Answer:**

Funnily enough I asked that same question when I read the same bit of the BSIP, as there are a selection of bus shelters owned by the parish councils and I am not quite sure which ones in the future are going to be maintained by the parish councils and which ones are going to be upgraded by who, so that is still a live question that is out there at the moment.

Regarding kassel kerbs, we have at the moment been upgrading a lot of bus stops so that there are kassel kerbs. That is one thing that we did to one of the bus stops in Hillside a couple of years ago, so I would hope that all new bus stops will have kassel kerbs, if that is possible, but I will make sure that that is made clear in the documentation, and I will let you know one way or another.

**64.8 Caroline Smith asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question:**

Hillside School has had temporary chicanes in place which have successfully reduced cars speeding past the school on Rushey Way. When are these temporary chicanes going to be replaced by more permanent ones?

**Answer:**

I am glad that you appreciate the chicanes that I worked with the school to get put in during the Covid issues because of the speeding and the problems that the children were having in terms of crossing roads and that sort of thing. We are still looking at various other improvements that we can do at Hillside in order to improve the crossings and that will be one of the permanent features, chicanes, when they are put in. I have not got a date yet, but I will get a date and I will respond to you.

**64.9 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question:**

When are they going to fix the entrance into Woodward Close off the Reading Road? It is very hazardous, to the point that I just drove it again today and you get a big bump at the end. Will you please fix it so that we can actually not have an accident there?

**Answer:**

Yes, I have been in communication with Officers yesterday and today about this particular hump. They are having a bit of difficulty designing it so that it ramps properly with the road, but it is actively under consideration at the moment. They have got an engineer looking at redesigning that particular area and I certainly responded to a resident earlier, I think it was either later yesterday or early this morning, to say that was what was going on. I cannot give you a date until they have finished the design.

**64.10 Sam Akhtar asked the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services, the following question:**

**Question:**

At the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, there was a discussion about GP practices performance. What if anything are we doing, and can we do about poor performance?

**Answer:**

Council may remember because I spoke about this at the last meeting because it is something that we are very much aware is of real interest and of real concern to our residents to some of them. GPs are under a lot of pressure at the moment. NHS figures will quote a 40% increase in demand since the pandemic has ended, but if you look at the recent NHS Patient Survey of the country, it combines with anecdotal evidence to what all Members are telling me about GP performance across the Borough. We have some GPs that are very good, and that is all credit to them, but we have four that are in the bottom 10% of the GPs across the country, one of which has been at the bottom for a long, long while. The performance for me of the Wokingham Medical Centre in particular, is completely unacceptable. Loddon Vale, Twyford and Woosehill also give cause for concern.

In answer to your question as to what we have actually been trying to do about it, myself and two of the senior officers from the department had a long meeting with the Wokingham Medical Centre earlier in the year, where there was lots of talk basically, but not much evidence of delivery. Following that we wrote to the CCG to raise our concerns, got no response, wrote to Dr James Kent, who is head of the ICS BOB, and got a long letter back eventually offering lots of long promises but no actual delivery date. So, we raised it with our MPs to try to get them to intervene on our behalf and went back to Dr James Kent, who has now written back promising a meeting with me and the Officers to actually raise this with him directly. I have also spoken to the other lead Members from Reading and West Berkshire who share the same CCG, and obviously share the same problem to a degree. There is a joint letter which has been circulated which we have all agreed, which will be going to Dr Kent next week, the Head of the ICS, to push this matter further. We are not going to give up on this and we are not going to give in. We are going to keep pushing this issue because we know it is of real concern to our residents. One thing that I should

make absolutely clear in conclusion, is that GP performance is solely the responsibility of the CCG. It is something that we can lobby on but not anything that we have direct control over. All we will continue to do is raise concerns until we get some satisfactory answers.

**64.11 Abdul Loyes asked the Executive Member for Finance and Housing the following question:**

**Question:**

At the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 6 October, you stated that the Adult Social Care reform could place a £20million burden on the Council. Can you confirm this figure and are there any other headwinds which the Council is facing?

**Answer:**

At the risk of stepping on the feet of my colleague for Adult Care, basically, we have a situation where we have 1700 people that we have in care that we fully fund, but 87% of all people in adult care in the Borough, are self-funded. As such we will need to pick up any additional costs once the £85,000 limit has been breached. This was an increase in minimum wage to care workers, and let me just say that I fully support that, knowing what a job that is. But again, that has led to the costs. Finally, the levelling up suggestion by the Government to make it fairer to self-funders, depending on the amount of money from the new money that has been passed to the NHS, and how of that has been passported to us. It could cost us between £17million and £20million.

On the wider question to regards to headwinds, well we have got a few hurricanes. We basically have inflation running higher than it has ever run in my memory, especially with energy costs seeing an increase of about £6-7,000 next year. Add to that, the increase in wages and also materials, and NI payments, I mean there are lots of things that we need to deal with. It makes it even more important that we are very prudent about the way we spend our money, and we maximise every penny that we receive from our shareholders, who are basically our funders as well, who are the residents. That is the picture that we are faced with at the moment.

**64.12 Peter Dennis asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:**

**Question:**

The revised Local Plan update includes replacing a community Borough building that currently holds the library and a number of housing units. Back in May 2017, when asked about this site, there were no plans for the loss of this public asset, so what has changed now to include this site as another housing development as opposed to a community resource?

**Answer:**

In short, we are moving the library to a brand new building at Carnival Pool so we have a facility there. The community is not losing anything. They are getting a brand new library.

**65. Statement from the Chairman of the Constitution Review Working Group**

This item was withdrawn.

**66. Statements by the Leader of the Council, Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members**

**Stuart Munro, Executive Member for Business and Economic Development:**

I would just like to briefly give people listening an update as to where we are with regeneration in Wokingham town centre. I think it has come to a point where we need to take stock and look at where we are at and get some facts on the table. So, I am going to go through lettings and where we are with our stock of houses that we have built, and then some comment at the end about how well this has been received by the outside world.

So as far as anything is concerned, we are continuing to see several new businesses continuing to fit and open in our town centre units. Our emphasis remains on a good mix of local independents, to sit alongside quality nationals. A few come to mind in the last few months; R Young Art Gallery in Elms Field, the Lazy Frog in Denmark Street and BXG Fit, the town's first boutique boxing and fitness studio due to open soon in Peach Place. We continue to see strong interest in the remaining few units. We will be announcing new names soon after the paperwork has been completed. We continue to use regeneration to help the local community as well. For example, temporary lets to the Royal British Legion, and to the Christmas presents Community Project led by the First Day's children's charity, in Elms Field. Also, Peach Place will be used for the Wokingham Winter Carnival stage and entertainment on Sunday 28 November.

Despite tough conditions nationally over the last few years, the town centre continues to outperform many in the UK. Increased numbers of people working from home rather than commuting to London, offers a great opportunity to capture more of the local market share. Growing footfall and eating out as people start to return to shopping and entertainment. Low numbers of closures, and primarily related to nationals rather than local and boutique shopping, minimal vacant units and those that are empty, have seen interest across the town, not just WBC, privately owned ones as well. Regeneration currently has 91% let, and on target to achieve 94% by Spring of next year, the target we set ourselves. This means we continue to cover the cost of the regeneration. As well as generating a good return we can fund services for residents. Income will continue to rise as costs paid back over the next ten years or so. It is also a milestone because the asset value of the stock is far in excess of the loan.

On residential sales, another good news story, with prices continuing to generally meet or exceed predicted sales values, and 84% of the properties released to date, exchanged, and completed. All of this has been very well received in the outside world. We are receiving lots and lots of recognition, both locally and nationally. I will just mention a couple; a win of the Rural Town Planning Award for Excellence in planning for a successful economy; Association of Public Sector Excellence Best Housing Regenerated or New Build Initiative; Urban Land Initiative Award for

Excellence Mixed Use; Business Magazine's Thames Valley Property Award for development in Peach Place and SPACES (Society for Public Architecture, Engineering, Surveying and Construction) Yearbook entry for Peach Place and Elm's Field, Elm's Field going on to win the spacious regeneration award, last week. Finally, we have been approached by the Local Government Association to write a case study about the regeneration to share as best practice with other councils. So, Mr Mayor, it is clearly a highly successful programme of which you should be proud, with more exciting developments to come such as the Carnival Hub, which Councillor Smith, mentioned earlier, which is looking very impressive and yet to be delivered on time by a very organised German organisation. Visiting the town centre and seeing all the restaurants and other retail businesses come to life means more than just money and vibrancy of the place. The play park with mums and dads and their children confirms to me that it was the right decision to regenerate Wokingham town.

**John Kaiser, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Housing:**

When I spoke earlier in answer to Councillor Loyes' question, I just wanted to touch on the finances of the Council. With other local councils getting into financial difficulty, it is important to give our residents in Wokingham Borough confidence that we are in a strong position and not at risk. Recent news on some authorities, for example Labour led Slough, which has had to declare bankruptcy, and are finding it impossible to make ends meet, with little chance that the situation will change for the foreseeable future. Residents are naturally concerned. Could we go the same way? The short and simple answer is no. How is it that we are delivering more services and facilities, when other councils are closing swimming pools and libraries? We are opening new ones and providing better facilities and services such as Bulmershe, Cantley, California Country Park, Lower Earley and Arborfield Green. Too good to be true I guess everybody will say.

Let me explain how we do this. In fact, it is the Conservative administration's careful budget monitoring, prudent borrowing, and shrewd investments. Our finances are among the soundest in the land, even CIPFA say that we are in the top twenty in the UK. How are we going to safeguard our financial future, which is the cornerstone of being able to provide great services? We regularly report on expenditure throughout the year and keep a close eye on expenditure. The first thing I did when I took this role was to insist that the Budget in all its glory went to Overview and Scrutiny before it is published in its final format, and over a long period of six months, so that everyone can have their say. Last year the Budget came in slightly underspent, and even though it has been a very tough year, we are currently on track this year.

Let me talk about debt. All local authorities must borrow if they want to forward funds things such as leisure centres, regenerated towns, solar farms, and other improvements for the community. Even more important, is to fund that infrastructure, as and when we need it, such as roads and schools, rather than waiting for the money from the developer. My rules around borrowing are quite clear. We must have a clear route to pay back, make commercial sense and deliver services and facilities to residents. I clearly understand we are not some company or commercial entity. That does not mean we should abandon prudent, fiscal control, like I say some Councils seem to have done. The money we spend is the residents' money, as such they are shareholders, and more importantly they are our funders, and as

such we must deliver services and environment that we all want to exist in Wokingham Borough. This means the key is to ensure that anything you borrow can be funded and paid back, a return on investment is backed by the asset and produced. In our case the cost of the borrowing does not just offset the returns we are making, the Council is generating revenue which can be reinvested in services. Without the money we could not balance our budget and would have to cut these services. Our net debt when you offset our internal borrowing investment is around £140million today and the interest paid is 2% of the Council's total income, all of which not only paid by the return of our investment but it is forecast this year, by March 2022, that we will be generating over £30 for each tax payer in this Borough through our investment, nearly three times more than we did last year, all of which can be spent on vital services.

In addition, we are looking to reduce our external debt by £100million at the same time, and we have reduced the cost of borrowing by nearly 1%. That is nearly a 40% decrease in our borrowing.

The biggest threat to the Council and the economy as a whole is inflation, as we see prices rise in all areas of life. We must keep pace, and there will be some tough decisions on pricing and services that we provide across the Borough. We have relatively low costs compared with other councils. Car parks is a classic case, where less than 1% of our income comes from it, and we have councils that surround us who collect over 10% of their income through it. We do not intend to go down that route and the last time we raised our car parking charges was 2017. Some councils, believe it or not, even raised their charges last year during Covid, can you believe that? That said any increase in fees and charges will be measured and only designed to allow the Council to keep pace with the cost. No doubt charges will be needed to respond to the massive increases we are seeing in energy prices, building costs, both labour and materials, as well as an increase in care and schooling. Even though we are considered to be the most prosperous area we still have poverty, and it is our job to ensure that the increases fall on those who can best afford to pay, as the only option will be less services, which will fall on the old and the most vulnerable in the Borough. We have strong reserves.

**Gregor Murray, Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions:**

Firstly, I am delighted to say that our new carbon neutral Dinton Pastures Activity Centre featured at COP26 last week, as an example of best practice and sustainable construction for community use.

I am sure that every Member will have seen recently that the cost of energy has increased significantly. With this in mind I wanted to update you on some of the vital and incredibly forward thinking work of the Council's Energy Team concerning our climate emergency. As I have said before, our Eco Flex to heat scheme has been a huge success for the Council. I am very pleased to say that this year 968 homes have had either cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, or both, installed free of charge to the resident, as a result of this fantastic scheme. These sites have all been made significantly more energy efficient as a result of this programme, reducing energy bills for the residents, providing real time savings for families most likely to be impacted in the sharp rises in energy prices. Mr Mayor, I am sure that you will

agree, that the foresight of our Energy Team should be applauded by this Council, and by the residents who have benefited so greatly from this free scheme.

In the last two weeks I have visited schools in Woodley, to see completed installations of new solar panels. At the end of this year the Energy Team will have completed thirteen additional solar PV installations across our Borough's schools. Combined they will generate well over 250,000Kwh of energy and will save a combined £52,000 a year in energy costs for those schools. That cost saving is money that goes directly back into the schools' budget to be spent elsewhere, supporting the education of our Borough's children. I should remind you also Mr Mayor, that these solar installations cost the schools nothing up front, so the school gets all the benefits of reduced energy costs and carbon savings without any of the upfront installation costs. Councillor Howe and I are both delighted with the success of this programme to date and have started discussions together on how we can accelerate it to other schools across the Borough, including our academies. At Bulmershe School, Wokingham Borough Council have upgraded an existing solar array, installing new panels that are capable of generating more than twice the electricity capacity from the same rooftop space. I am sure you would be interested to know that the previous panels have not just been scrapped, they have been relocated to Dinton Pastures where they will be used to provide power to the lake's aerator. Mr Mayor, I am also pleased to inform you that twenty one schools have had LED low energy lighting systems installed this year by our Energy Team and the Council completed installation upgrades at seven commercial sites.

Turning to trees Mr Mayor, I am very pleased to say that our 250,000 trees project officer has been appointed and started work. As part of her role, she will become the point of contact for town and parish councils as we look to identify additional sites for siting our trees, and I know that she will be contacting those councils directly in the coming weeks, if she has not done so already. She will also manage our garden forest programme, where we are looking to site up to 10,000 with residents to plant in their own properties.

As part of our tree planting initiative, you may have seen a consultation that has gone live using our new Engage Wokingham Borough platform. Already in use for our Waste Strategy consultation and now the Local Plan update consultation, this new platform has been launched to create a more constant two-way dialogue with our community on many issues, as already seen by several thousand residents signing up to engage.

Finally, Mr Mayor, you will have heard me say on numerous occasions that encouraging and adopting sustainable living behaviours in our residents is the most important thing that we can do as a council to combat climate change. With that in mind, on 21 and 22 October WBC held an open market engagement event where we invited businesses and individuals who are experts in behaviour change and sustainable living to come and pitch their ideas and tools to officers from across our council. I am pleased to say that over twenty five different pitches took place over two days from a variety of organisations, all proposing sustainable ideas relating to transport, energy reduction, waste reduction, active travel, food waste and consumption behaviours. Our officers are currently collating feedback and benchmarking scores from those pitches and will be arranging more detailed follow

up meetings to discuss more opportunities in more detail shortly. This is a vital step in building sustainable living behaviours across our Borough, and I am grateful for the Officers who made the time in their diaries to attend the two days.

**Wayne Smith, Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement:**

As most of you will know, last week the Executive approved the consultation for the revised growth Local Plan Update, which starts next Monday and will run to 24 January. I wanted just to say a few things. We have set up a number of events that will start next week. We have got an event on Monday evening at St Crispin's School, and then we have got an event in Arborfield the following week. We have also got four different virtual events, which already via our new Engage platform which Councillor Murray was referring to, we have got two hundred people registered for those events. Obviously, we are going to have to pay close attention to what happens with Covid, and to make sure that we have got precautions in place. We are also going to be having a section outside in the reception area where we will have all the maps and all the information available for residents to come along, and also if they go along to the Engage website, they can see when officers will be available to ask any questions or any points that they want to pick up. Also, there are various routes to engage with our Team. They can obviously engage through online, or they can write to our Team, or they can send us a letter. We very much hope that you can spread the word and ensure that we get as many people as possible to come along to our events, if not virtual, in person, and to give us their views on our Plan. As I said, we start next week, and it will run to 24 January, and we do hope that you come along and get involved.

**Parry Batth, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure:**

Mr Mayor I welcomed your presence at the opening of our two brand new leisure facilities, to benefit the health and wellbeing of our residents. The two facilities that you helped open are the boxing hub at Peach Place in Wokingham and the synthetic skating rink at Cantley. The synthetic rink mimics the characteristics of real ice. It creates a smooth and even surface for residents to skate on, with a low frictional resistance resulting in an enjoyable skating experience for all. Residents of all ages had fun skating the afternoon away when it opened over a week ago and showing off their skating skills. So far up to now over 2,750 tickets have been sold, and a couple of people that were expecting ice have been refunded. The state-of-the-art boxing hub will also be open to the public on 26 November. The hub includes a training ring, storage rig with three fitness stations, a functional cube ring with attachments for up to six stations and punch bags, including aqua bags, heavy bags, and upper cut bags. This offers a range of fantastic boxing facilities and is available to everybody whether you are looking for a 1-2-1 training membership, ad hoc classes or to hire the facility. The brand new facility packs a punch and will be very popular with our community, and will help them compliment an active lifestyle.

**67. Statement from Council Owned Companies**

**Charles Margetts, Non Executive Director Optalis:**

I spoke briefly earlier about Optalis. I thought it was time to give Members a much more full update. When I first took on this role two years ago, it was clear that Optalis needed reform to make it suitable for the needs of the future and to make it suitable for what the Council actually wanted from it. I am pleased to advise that

following long discussions with RBWM we have now reached agreement and signed a new contract to set Optalis up for future years.

There have been some significant changes to the purpose and the management structure of the company. I referred to some of these briefly earlier, but to cover the other ground; a reduction in management structure and bureaucracy to make decision making quicker and easier, and also to give a stronger direct relationship with each local authority partner. What this means is that three Boards have gone to one, as I said, and that one Board consists of the CEO, the Director of Adult Services from each authority, and the Lead Member. For the first time we have direct strategic control of the company.

The refocus of Optalis, which I referred to earlier basically on to quality rather than growth and the efficiency drive resulting in the saving of £2.5million a year. The other £2.5million over the last two years I should say. The other thing is that Optalis Wokingham will now operate independently from Optalis RBWM. This allows the company the freedom to design services that meet the needs of Wokingham residents and greater flexibility.

WBC has set the following priorities for Optalis to continue the transformation of services and to focus heavily on the retention and development of staff. With the current situation around the uncertainty around the Government's Adult Social Care proposals, which my colleague Councillor Kaiser referred to a few minutes ago, that is most helpful basically to do that. From a Wokingham point of view, using Optalis to provide care gives certainty of ongoing costs over time and enables us to hedge against the uncertainty in terms of cost in the care sector. It also ensures that any surplus money can be returned to WBC rather than being used to pay Directors' bonuses or shiny new offices. This enables us to plan financially, more effectively for the future with greater confidence. Whilst this change has been underway Optalis has maintained and improved the quality of care that it offers. David Birch and his team continue to move forwards. An example of this is, recently Wokingham coming first in the South East and second in the UK in the recent Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework. This measures the number of adults with learning disabilities who return to paid employment. The figure in Wokingham is over three times the national average, which is a real credit to the company and all the people who work there. I would like to thank the Supported Employment Service specifically for their work in this area.

Mr Mayor, in conclusion I would say that we believe that Optalis is well placed to continue its work, and to serve our residents. I know that there are some exciting new things that I will be able to talk about in the upcoming months, which are now being developed.

**Norman Jorgensen, Non Executive Director Loddon Homes:**

As a company wholly owned by Wokingham Borough Council, Loddon Homes has two main objectives. One is to provide much needed affordable housing in the Borough, and the second is to generate a financial return to the Council. I believe that Loddon Homes is an organisation that this Council should be proud of. This evening I will give you a bit of a snapshot. Firstly, we currently have one hundred and twenty three homes in our portfolio, with a further nineteen due by the end of the

financial year. The total asset value of these is in excess of £30million. We receive an annual rent and service charge income of about £570,000, and we have a further pipeline of around four hundred new homes over the next four years, supporting the delivery of the Council's housing programme. Underpinning this is Loddon's Homes robust five-year business plan, which is able to flex should Loddon's and the Council's housing objectives change, as well as withstanding the scrutiny of our Board and the Housing Regulator. The final version of the plan is expected in January.

We have just completed a couple of months of exceptional delivery and performance by the company. We took ownership of the final homes at Arnett Avenue, marking the completion of the first phase of the Gorse Ride regeneration. I recently met other members of the Board and members of Gorse Ride Community Steering Group to have a tour of the completed shared ownership apartments, and I can attest to the exceptional quality and workmanship of the final build. Whilst I was there, I met residents who had already moved into their new home, and they could not speak more highly of the property or of the service and support that they had received since moving in, from both Loddon Homes and the developers RJ Leighfield and Sons. I am pleased to report that 50% of all the shared ownership sales completed within a month of the properties being handed over. I am also pleased to report that we have received the initial feedback from our biannual residents' survey, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive, with 90% of residents being happy or very happy with the overall service that they receive from Loddon Homes. Over 95% say they would recommend us as a landlord, and 95% are happy with the quality of their home. We are only part way through the feedback and the full results will be published in December.

## **68. Motions**

### **68.1 Motion 467 submitted by Ian Shenton**

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion, submitted by Ian Shenton, and seconded by Sarah Kerr.

'This Council formally declares an ecological emergency and will:

1. Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions and ensure that opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies are maximised.
2. Add ecological implications alongside those for climate in committee and Council reports.
3. Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by providing guidance through a biodiversity supplementary planning document.
4. Strive to enable the development of a 20% mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for Wokingham through the new local plan.

5. Create a Developing Nature Toolkit and direct developers to use the toolkit to assist them in demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity, to be used from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development.
6. Re-establish the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum to allow the Council to collaborate effectively with partners and the wider community.
7. Where possible, embed ecological initiatives within all Council work areas, including Covid-19 recovery projects and programmes.
8. Promote woodland planting and rewilding in the right places and with the right species, peatland restoration, natural flood management, wild flower meadows, and habitat creation and restoration.
9. Work with local, county, regional and national partners to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Wokingham Borough ensuring robust connectivity between them.
10. Manage Council services, buildings and land in a biodiversity-friendly manner, including by reviewing the use of harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats and corridors.
11. Provide advice for local communities and businesses on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.
12. Encourage residents to take biodiversity measures in their own homes by, for example, wildlife gardening and home composting.
13. Working collaboratively with the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership, Wokingham Biodiversity Forum, a cross party working group and other stakeholders, produce a local nature recovery strategy and associated action plan with an annual progress report to full Council.'

Ian Shenton indicated that it was estimated that in normal times approximately one species per million was lost per annum, around eight in total per annum. However, it was estimated that the loss rate was currently a thousand times greater and equated to the loss of approximately one species an hour. He asked that the Council went beyond the ecological considerations currently incorporated in some of its activities, and declared an ecological emergency. The climate emergency and ecological emergency should equally be at the heart of future actions.

In accordance with 4.2.13.7 b iii) of the Constitution it was proposed by Gregor Murray and seconded by Parry Bath that the Motion be amended as follows:

'This Council **resolves to refer to the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group to examine the benefits of** formally declaring an ecological emergency and **the actions below. This will be reported back to a future Full**

### ***Council Meeting.***

1. Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions and ensure that opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies are maximised.
2. Add ecological implications alongside those for climate in committee and Council reports.
3. Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by providing guidance through a biodiversity supplementary planning document.
4. Strive to enable the development of a 20% mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for Wokingham through the new local plan.
5. Create a Developing Nature Toolkit and direct developers to use the toolkit to assist them in demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity, to be used from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development.
6. Re-establish the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum to allow the Council to collaborate effectively with partners and the wider community.
7. Where possible, embed ecological initiatives within all Council work areas, including Covid-19 recovery projects and programmes.
8. Promote woodland planting and rewilding in the right places and with the right species, peatland restoration, natural flood management, wild flower meadows, and habitat creation and restoration.
9. Work with local, county, regional and national partners to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Wokingham Borough ensuring robust connectivity between them.
10. Manage Council services, buildings and land in a biodiversity-friendly manner, including by reviewing the use of harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats and corridors.
11. Provide advice for local communities and businesses on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.'
12. Encourage residents to take biodiversity measures in their own homes by, for example, wildlife gardening and home composting.
13. Working collaboratively with the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership, Wokingham Biodiversity Forum, a cross party working group and other stakeholders, produce a local nature recovery strategy and associated action plan with an annual progress report to full Council.'

Sarah Kerr proposed a 10-minute adjournment to allow consideration of the proposed amendment. This was seconded by Stephen Conway. This was agreed.

Upon reconvening, the amendment was not accepted by the proposer of the original Motion.

Gregor Murray stated that he felt that the Motion was premature and that residents would be better served if the Motion was referred to the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group to consider in the context of their recommendations. In addition, he felt that further work needed to be carried out on existing projects, and referred to targets 18-20 of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Parry Batth felt that the timing of the Motion was premature and that referring it to the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group would avoid a duplication of effort and resources.

Sarah Kerr emphasised that it was an ecological emergency and the time to act was now. She highlighted that the UK had failed against seventeen of twenty Aichi Biodiversity targets and had gone backwards in six areas. The UK had lost more biodiversity than any other G7 country and was in the worst 10% globally for loss of biodiversity. Sarah Kerr felt that there was not time for the Motion to be considered by another Committee. Whilst there were some actions ongoing around protecting nature, they were not enough. She felt that biodiversity required its own action plan, and that climate and biodiversity emergencies were a dual threat.

Angus Ross commented that the actions needed careful consideration as to how they could be taken forwards in the best way.

Rachel Burgess stated that she supported the original Motion and that Wokingham needed to do its bit to protect biodiversity. She emphasised the need for concrete actions and a clear commitment.

Stephen Conway felt that the amendment was procrastination.

The amended Motion was put to the vote and voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar	Rachel Bishop-Firth	Keith Baker
Parry Batth	Shirley Boyt	
Laura Blumenthal	Rachel Burgess	
Chris Bowring	Stephen Conway	
Jenny Cheng	Peter Dennis	
Phil Cunnington	Lindsay Ferris	
Michael Firmager	Paul Fishwick	
John Halsall	Jim Frewin	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	David Hare	
Graham Howe	Clive Jones	
Norman Jorgensen	Sarah Kerr	
John Kaiser	Tahir Maher	

Abdul Loyes	Morag Malvern	
Charles Margetts	Adrian Mather	
Rebecca Margetts	Andrew Mickleburgh	
Stuart Munro	Ian Shenton	
Gregor Murray	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
Barrie Patman	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Jackie Rance	Caroline Smith	
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		

The amended Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

The Mayor indicated that he had been advised that because there was no time available to debate the substantive Motion a further vote was not required. He indicated that Members could have a vote if requested.

Clive Jones indicated that had there been a further vote the Liberal Democrat Group would have abstained. Rachel Burgess indicated that the Labour Group would also have abstained. Jim Frewin indicated as an independent he would have voted 'for.' John Halsall indicated that the Conservatives would also have voted 'for.'

**RESOLVED:** That this Council resolves to refer to the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group to examine the benefits of formally declaring an ecological emergency and the actions below. This will be reported back to a future Full Council Meeting.

1. Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions and ensure that opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both the climate and ecological emergencies are maximised.
2. Add ecological implications alongside those for climate in committee and Council reports.
3. Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by providing guidance through a biodiversity supplementary planning document.
4. Strive to enable the development of a 20% mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for Wokingham through the new local plan.
5. Create a Developing Nature Toolkit and direct developers to use the toolkit to assist them in demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity, to be used from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development.

6. Re-establish the Wokingham Biodiversity Forum to allow the Council to collaborate effectively with partners and the wider community.
7. Where possible, embed ecological initiatives within all Council work areas, including Covid-19 recovery projects and programmes.
8. Promote woodland planting and rewilding in the right places and with the right species, peatland restoration, natural flood management, wild flower meadows, and habitat creation and restoration.
9. Work with local, county, regional and national partners to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Wokingham Borough ensuring robust connectivity between them.
10. Manage Council services, buildings and land in a biodiversity-friendly manner, including by reviewing the use of harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats and corridors.
11. Provide advice for local communities and businesses on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.
12. Encourage residents to take biodiversity measures in their own homes by, for example, wildlife gardening and home composting.
13. Working collaboratively with the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership, Wokingham Biodiversity Forum, a cross party working group and other stakeholders, produce a local nature recovery strategy and associated action plan with an annual progress report to full Council.

## **68.2 Motion 468 submitted by Gregor Murray**

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Gregor Murray and seconded by Angus Ross.

'Building on our commitment to planting 250,000 new trees, this Council commits to achieving 'Tree Cities of the World' status for our Borough as part of the creation of a Borough wide Tree Strategy.

This will be done by:

1. Maintaining clear responsibility within the Council for the care of trees across our Borough.
2. Agreeing a policy for the care and management of our forests and trees across the Borough. This must include standards for tree care, where and when they apply and penalties for non-compliance.
3. Working with external partners to create and maintain an inventory of the local

tree resource so that effective long-term planning for planting, care and removal can be established.

4. Setting aside an annual budget for the implementation of the tree management strategy and management plan.
5. Holding an annual celebration of our Borough's trees and acknowledge the residents schools, charities and Council staff that contribute to our city tree programme.
6. Creating a 'Garden Forest' program to allow residents the opportunity to plant some of our 250,000 new tree commitment in their own gardens.
7. Developing a continuous education process aimed at informing residents of the importance of trees, tree planting and tree protection and how best to care for the trees in their own gardens and communities.
8. Committing to planting a Covid-19 memorial wood within the Borough, of native trees, as a long-lasting memorial to those who have lost their lives during the 2020-21 Pandemic.

Once the above conditions are met an application for Tree Cities of the World status should be made as soon as possible.

Further information on the Tree Cities of the World status and benefits can be found at [www.treecitiesoftheworld.org](http://www.treecitiesoftheworld.org).

Gregor Murray indicated that the Tree Cities of the World had been brought to his attention by members of the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association. There were five conditions for achieving Tree Cities of the World status and he felt that Wokingham was already doing three of them and another was a work in progress. Firstly, the Council already had an Officer responsible for the care and planting of trees. Secondly, the Council's Tree Strategy was a work in progress and would require completion before status could be applied for. The third condition was to be aware of what trees the area had and work was being undertaken by the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association to ascertain this information. In addition, there was a need to harness the community to better understand the Borough's tree population. The fourth condition was to allocate resources, which was being addressed through the planting of a large number of new trees. The final condition was to celebrate achievement which he felt was not being done presently. He referred to the commitment to plant a Covid memorial wood.

#### **69. Continuation of the meeting**

At this point in the meeting, 10.05pm, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12 (m), the Council considered a Motion to continue the meeting beyond 10.30pm for a maximum of 30 minutes to enable further business on the Agenda to be transacted. The Motion was proposed by Stephen Conway and seconded by David Hare.

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

**70. Continuation of Motion 468 submitted by Gregor Murray**

The Motion was put to the vote and voting was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar	Jenny Cheng	Keith Baker
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Rachel Burgess		
Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Graham Howe		
Clive Jones		
Norman Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Sarah Kerr		
Abdul Loyes		
Tahir Maher		
Morag Malvern		
Charles Margetts		
Rebecca Margetts		
Adrian Mather		
Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Barrie Patman		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		

Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		

The Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

Chris Smith indicated that he had wished to speak in favour of the Motion due to the importance of the subject. It was clarified that in line with the Constitution, this was not possible.

**RESOLVED:** That building on our commitment to planting 250,000 new trees, this Council commits to achieving ‘Tree Cities of the World’ status for our Borough as part of the creation of a Borough wide Tree Strategy.

This will be done by:

1. Maintaining clear responsibility within the Council for the care of trees across our Borough.
2. Agreeing a policy for the care and management of our forests and trees across the Borough. This must include standards for tree care, where and when they apply and penalties for non-compliance.
3. Working with external partners to create and maintain an inventory of the local tree resource so that effective long-term planning for planting, care and removal can be established.
4. Setting aside an annual budget for the implementation of the tree management strategy and management plan.
5. Holding an annual celebration of our Borough’s trees and acknowledge the residents schools, charities and Council staff that contribute to our city tree programme.
6. Creating a ‘Garden Forest’ program to allow residents the opportunity to plant some of our 250,000 new tree commitment in their own gardens.
7. Developing a continuous education process aimed at informing residents of the importance of trees, tree planting and tree protection and how best to care for the trees in their own gardens and communities.
8. Committing to planting a Covid-19 memorial wood within the Borough, of native trees, as a long-lasting memorial to those who have lost their lives during the 2020-21 Pandemic.

Once the above conditions are met an application for Tree Cities of the World status should be made as soon as possible.

Further information on the Tree Cities of the World status and benefits can be found at [www.treecitiesoftheworld.org](http://www.treecitiesoftheworld.org).

### **70.1 Motion 469 submitted by David Hare**

The Council considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by David Hare and seconded by Clive Jones.

'White Ribbon UK is a leading charity engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. Their mission is for all men to fulfil the White Ribbon Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women and girls.

It is not enough for men to not be violent towards women and girls. Men need to take responsibility for helping to make change happen. All men can help prevent physical, mental, or emotional violence against women and girls by speaking out whenever they encounter such behaviour. If men do not act to correct this, women and girls will continue not feeling safe to do many of the things men do without thinking, making us a morally corrupt and emotional poor society, as we trivialise the sickness that is any type of violence against women and girls.

Wokingham Borough Council resolves to:

- Seek White Ribbon Accreditation for the Organisation within the next 6 months and encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women. As part of this Wokingham Borough Council will appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador for White Ribbon.
- Promote the Our Streets Now campaign to make street harassment of women a crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask them to make street harassment a specific crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the four MPs who cover the Borough, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner, to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime and encourage elected members and residents to sign the petition.
- Ask schools, academies and colleges in the Borough to each develop a clear policy on tackling physical, mental, emotional or spiritual harassment of female pupils or staff, separate to their bullying policy and ask them to include education to prevent public sexual harassment, as part of their PSHE education.'

David Hare stated that White Ribbon accreditation would give the Council the opportunity to lead the way as a positive role model for men and boys, demonstrating that the Council was meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010. He commented that some women were unable to get away from violence either in or outside the home. The Council needed to lead in ending physical, verbal, sexual, financial, emotional, and spiritual violence against women.

Clive Jones emphasised that a change in attitude against women, was necessary. He questioned why women should feel uncomfortable in everyday life. Street harassment was also an issue. Clive Jones emphasised that the Council could seek changes to the law and should speak up for women, helping to change attitudes.

In accordance with 4.2.13.7 b iii) of the Constitution it was proposed by Laura Blumenthal and seconded by Alison Swaddle that the Motion be amended as follows:

‘That White Ribbon UK is a leading charity engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. Their mission is for all men to fulfil the White Ribbon Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women and girls.

It is not enough for men to not be violent towards women and girls. Men need to take responsibility for helping to make change happen. All men can help prevent physical, mental, or emotional violence against women and girls by speaking out whenever they encounter such behaviour. If men do not act to correct this, women and girls will continue not feeling safe to do many of the things men do without thinking, making us a morally corrupt and emotional poor society, as we trivialise the sickness that is any type of violence against women and girls.

Wokingham Borough Council resolves to ***refer this matter to the cross-party Equalities Working Group at its meeting in January 2022, to examine the benefits of the actions below and to report back to a future Full Council meeting:***

- Seek White Ribbon Accreditation for the Organisation within the next 6 months and encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women. As part of this Wokingham Borough Council will appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador for White Ribbon.
- Promote the Our Streets Now campaign to make street harassment of women a crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask them to make street harassment a specific crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the four MPs who cover the Borough, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner, to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime and encourage elected members and residents to sign the petition.
- Ask schools, academies and colleges in the Borough to each develop a clear policy on tackling physical, mental, emotional or spiritual harassment of female pupils or staff, separate to their bullying policy and ask them to include education to prevent public sexual harassment, as part of their PSHE education.’

The amendment was not accepted by the proposer of the original Motion.

Laura Blumenthal commented that she agreed with the spirit of the original Motion. The Council was committed to doing all it could to protect residents from violence and harassment, including educating staff and Councillors, and speaking out when witnessing abuse. The Equalities Team was designing training for staff and Councillors, which would extend to all the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. She commented that the Equalities Task and Finish Group would

be considering training and awareness raising and could see whether the Council needed elements of what White Ribbon offered, to supplement the work already being undertaken by the Council. She was of the view that it was too early to decide to sign up to White Ribbon accreditation.

Rebecca Margetts commented that sexual harassment in schools had become common place. The Council would engage with schools on this issue and the need for implementing policy and procedure to meet the statutory guidance from the Department of Education. She felt that the Council should look at how it could support all individuals who were suffering any kind of harassment.

Rachel Burgess commented that she supported the original Motion and that violence against women was a serious problem.

Sarah Kerr stated that almost every woman at the meeting would have survived some form of harassment or assault. Women were disproportionately the victims of violence because they were women and girls. She was pleased that training was being developed but felt that this barely scratched the surface of what needed to be done.

The amended Motion was put to the vote and voting was as follows. Due to the fact that the time was 10.30pm, and therefore the meeting was due to conclude, the Mayor indicated that should the amendment be passed a second vote would not be held:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar	Rachel Bishop-Firth	Keith Baker
Parry Batth	Shirley Boyt	Jim Frewin
Laura Blumenthal	Rachel Burgess	Abdul Loyes
Chris Bowring	Stephen Conway	
Jenny Cheng	Peter Dennis	
Phil Cunnington	Lindsay Ferris	
Michael Firmager	Paul Fishwick	
John Halsall	David Hare	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	Clive Jones	
Graham Howe	Sarah Kerr	
Norman Jorgensen	Tahir Maher	
John Kaiser	Morag Malvern	
Charles Margetts	Adrian Mather	
Rebecca Margetts	Andrew Mickleburgh	
Stuart Munro	Ian Shenton	
Gregor Murray	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
Barrie Patman	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Jackie Rance	Caroline Smith	
Angus Ross		

Daniel Sargeant		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		

The amended Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

The Mayor asked Council if they required a further vote. This option was not requested.

**RESOLVED:** That White Ribbon UK is a leading charity engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. Their mission is for all men to fulfil the White Ribbon Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women and girls.

It is not enough for men to not be violent towards women and girls. Men need to take responsibility for helping to make change happen. All men can help prevent physical, mental, or emotional violence against women and girls by speaking out whenever they encounter such behaviour. If men do not act to correct this, women and girls will continue not feeling safe to do many of the things men do without thinking, making us a morally corrupt and emotional poor society, as we trivialise the sickness that is any type of violence against women and girls.

Wokingham Borough Council resolves to refer this matter to the cross-party Equalities Working Group at its meeting in January 2022, to examine the benefits of the actions below and to report back to a future Full Council meeting:

- Seek White Ribbon Accreditation for the Organisation within the next 6 months and encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women. As part of this Wokingham Borough Council will appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador for White Ribbon.
- Promote the Our Streets Now campaign to make street harassment of women a crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask them to make street harassment a specific crime; ask the Chief Executive to write to the four MPs who cover the Borough, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner, to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime and encourage elected members and residents to sign the petition.
- Ask schools, academies and colleges in the Borough to each develop a clear policy on tackling physical, mental, emotional or spiritual harassment of female pupils or staff, separate to their bullying policy and ask them to include education to prevent public sexual harassment, as part of their PSHE education.

## **70.2 Motion 470 submitted by Clive Jones**

Due to time constraints this Motion was not considered.

**70.3 Motion 471 submitted by Rachel Burgess**  
Due to time constraints this Motion was not considered.

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