

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2022 FROM 7.30 PM TO 10.50 PM**

Members Present

Councillors: Caroline Smith (Mayor), Beth Rowland (Deputy Mayor), Sam Akhtar, Keith Baker, Parry Batth, Rachel Bishop-Firth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Shirley Boyt, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Anne Chadwick, Stephen Conway, David Cornish, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Phil Cunnington, David Davies, Peter Dennis, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Maria Gee, David Hare, Peter Harper, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Graham Howe, Chris Johnson, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Sarah Kerr, Abdul Loyes, Tahir Maher, Morag Malvern, Charles Margetts, Rebecca Margetts, Adrian Mather, Andrew Mickleburgh, Stuart Munro, Alistair Neal, Jackie Rance, Ian Shenton, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Mike Smith, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle and Shahid Younis

60. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted from John Halsall, Gregor Murray and Wayne Smith.

61. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

62. Declarations of Interest

Prue Bray submitted a Personal Interest in Item 68 Statement from Council Owned Companies as a Non Executive Director of Berry Brook Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.

Stephen Conway submitted a Personal Interest in Item 68 Statement from Council Owned Companies as a Non Executive Director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.

David Hare submitted a Personal Interest in Item 68 Statement from Council Owned Companies as a Non Executive Director of Optalis Ltd.

Clive Jones submitted a Personal Interest in Item 68 Statement from Council Owned Companies as a Non Executive Director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd.

63. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor drew Members' attention to the reverse advent calendars that she had distributed. This was an initiative with her chosen charity, the Wokingham Food Bank, where on each day of the calendar people were asked to put the described item aside to create a Christmas donation. Donations were required so that they could be collected and delivered in time for Christmas. Members were asked to fill in their calendars and to either drop it at the Food Bank or to bring it to the next Council meeting on 17 November. There was also a special Saturday collection time on 3 December 10am-midday.

64. Speech from Stephen Conway, Deputy Leader, and Executive Member for Housing

With your indulgence I would like to say a few words if I may. Many colleagues will know that Simon Price, Assistant Director for Housing, is leaving the Council. Simon hates fuss and he will not thank me for drawing attention to his departure, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking him on behalf of all Councillors for his dedicated service to the Council over many years, and particularly of course to the Housing Department. Simon has been a key figure in turning round that department, and he can be proud of the strong state in which he leaves it.

I am immensely grateful to Simon for the help he gave me as a Councillor before I stood down in 2012, and since I returned in 2019. I am particularly grateful for his support since May when I became Executive Member for Affordable and Social Housing. His knowledge and experience have been invaluable. Simon's passionate commitment to our tenants is I am sure well known across the Council, and I am sure I speak for all Councillors when I wish him the very best for the future.

65. Public Question Time

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

65.1 Jeremy Evershed asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure the following question:

Question

The proposed 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh school is going to require significant investment from the Council given the engineering work to remove the 10-foot slope on the pitch, improvements to drainage to avoid downstream flooding, pitch replacement every 7 years costing more than £200,000, plus, potentially unbudgeted Noise Reduction fences. How much will the Council spend on internal staffing and external fees to confirm whether the business case is still viable at the stated cost of £800,000 as per the published minutes of the July meeting of the Executive?

Answer

Firstly, drainage has been included within the planning to utilise a Thames Water service outlet in the northeast corner of the potential pitch. If the proposal were to progress beyond the current feasibility stage, a full drainage survey would be carried out as part of the design works, prior to any planning application being made.

Secondly, the Football Foundation stipulate that an applicant will put in place a Sinking Fund, and that would fund would be the replacement of the 3G pitch at the end of its life. Wokingham Borough Council will set aside £25,000 per year into the sinking fund and through efficient usage management, and appropriate maintenance of the pitch, the pitch should give a good level of service of up to at least 8 to 10 years.

The internal staff resources, so far, have been utilised through the day-to-day staff budge. The external technical consultants have been included within the Football Foundation framework. However, given the inflation-driven pressure that is now impacting the Council's financial situation, the continued viability of the business

case will be closely scrutinised before any decision to progress further.

Supplementary Question:

The £25,000, I am not sure if that was actually included in the business case that was put forwards. Was that an omission?

Supplementary Answer:

It is in the business case, but as I said, the business case will be very closely scrutinised. The situation has changed since that business case was put together, and we are well aware of that.

65.2 Judith Clark asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

I live in Sevenoaks Road. Already at school drop-off and pick-up times, in addition to the sometimes dangerous behaviour of moving traffic (with vehicles driving on pavements if there is a delay) I have to close my windows to shut out the fumes and noise from cars parked outside my house after drop off or before pick-up, with engines running as drivers look at messages, listen to loud music, or converse by phone with the loudspeaker on.

If the 3G plans go ahead, particularly when there are matches from visiting teams, there will be traffic congestion outside school hours, and I shall have to continue closing windows through the evening until after 10.00pm and at weekends too. The slamming of car doors will continue after 10.00pm, if players pick up refreshments at the shops outside the school, and continue conversations or arguments on the road.

The school has no power to control users' behaviour once they leave school premises, and the Council already does not keep daytime traffic in check, so how can it ensure that residents do not suffer further stress, noise, and air pollution in the evenings and at weekends too?

Answer

A parking management plan will be set up between the Borough Council, Maiden Erlegh School and the two key partner clubs to ensure that parking and traffic flow will have minimal impact on the local environment. A noise management plan will also be put in place and shared with the key partners and clubs to set out robust policies and procedures to help monitor noise level and reduce its impact.

The Council, within the Steering Group framework, will encourage active and cleaner travel for members of the key partner clubs through walking, cycling and car and lift share particularly for sessions on weekdays. The key partner clubs will design a briefing for visiting teams to ensure that they follow guidance on parking and noise.

Separately a Service Level Agreement will be signed by the school and the key partner clubs to emphasise respecting the local neighbourhood by keeping noise to a minimum, with a focus on noise levels after 8pm on week days. This will give guidance on housekeeping and usage to avoid car park conversations and music from cars entering and leaving the site. Saturday and Sunday morning usage by

younger teams will also need to follow the noise management plan and guidance.

Supplementary Question:

How can this Plan ensure what happens outside of the school premises? The School could not. How can the traffic on the roads be ensured too?

Supplementary Answer:

The normal controls the Council applies on parking and anti-social behaviour, can be applied in this situation too.

65.3 Karen Brown asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

With regards to the 3G Pitch proposed for Maiden Erlegh How do you propose to ensure that the mental health of the local residents is not affected by excessive noise from users of the sports facility, cars with banging doors and excess fumes, 4.5 metre oppressive acoustic fencing, floodlighting till 10 pm weekday nights, all day and evening till 8pm at weekends. There is no respite from a 7 day and night a week facility. An area that is overall very tranquil and undisturbed will be turned into an area of noise and traffic chaos. Where is the care and consideration to families with young children, the elderly, and the myriad of health issues with which people may be struggling with?

Answer

In my answer to the previous question, I highlighted the parking management plan, the noise management plan, and the Service Level Agreement, and those serve as examples of how the Council would seek to minimise the impact on residents.

I would however point out that this project was initiated by the previous administration and much of the background work had taken place before the change of control. When taking over, I was briefed during the summer that all aspects of the project had been considered and so I took it forward to the Executive in July in good faith. However, the consultation has raised clearly legitimate questions and before we make any decision to proceed to the next steps, we will certainly and carefully review all such issues.

Supplementary Question:

Is it right in a cash strapped environment to pour council tax funds into a project that could turn into a white elephant if there are complaints from local residents to Environmental Health Officers. There are already four sites across the country in school settings, that have had after school games stopped due to complaints from residents about noise and lighting, at the moment with no suitable solution.

Supplementary Answer:

I am not sure that relates to the question as supplementaries should, but whether it is actually a white elephant is something that we have yet to determine, in the sense of that the business case will be very closely re-examined. We have a demand for more capacity in the Borough. We have a lot of teams actually having to practice outside of the Borough. However, that may or may not be the right place for a

facility.

65.4 Dr David Walker asked the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Business and Economic Development the following question, which was answered by the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, and put by Sandra Spencer in Dr Walker's absence:

Question

If the proposed scheme for a 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh School passes the scrutiny of the Council and then it passes to a Planning Application, it is crucial that houseowners living in Avalon Road and Sevenoaks Road know beforehand the EXACT distances of the pitch, fencing and lighting from their properties. My question, therefore, is what are these distances?

Answer

As we are currently at the feasibility stage of this project, planning so far whilst comprehensive has been an inexact survey. Should a decision be made to proceed to a full planning application, drawings and plans will be produced that show the exact distances of the pitch, fencing and lighting from the rear gardens of the properties in both Avalon Road and Sevenoaks Road.

In addition, the Football Foundation technical team would complete an onsite technical assessment to make recommendations to help minimise the impact of pitch, lights, and fencing.

65.5 Sandra Spencer asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

Maiden Erlegh School has a nature area, known as Buckhurst Copse, at the edge of the playing field which is a remnant of ancient woodland. This provides a habitat for a large variety of wildlife, including bats, many species of birds, moths and foxes which come into our adjacent garden. Moth traps have revealed the copse supports significantly more moths than surrounding roads. The playing field is home to millions of insects and invertebrates and therefore an essential feeding ground for the wildlife - in addition to absorbing carbon dioxide. What assessment have you carried out on the effect of ripping up the school field and replacing it with plastic, erecting a very tall fence that will hinder or prevent migration, non-stop noise seven days a week and floodlighting the entire area every evening which will seriously affect the bat and moth population?

Answer

I expressed my disappointment that an Ecology Survey has not yet been carried out. It should have been, but it will be carried out before any full planning application is made. I would say in defence of the Council, we have had only one Ecology Officer until recently, and the survey would be redundant in the event of not proceeding to planning.

The Council has no desire to impact wildlife in the area. However, it is important to

note that the existing floodlit Astro pitch (which we are proposing to replace) has been in use for more than 15 years and is already situated next to Buckhurst Copse.

Supplementary Question:

The floodlit pitch is behind our garden behind the copse. In fact, we never even knew that, that pitch was going to be built, and we did not know that the floodlights were going to be built. It just suddenly happened. I have noticed and my husband has noticed that it has got significantly more busy and is used a lot more than it used to be. It is an increasing problem already, and we do not feel that the School ever really consulted the residents over it. I am not aware if they even had planning approved for use outside school hours. They are certainly using it outside school hours. We have a summer house at the bottom of our garden which we cannot use in the evenings, because it is too noisy, with constant shouting of footballers. Quite frankly I am here mainly in support of my neighbours because we are already affected by this, it is true. Our neighbours do not know what is about to hit them, and what is more their gardens are going to be much nearer the pitch, which are going to be used infinitely than it is already being used.

My question to you, is do you care about the environment and the wildlife, and is this really progress?

Supplementary Answer:

I have a very simple answer. Yes, absolutely, and it will be one of the factors that we look at very closely in the next few weeks.

65.6 Andy Bailey asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question

Berkley homes produced a map showing 97% of new housing development taking place in the South of the Borough and only 3% taking place in the North.

Can the Executive explain how they plan to address this imbalance in the next iteration of the Local Planning Update?

Answer

The strategy established by the adopted Core Strategy local plan was to meet the majority of our development needs in four major development areas: North Wokingham, South Wokingham, Arborfield Garrison and South of the M4 in Shinfield.

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

Our new local plan must be prepared within the context of national planning policy and of course, much of the land in the north of the Borough forms part of the

Metropolitan Green Belt surrounding London.

National planning policy states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts being their openness and permanence. It is therefore no surprise that less development has taken place in the north of the Borough.

National planning policy does allow boundaries of Green Belt to be amended, however this can only be done in exceptional circumstances. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist, a local authority must be able to demonstrate that it has examined all other reasonable options.

At the time the Core Strategy was prepared, the Council concluded there were no exceptional circumstances, with development elsewhere being capable of meeting development needs in a sustainable way.

Whilst I must keep an open mind given the ongoing work on the new local plan, the Council will be required, as before, to consider all other reasonable options outside the Green Belt. The Council's most recent consultation on the Local Plan, included a number of proposed allocations in the north.

65.7 Marc Bates asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure the following question. Due to his inability to attend the following written answer was provided:

Question

The consultation for the 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh was undertaken following a Technical Appraisal. The technical appraisal only listed one con for the Maiden Erlegh site being 'Construction would need to be during school holidays', this would not actually be possible as it would take at least 12-14 weeks. Other cons that should have been included are Traffic issues, close proximity to housing (boundary less than 10 metres away) and loss of grass pitch (consultation document states 'no loss of grass pitch' in Pro's which is wrong). The technical appraisal is not fit for purpose and misleading to residents and others who may rely on it such as the Football Foundation. Would the Council agree that a Technical Appraisal is a key part of any consultation of this type and therefore this should be undertaken again properly if the proposal is not shelved following this initial consultation process?

Answer

I believe that you are referring to the options appraisal analysis that compared six theoretically possible sites. The consultation has raised one or two issues with this site that require further consideration, and we will look at them very closely before a decision is made on whether to proceed to a planning application.

It is correct to say that the length of construction would exceed the length of a school summer holiday, but it would be highly dependent on the weather conditions. While an existing grass pitch would be lost, there would still be enough space for a 6-a-side grass pitch.

65.8 Amanda Bates asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure the following question. Due to her inability to attend the following written answer was provided:

Question

According to information supplied by Sport England, noise levels for residential properties where the boundary is located less than 10 metres away from a 3G pitch will more than likely exceed the maximum noise levels recommended by the World Health Organisation notwithstanding the installation of high quality acoustic fencing. How are the Council going to protect local residents from the intrusion of noise and light from a facility less than 10m from property boundaries?

Answer

It is important that the potential for disturbance to neighbours is considered at an early stage in the planning and design of a 3G pitch. The Council has experience of these matters from elsewhere in the Borough. We would follow recommendations from colleagues in Planning and Environmental Health to mitigate noise levels and use the Sport England Framework relating to acoustics and noise levels.

66. 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 each petition.

Keith Baker	Keith Baker presented a petition of 4,238 signatures about stopping the proposed increase in parking charges across the Borough. <i>To be debated at the next appropriate Council meeting.</i>
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67. The Tenants' Charter Update 2022

Council received a presentation on the Tenants' Charter update 2022.

It was proposed by Stephen Conway and seconded by Shirley Boyt that the recommendations contained within the report be agreed.

Council received the Tenants Charter video.

Steve Bowers, Chair of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel, thanked Councillors and Officers for their assistance and emphasised that the Tenants wanted to continue to work in partnership.

A number of Members thanked Steve Bowers for his hard work, particularly with regards to progressing the Gorse Ride Project, and praised the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (TLIP) as a positive and constructive forum. In response to a Member question as to the one thing that he was most proud to have achieved for tenants, Steve Bowers commented that he was proud that TLIP worked well for the benefit of tenants. He wanted all tenants to feel safe and happy in their homes.

It was emphasised that the Tenants Charter was a living, breathing document.

Members thanked Simon Price, Assistant Director Housing, for his hard work over the years and referred to his good work with tenants, refugees in the Borough and reducing the number of rough sleepers.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council considers the new aspirations outlined in the Tenants Charter update 2022 report and continue to work in partnership with the Tennant Volunteers to achieve these;
- 2) the Tenant Charter video be noted;
- 3) the report Three Years on – What we have achieved so far! be noted.

68. Council Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Consultation

Council considered the proposed response to the Local Government Boundary Commission consultation.

It was proposed by Prue Bray and seconded by Stephen Conway that the recommendation be agreed.

Prue Bray thanked the Electoral Review Working Group and officers for their work. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was looking at the Borough's internal ward boundaries as part of a review, with the aim that so far as possible each councillor represented a similar number of residents. Prue Bray indicated that because the Council had opted to undertake elections by thirds, the LGBCE assumed that all wards would be three Member wards, unless there was a good reason not to. The LGBCE had agreed that the Council should continue with 54 councillors.

The LGBCE had asked for proposals by 7 November. Prue Bray commented that Town and Parish Councils, individuals and political parties were likely to submit their own responses. The report detailed the Council's submission as detailed by the Working Group and contained both majority recommendations and also minority recommendations in the few areas where there was not consensus.

Michael Firmager stated that wards should reflect the area that they represented. He questioned having Sonning, Charvil, Wargrave and Remenham as one large northern ward, and expressed concern that they would lose their identities. Michael Firmager was of the view that there was a better relationship with residents and a better understanding of local issues, in one Member wards.

Stuart Munro questioned why the Council was continuing with elections by thirds.

Peter Harper stated that the Working Group worked well. However, he felt that in two cases the proposed structure did not match the community. He was of the view

that rural Hurst had little in common with Twyford, and Swallowfield had little in common with Shinfield and Spencer's Wood.

Gary Cowan favoured the inclusion of single Member wards. He felt that independent candidates would be discouraged from standing in a three Member ward system.

Jim Frewin emphasised that it was about what residents recognised as a community not balancing numbers.

Andy Croy felt that the villages would not lose their identities if they were part of larger wards.

Stephen Conway emphasised that nothing was prescribed and that the report contained both majority and minority recommendations.

Prue Bray indicated that the Commission had made it clear that three Member wards were expected given the Council's use of elections by thirds. She emphasised that the retention of Sonning as a single Member ward had not been raised at the Working Group, and that the existing ward of Swallowfield already contained the villages of Riseley and Farley Hill. Prue Bray stated that if the submission was not agreed at Council she would submit it as the Chair of the Working Group and explain what had happened at the meeting.

In accordance with Section 4.2.15.5 a recorded vote was requested.

The result of the voting is as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Rachel Bishop Firth	Gary Cowan	Sam Akhtar
Shirley Boyt	Jim Frewin	Keith Baker
Prue Bray		Parry Batth
Rachel Burgess		Laura Blumenthal
Stephen Conway		Chris Bowring
David Cornish		Anne Chadwick
Andy Croy		Phil Cunnington
Peter Dennis		David Davies
Lindsay Ferris		Michael Firmager
Paul Fishwick		Peter Harper
Maria Gee		Pauline Helliard Symons
David Hare		Graham Howe
Chris Johnson		Norman Jorgensen
Clive Jones		Pauline Jorgensen
Sarah Kerr		John Kaiser
Tahir Maher		Abdul Loyes
Morag Malvern		Charles Margetts
Adrian Mather		Rebecca Margetts

Andrew Mickleburgh		Stuart Munro
Alistair Neal		Jackie Rance
Beth Rowland		Bill Soane
Ian Shenton		Alison Swaddle
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey		Shahid Younis
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey		
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		

RESOLVED: That the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) as recommended by the Electoral Review Working Group and set out in Appendix 1 and the accompanying maps, be approved.

69. Changes to the Constitution

Council considered proposed changes to the Council's Constitution.

It was proposed by Imogen Shepherd-Dubey and seconded by Prue Bray that the recommendations contained within the report be approved, subject to the withdrawal of recommendations 1a) and 1d). Members had also received additional recommendations as part of a supplementary agenda.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey took Council through the proposed amendments to the Constitution. Much of what was recommended was designed to speed up Council meetings, as Council was consistently unable to get through all of the business on meeting agendas.

Pauline Jorgensen commented that she welcomed the withdrawal of the recommendation relating to questions, and that whilst she could support some suggestions, she could not support all. She felt that the proposal that the Chief Finance Officer provide costings for all Motions would be overly onerous for Officers.

In accordance with Section 4.2.15.5 a recorded vote was requested for recommendations 1 c), 1e), 5 and 7.

Rachel Burgess stated that she supported many of the recommendations, but felt that the inclusion of the word 'unlawful encampments' in place of 'travellers' under section 5.2.10.4, did not satisfactorily resolve the issue. In addition, she felt that the Chair of Executive meetings should not be able to make a speech at the start of meetings, and that the agenda should be for business items only.

Keith Baker questioned how the Constitution Review Working Group could agree proposals, only for some of them to be withdrawn prior to the meeting. He queried the proposal that business items which were 'to note' only had a discussion time of 10 minutes, which he felt was too short and that some important reports would not receive a sufficient debate as a result. Keith Baker felt that Council should be able to continue to vote for an extension of the meeting or not, in the same way as other Committees.

Gary Cowan felt that the Constitution was not fit for purpose and required a rewrite.

Alison Swaddle felt that the proposal that the size of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be agreed at Annual Council, should not be agreed.

Chris Bowring believed that the recommendations around the Planning Committee did not make sense. Stephen Conway emphasised that this had been approved by the Planning Committee.

Jim Frewin commented that he appreciated the amount of work that had gone into the review, but he too felt that the Constitution was in need of a rewrite.

Prue Bray acknowledged that it was a long list of proposed amendments. Whilst sympathetic she felt that a rewrite of the Constitution was not a priority at the time. She explained that 1b was to correct an incorrect paragraph reference which had been incorrect for some time. The proposal set out in 1c) was to facilitate the Motion process and would allow the debate of Motions in the full knowledge of the likely costs. Whilst she understood concerns around the 'to note' items, the majority of reports did not fall into this category. The proposed amendment was designed to speed up the meetings. Prue Bray appreciated the sensitivities around the reference to 'unlawful encampments' but emphasised that reference had to be made in some form and could not just be removed from the Constitution. She went on to refer to the proposed amendments relating to the size of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and indicated that this related to political proportionality.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The following proposals relating to the following areas of Council Rules of Procedure be agreed:
 - b) that Rules 4.2.1.1 Timing and order of business [Annual Council] and 4.2.2.1 Timing and order of business [Ordinary Council meetings] be amended as set out in paragraph 2 of the report;
 - c) that Rule 4.2.13.13 Motions on Expenditure or Revenue be deleted and Rule 4.2.11.2 be amended as set out in paragraph 3 of the report;
 - e) that Rule 4.2.2.1 Timing and Order of Business (Ordinary Meetings be amended as set out in paragraph 5 of the report;
 - f) that Rules 4.2.9.5, 4.2.10.5, 5.4.29 and 5.4.37 – Scope of Public and Member Questions be amended as set out in paragraph 6 of the report;
 - g) Rules 4.2.8 Duration of Meetings, 4.2.8.1 Consideration of Motions and 4.2.12 Motions without Notice be amended, as set out in paragraph 7 of the report;
- 2) that recommendation 2 not be agreed;
- 3) it be noted that Rule 5.2.7.17 [Responsibilities of Deputy Leader and

Executive Member for Housing] as set out in paragraph 8 of the report, will be added;

- 4) that recommendation 4 not be agreed;
- 5) that Section 6.2 Overview and Scrutiny, be amended as set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the report:
- 6) changes to Chapter 8.2 – Planning Committee Procedure Rules as set out in paragraph 12 of the report;
- 7) changes to Chapter 8.3 – Planning Member Guidelines on Good Practice as set out in paragraph 13 of the report
- 8) a Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee be established;
- 9) the proposed terms of reference for the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved;
- 10) the composition of the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee be four Wokingham Borough Partnership Members and three Conservative Members, plus substitute Members (four/three) as advised by the Group Leaders;
- 11) the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee be elected at the first meeting.

The results of the recorded votes were as follows:

Recommendation 1c:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	
Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker	
Prue Bray	Parry Batth	
Rachel Burgess	Laura Blumenthal	
Stephen Conway	Chris Bowring	
David Cornish	Anne Chadwick	
Andy Croy	Gary Cowan	
Peter Dennis	Phil Cunnington	
Lindsay Ferris	David Davies	
Paul Fishwick	Michael Firmager	
Jim Frewin	Peter Harper	
Maria Gee	Pauline Helliard Symons	
David Hare	Graham Howe	
Chris Johnson	Norman Jorgensen	
Clive Jones	Pauline Jorgensen	
Sarah Kerr	John Kaiser	
Tahir Maher	Abdul Loyes	

Morag Malvern	Charles Margetts	
Adrian Mather	Rebecca Margetts	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Stuart Munro	
Alistair Neal	Jackie Rance	
Beth Rowland	Bill Soane	
Ian Shenton	Alison Swaddle	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Shahid Younis	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey		
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		

Recommendation 1e:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Shirley Boyt
Prue Bray	Keith Baker	Jim Frewin
Rachel Burgess	Parry Batth	
Stephen Conway	Laura Blumenthal	
David Cornish	Chris Bowring	
Andy Croy	Anne Chadwick	
Peter Dennis	Gary Cowan	
Lindsay Ferris	Phil Cunnington	
Paul Fishwick	David Davies	
Maria Gee	Michael Firmager	
David Hare	Peter Harper	
Chris Johnson	Pauline Helliard Symons	
Clive Jones	Graham Howe	
Sarah Kerr	Norman Jorgensen	
Tahir Maher	Pauline Jorgensen	
Morag Malvern	John Kaiser	
Adrian Mather	Abdul Loyes	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Charles Margetts	
Alistair Neal	Rebecca Margetts	
Beth Rowland	Stuart Munro	
Ian Shenton	Jackie Rance	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Bill Soane	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Alison Swaddle	
Caroline Smith	Shahid Younis	
Mike Smith		

Recommendation 5:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Jim Frewin
Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker	

Prue Bray	Parry Batth	
Rachel Burgess	Laura Blumenthal	
Stephen Conway	Chris Bowring	
David Cornish	Anne Chadwick	
Andy Croy	Gary Cowan	
Peter Dennis	Phil Cunnington	
Lindsay Ferris	David Davies	
Paul Fishwick	Michael Firmager	
Maria Gee	Peter Harper	
David Hare	Pauline Helliard Symons	
Chris Johnson	Graham Howe	
Clive Jones	Norman Jorgensen	
Sarah Kerr	Pauline Jorgensen	
Tahir Maher	John Kaiser	
Morag Malvern	Abdul Loyes	
Adrian Mather	Charles Margetts	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Rebecca Margetts	
Alistair Neal	Stuart Munro	
Beth Rowland	Jackie Rance	
Ian Shenton	Bill Soane	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Alison Swaddle	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Shahid Younis	
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		

Recommendation 7:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	
Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker	
Prue Bray	Parry Batth	
Rachel Burgess	Laura Blumenthal	
Stephen Conway	Chris Bowring	
David Cornish	Anne Chadwick	
Andy Croy	Gary Cowan	
Peter Dennis	Phil Cunnington	
Lindsay Ferris	David Davies	
Paul Fishwick	Michael Firmager	
Maria Gee	Jim Frewin	
David Hare	Peter Harper	
Chris Johnson	Pauline Helliard Symons	
Clive Jones	Graham Howe	
Sarah Kerr	Norman Jorgensen	
Tahir Maher	Pauline Jorgensen	
Morag Malvern	John Kaiser	
Adrian Mather	Abdul Loyes	

Andrew Mickleburgh	Charles Margetts	
Alistair Neal	Rebecca Margetts	
Beth Rowland	Stuart Munro	
Ian Shenton	Jackie Rance	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Bill Soane	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Alison Swaddle	
Caroline Smith	Shahid Younis	
Mike Smith		

70. Member Question Time

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

70.1 Graham Howe asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Given that we all know the demand for SEND places is growing, can the Lead Member explain how capacity is going to be accommodated in a timely manner by having 2 new schools built at Rooks Nest and Grays Farm, which will take a considerable amount of time for planning consent, inclusion in the local plan, and funding to be agreed with the Department of Education?

Answer

It is the case that demand for Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessments continues to increase which provides for additional pressure on SEND places within the Borough as more Assessments are converted into Education, Health and Care Plan's.

In addition to the two new schools that we are currently applying for at Rooks Nest and Grays Farm, we look forward to the opening of Oak Tree Special School in Winnersh from September 2023.

In the meantime, we continue to work with Addington Special School, and have had initial discussions with Chiltern Way Special School on increasing the numbers of specialist places available locally.

We are also working on delivering a programme of system change activity to support schools, settings, and families, that will assist in ensuring that children with SEND are identified early, supported into the right provision to meet their needs at the right time, whilst also reducing demand for the Special School places.

At this point in the meeting, 10.01pm, 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 Prue Bray and seconded by Stephen Conway.

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

Supplementary Question:

I just wonder if this is an excuse to build on the sites that the Liberal Democrats have previously said they would build on over their dead bodies. What criteria is being used in making these sites suitable for schools, when there are other sites such as Farley Hill School, that maybe could be used and considered, not only Farley Hill, where capital and operating budgets could be more closely managed?

Supplementary Answer:

Interesting supplementary. Farley Hill is being considered along with all the other assets that the Council has, so that we can look for places for not just special schools, but also satellite buildings, outreach, whatever else we can possibly do. I am slightly surprised that you are asking me this question, given that less than six months ago you were the Executive Member and you had done absolutely nothing since 2019 to provide extra capacity. We are doing everything in our power to cope with this increasing demand, which you knew about, which was in the previous SEN Strategy, and has not been addressed. We will continue to do that. As for the idea that there are sort of magic solutions, sometimes you have to do what you have to do. We need those SEN places, and we have to act like mature grown-up adults and make difficult decisions, which you singly failed to do as an administration.

70.2 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty the following question:**Question**

The Government announced in May that it would be extending its Household Support Fund scheme in October, so this Council knew it would get a guaranteed lump sum to spend on helping struggling residents. Please can you confirm that it is the Government's Household Support Fund that will be funding free school meals during holidays in the Borough, right up to May 2023?

Answer

The Government announced its intention to continue the Household Support Fund in May 2022 but there was no guarantee that Wokingham Borough Council would receive any of this money. If we did get funding, there was no guarantee of what amount we would receive and whether there would be any conditions set on how it should be spent. As we have seen from the last few weeks, the government announcing its intentions is no guarantee that those intentions will be delivered.

Our Council officers got draft guidance in August of how grants could be spent. We got the final confirmation that we would get money, the amount that we would receive, and the final guidance on how it could be spent on 30 September 2022.

Wokingham's Liberal Democrat administration had meanwhile decided that regardless of the government's funding decisions, we would fund those families who rely on benefits related free school meals during term time, so that they can feed their children during the school holidays. We guaranteed that we will provide this funding up until and including the May half term in 2023. Given the Council's financial position it would have been very difficult to provide this help without support from central government, but we were prepared to make this commitment to support local families.

Some of the Household Support Fund money will be spent on delivering on this commitment. The remainder will be used to provide grants to other households in the Borough who are struggling with the cost of living, and to fund our hardship alliance partners who are administering the scheme and providing advice to residents in need in these difficult times.

Supplementary Question:

Can you tell me why there is a lack of transparency in Council communications over where the Household Support Fund has come from, and how much has been awarded to the Council, this month? These key bits of information are not included anywhere around this month's award. Please could there be more transparency with residents.

Supplementary Answer:

You are a member of the Working Party of course, and we will take on board any feedback about how we can improve the communications.

70.3 Chris Bowring asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure the following question:

Question

At the September meeting of the Executive, it was resolved to reduce the number of blue waste bags per property per annum from 80 to 54. As an afterthought, or so it seemed to me, you decided to keep the possibility of more blue bags for larger households 'under review'. What exactly do you propose to 'review' and why, after being in control of the Council for five months, were you unable to bring a fully formed policy to the executive?

Answer:

I think it is important to clarify that the report presented to the Executive was an options paper that asked the Executive to consider and approve one of two options in relation to the reduction in provision of blue bags to residents. The Executive meetings provide an opportunity for the Executive to review, discuss and challenge the options proposed and this is exactly what occurred during the meeting. It is not a rubber stamp exercise.

The report explained that the impact of both options on larger families has been considered and that any negative impact as a result of a reduction in provision will be mitigated through the provision of additional green recycling bags given that 57% of the composition of the contents of the average blue bag is recyclable. The Executive discussed the two options and whilst it was unanimously agreed that option 1, a reduction in number of blue bags from 80 to 54, to stay within Budget, should be progressed, it was felt that alongside delivery of this option, officers should also consider other ways to cater for larger families in addition to the provision of extra green recycling bags.

Supplementary Question:

The implication is that you were considering more blue bags. The decision to reduce from 80 to 54 was a key decision. It came to the Executive. An increase for some

households of blue bags, would that be a key decision too, and if so, that will have to go to the Executive and should be on the forward programme, and would you be able to implement that in time for whenever it is that you are going to send the blue bags out, January or February?

Supplementary Answer:

Why is that a key decision?

71. Minutes of Committee Meetings and Ward Matters

71.1 Maria Gee asked the Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty the following question:

Question:

Some of my local residents have had difficulty accessing timetables for the new leisure centre. A lot of the advice is to go online. It has not improved recently. I tried to look for the Equalities Impact Assessments for the Centre, but they started as soon as you walked through the door rather than accessing information prior to walking through the door, so I am just wondering if we can have Equalities Impact Assessments that look at access from cradle to grave as it were, and will they be published on the website?

Answer:

I have also had a number of queries of the sort that you just described. I think it is really important that we have very good, very thorough Equalities Impact Assessments. I have also been talking to the Officers about these. We have got some ideas on how we can improve them, and we have a meeting in fact next week, to review some of these ideas. But yes, in summary, I believe we need to have very full, very thorough Equalities Impact Assessments, and yes, I have asked if they can be published on the website, with the exception of where we do agree that they cannot because of confidentiality reasons. As a general rule they should be on the website.

71.2 Laura Blumenthal asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

This Council's Cycling Infrastructure Plan proposes moving roundabouts on Nightingale Road in Woodley. This has worried my residents as they were originally installed on safety grounds. Please can you explain why removing the roundabouts, including one right next to a primary school, is now considered safe?

Answer:

There are not any firm proposals to remove any roundabouts. You are talking about the LCWIP? The LCWIP is at very high level, and they are just ideas at the moment. The next stage is then to look at what would be the primary routes, so it is the LCWIP you are talking about not the Active Travel route. So that is at a very high level. We would then be going to the primary routes and looking at those particular ones in a priority order, and detailed designs would then be undertaken, and there will be consultation on those detailed designs.

71.3 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services the following question:

Question:

We had a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee earlier this month, and we discussed the Climate Emergency and solar farms in that, so it is a follow up from that really.

A couple of weeks ago the Government Minister for the Environment said that they were going to reclassify agricultural land to prevent the building of solar farms on land. Now we have three or four solar farms planned on our agricultural land. Could the Member tell me, will this reclassification of our land prevent us from building the three or four extra solar farms that we have yet to start?

Answer:

Firstly, Barkham Solar Farm would not be affected because planning has obviously already been granted for that. For future solar farms, my understanding is that it is how it is balanced at planning, so it is how much weight is given to these things at planning. At the moment land that is on best and most versatile land, which is agricultural land grades 1, 2 and 3a, it is advised that we have no development, but it can be superseded should there be something going on which is actually more beneficial such as solar farms. What they are saying is extending it to more classifications of agricultural land, so it will still go through the planning, and it is about the right determination of weight on that.

Having said that, that is a policy which they say is potentially coming out, it is not actually based on evidence. It is actually against what the department is advising, and it will leave any agricultural land that is not suitable for solar farms, so it would mean hardly any solar farms could be built in the country. We would not meet our climate goals as a country.

Just interestingly, currently, 0.1% of the land in the UK has solar farms on it, and if we were to build solar farms to meet our climate expectations, the land taken to cover that would still be half the amount that we currently use for golf courses in the country. That is how little it actually takes. If you add all the golf courses in the country, all the airports, and if you add all the current solar farms and the solar farms that we would need, it takes up 1% of total land in the country. Currently 56% of land is agricultural land, so just to put it into context. It was ill advised of the Government to say this, and I suspect that there will be another U-turn.

71.4 David Cornish asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:**Question:**

As he will know the Council has now submitted the Finchampstead Neighbourhood and Development Plan for Regulation 16 consultation. Under the provisions of the Localism Act it states that 'decisions on planning applications will be made using both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.' The provisions of the National Planning Quality Framework states that 'in situations where presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to housing applications, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to significantly outweigh the benefits.'

I am sure many Members here will be concerned that some Neighbourhood Plans

already made, and I think particularly of Barkham and Shinfield, do not seem to have weighed particularly heavily on the minds of our Planning Team, and some of their decisions. Could the Lead Member for Planning ensure that when it comes into force next Spring, the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan will be given the maximum possible weighting by the Planning Team of this Council when determining planning applications.

Answer:

The answer I will give is yes. I have had some responses back from the Planning Officers, and they have given me some provisional comments, so at the due time I will let you know.

71.5 Morag Malvern asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure the following question:

Question:

There have been numerous complaints from residents who live near the Latimer Road Recreation Ground about anti-social behaviour in the area. The ASB Team and the Police have both been very supportive and there does seem to have been a reduction in drug dealing and drug use, but we do still have problems. I have seen graffiti being sprayed on the children's slide, litter and broken glass in the playground, and also young adults who use the area as a place to drink and smoke. Could you update me please on the plans to reduce anti-social behaviour in the park?

Answer:

I was sorry to hear about the problems that were being caused by anti-social behaviour at Latimer Road. I can confirm that Officers have spoken to the Play Officer, and he is going to arrange some new signage to be installed there, as has previously been suggested. Obscene or otherwise offensive graffiti can of course be reported to the Cleaner and Greener Team, and they will arrange for its removal. I have also asked the Team to undertake a thorough clean of the area. On the Council's internal database there are no recorded reports of ASB at Latimer Road play area, so I would urge anyone witnessing ASB, to report it directly by emailing asb@wokingham.gov.uk or indeed by reporting to the Police by phoning 101 if it is a criminal matter. The location will also be added to the ASB Team's schedule for regular out of hours visits.

71.6 Parry Batth asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

Crossfield School, which is in my ward in Shinfield, has no safe crossing near the school entrance, and over the years traffic congestion at peak periods has worsened and children's safety crossing the road has become a major issue. The parents and the School Leadership have asked me to talk to Wokingham Borough Council to see if they can install a safe crossing near the school entrance. Some officer involvement has been welcomed at coming forwards, but it is taking a long time.

I would like to ask you whether you would like to agree and meet me and the School Leadership to assess children's safety crossing the road, and scope the need for

installing a safe crossing near the school entrance?

Answer:

You mention that there has been some officer involvement already, so it may well be on the Integrated Transport list for work being developed, and survey work, so I will certainly look into that. I am quite happy to come and meet you on site with the Headteacher of the school to have a look at the situation.

71.7 Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sports and Leisure the following question:

Question:

The play area on Dolphin Close, something hit two bollards, and when I reported it to the Council, the solution was to put a traffic cone on to one of them. They are very dangerous by the way. The second one they said, 'oh I do not have a second traffic cone, maybe I will come back for it another day.' They still have not come back and done it. Please can it be fixed so it is safe for children?

Answer:

Without a doubt we will, yes.

71.8 Phil Cunnington asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

I have been asked by owners of small businesses in my ward, and owners that live in my ward, of small businesses that are in the town, to ask the question because they are very concerned about the car parking changes that have been announced. They are worried that it will deter shoppers, not least on Sundays when many of them open at cost or even a loss in order to make the town centre a worthwhile place to visit on a Sunday. So, the question is do the Liberal Democrat and Labour coalition not care how their policy may damage these retailers, and put a 'closed for business' sign on Wokingham town centre?

Answer:

There is a call in next week as you probably realise. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee do decide that will go ahead and not refer it back to the Executive, a Traffic Regulation Order will be then be drafted, and the public and businesses will have a chance to air their views during that consultation period.

71.9 Andrew Mickleburgh asked the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways the following question:

Question:

A number of times faults with streetlights have been due to cabling issue, which I understand relies on SSEN to rectify. I believe this is the case regarding three adjacent street lights on a very busy arterial road in my Hawkedon ward. I first reported these at the start of the year. Contractors' efforts to get the lights working seem to have failed.

My question is, when cabling problems occur on very busy roads, where lighting problems arguably cause significant road safety issues, are there any legal responsibilities on the different stakeholders to get the matter resolved in a timely manner?

Answer:

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks do have a standard turnaround of 35 days, which they are then meant to report through to Ofgem. What I do not know, and I cannot find out through Officers, is how that feedback comes back to Wokingham Borough Council, and when they do fix any lights, or if there is a delay, what mechanism or communication channels are open from SEN back to Wokingham Borough Council. This has come up a couple of weeks ago on a couple of street lights that I reported, and I will certainly look out and find that information and respond back to you, because it is that communication side when they are out on site, going back to Ofgem, what information are we getting back from Ofgem as well?

71.10 Charles Margetts asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question:

At the Council meeting in July, I asked if the Council was committed to the provision of a new standalone Sixth Form, extra Year 7 places and extra SEN provision at Bohunt School by September 2023. She responded that this was the case and agreed to provide regular updates to local Members. One update followed about a week later. Last week an Officer in Children's Services told me that delivery of the new Sixth Form building by September 2023 is now highly unlikely. Temporary classrooms may be needed to allow this, and made no mention of the SEN provision. In a subsequent discussion that I had with a senior member of the Bohunt Trust the comment was made that 'the pace of movement within WBC on this issue was glacial and there had been no meaningful progress since July.'

I would like to ask Councillor Bray to look into this and find out what is going wrong, and also find out who will pay for the financial cost of the temporary classrooms now necessary. Please can she ensure that progress is accelerated to ensure that there are no further delays? I would finally like ask if she would repeat again her commitment that the Sixth Form, Year 7 places and additional SEN provision will be delivered in September for 2023, and commit to provide regular updates for local Members of all political parties on the delivery of this critical piece of local infrastructure?

Answer:

We are committed to it. There are, as you will understand, complications to do with the fact that there has already been one design, and we need to change the design, and there is quite a lot of other things going on in Children's Services, some of which Councillor Howe referred to earlier on in the meeting. So yes, I am committed to it. We have every intention of opening provision in September. All the elements that you mentioned are included in that and we will do whatever we can, and I will, as I have been before be committed to trying to deliver it. We have a meeting with Bohunt on 31 October where we will be discussing progress, and I have already

initiated a system of weekly emails to Bohunt to tell them what the process is. That was put in place a couple of weeks ago.

71.11 John Kaiser asked the Executive Member Planning and the Local Plan the following question:

Question:

My residents are very concerned about the number of consultation letters that they are getting from developers now, and the surrounding wards, 400 homes in Evendons, 1,000 homes in Arborfield and another 1,000 homes in Barkham. Are you allowing the developers to write our Local Plan?

Answer:

No.

71.12 Keith Baker asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question:

Can I say right from the beginning of this speech that the issues that I am raising now started with the previous administration. My request is can you as Leader help in completing these Code of Conduct complaints?

A variety of Woodley Town Councillors have six outstanding Code of Conduct complaints in the system, for of which have been in the system since 2020. The other two in the system, since 2021. So, as we celebrate, or I should say commiserate a two year anniversary of the very first one, which was acknowledged on 8 October 2020, I am reaching out to you Councillor Jones to help me get these complaints processed as soon as possible. Now periodically over those two years I have been in communication with Andrew Moulton as you would expect about the lack of progress on these complaints, but nothing has happened. I did a response about a particular set of complaints saying he was in contact with the Party of the person being complained against, nationally, to see what influence they can bring to the matter. As far as I can see that is just designed to allow the Council to avoid making a decision.

One individual who has several outstanding complaints, constantly brags at our Town Council meeting, that he is untouchable, and that all complaints that were total nuisance, are in his words 'rubbish.' He even went to the press following a determination and named all participants and everything about the complaint, which in itself is a Code of Conduct break. Now on 27 February this year I wrote both to the Chief Executive and Andrew Moulton asking for rapid action, but as you can see, the fact that I am asking for help here now, means nothing has happened.

Woodley Town Councillors have now totally and utterly lost all faith in the WBC Standards Committee, such they will no longer submit any complaints because why bother because nothing will happen. Can you please help me?

Answer:

Thank you for acknowledging when these happened. Quite some time ago. They really should have been dealt with. You will know having been Leader of the Council before, that you do not know everything that is going on, certainly in the Standards

Board. You do not, but I will work with you to get some solution. One thing I will say is absolutely nobody is untouchable, nobody.

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

Clive Jones, Leader of the Council:

We all know that there is a cost of living crisis affecting all of us. This has been made worse by the government's mini budget a few weeks ago. Although much of the Budget has been reversed this week, considerable damage has been done which will see mortgages for millions of people increase by over £500 a month, a staggering £6,000 a year. Many families in Wokingham will be struggling to cope with the increases cost of food. Over the last year or so some foods have risen by 30% or more. On top of this they have to struggle with increases in energy costs which have doubled since last winter, and could be set to rise again in March now that the energy price guarantee which was to have been for two years has been cut back to only six months. Help is available to those struggling due to the cost of living crisis in Wokingham Borough. The Council is working in partnership with Age UK Berkshire, Citizens Advice Wokingham, First Days children's charity, Wokingham Food Bank and Wokingham United Charities to respond to these issues locally. This Group known as the Hardship Alliance will be launching a range of initiatives in the weeks ahead to help residents from all across the Borough. The Hardship Alliance is bringing the Borough together to help all those in need, as we respond to the cost of living crisis. With the Borough Council, they are going to provide a helping hand to people through a variety of projects in the winter. Financial pressures continue to rise, and these schemes will use our well established voluntary and community sector to step up once again to do what they do best, to provide a lifeline to those that need one. Madam Mayor, I would urge residents to feed into this incredible support already offered across the area's voluntary, community and faith sectors. Residents are urged to come forward as soon as possible if they are struggling. Initial projects to help them include; providing support, reassurance, and advice for those who are struggling, setting up places and activities where people can visit and keep warm throughout the winter. The Alliance and Council staff will work together in community locations to provide advice and guidance for anyone in the community that needs help, support for those in a period of poverty; a new round of household support fund to help those in need of support for food and energy costs; create an online cost of living help hub to guide people to help available, and to promote of getting involved in support in the community. More details of these and other schemes will be announced once they are finalised. The cost of living crisis is putting many of our residents under enormous pressure. We are working with partners to work together to alleviate problems as best as we can. We cannot do everything, but in collaboration with our excellent voluntary and community sector, we can offer help to those people in increasing need. If residents need a helping hand in these difficult times, they should reach out to One Front Door as soon as possible. Their team of experienced volunteers are speaking to many people who are facing the same issues, including many people who have not had to ask for help before. They have enormous experience and will support residents to find the best solution to whatever it is, you are facing. Madam Mayor, this administration will do whatever we can to help the least well off residents through these very difficult times.

Paul Fishwick, Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways:

At the 21 July meeting of Council, I highlighted that I had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner on 24 June related to the lack of mobile speed enforcement across the Borough, over the past three years. I received a response on 13 September which provided information on the road's policing unit, where every month they are allocated a number of priority roads to target with enforcement work, due to the high level of collisions, excessive speed, and high casualty rates due to drivers using mobile phones. The PCC said that for Wokingham, thankfully, none of our roads, currently feature in these categories. However, the PCC has indicated that Thames Valley Police detected 671 speeding offences on Wokingham roads during April 2022 from their fixed mobile speed cameras, with vast majority being in 30mph speed limit areas. I do not know how many cameras this refers to, or for what duration of April. I have therefore asked for clarification on several points raised in the PCC's response.

On another subject, I would like to thank Shinfield South Members, Councillors Chris Johnson, Jim Frewin, and Jackie Rance, as well as Shinfield Parish Council, for alerting me about the overcrowding issues on the 15:32 Leopard 3 bus service, starting at Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. I would also like to thank Wokingham Borough Council Officer Rebecca Brooks and Reading Buses for their swift work in coming up with an interim solution, to double up this service towards Shinfield until a longer term solution, can be found.

At the last meeting of Council, we were presented with a petition relating to the Floreat School. I was planning that evening on updating the Chamber about the plans for the road, but the meeting ran out of time, hence the update today. In accordance with the Department of Transport Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits, the Borough Council evaluates the appropriate speed limit outside primary schools. As a new school the Floreat has been assessed as a 20mph. Advisory speed limit signs with flashing lights are planned to be installed during late October 2022 and be operational after half term.

73. Statement from Council Owned Companies

Clive Jones, Non-Executive Director of Loddon Homes and WBC Holdings Ltd:

The Non Executive Directors of Loddon Homes and Berry Brook Homes recently attended an Away Day with Councillor Directors and Executives of the companies. This was an opportunity for the Boards to look forwards to the future with a higher degree of clarity than appears to have been shared with other Executive and Non Executive Directors, by the previous administration. Consideration will be given to merging the Boards. It may well be that there can be reductions in operational costs and some efficiency savings. The Councillor Directors made it clear that they were open to new ideas and innovation moving forwards. We were able to confirm that we wanted to see an increase in the number of affordable homes in the Borough. We were also certain that, that would be the view of the whole Borough Council, not just the Liberal Democrat Group. A Non Executive Director commented that this was the first meeting where all of the Directors were on the same page, the Non Executive Directors and the Councillor Directors.

74. Motions

74.1 Motion 489 submitted by Laura Blumenthal

Council considered the following Motion, proposed by Laura Blumenthal, and seconded by Sam Akhtar.

‘At present, a Member taking leave to look after their new-born or newly adopted child could find themselves in breach of s85(1), Local Government Act 1972 (“if a member of a Local Authority fails, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the Authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority”).

It is therefore proposed that this Council agrees the following Motion with the intention of introducing a Leave Policy for Members who become parents. This Council therefore resolves that: The Assistant Director of Governance be commissioned to work with the Head of Legal and the Assistant Director of Human Resources, to draft a Leave Policy for Members who become parents, taking into account guidance issued by the LGA, for approval by Council at the earliest opportunity.’

RESOLVED: That at present, a Member taking leave to look after their new-born or newly adopted child could find themselves in breach of s85(1), Local Government Act 1972 (“if a member of a Local Authority fails, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the Authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority”).

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74.2 Motion 490 submitted by Rachel Bishop-Firth

Council considered the following Motion, proposed by Rachel Bishop-Firth, and seconded by Stephen Conway.

‘Many Wokingham residents are facing severe and increasing financial hardship.

By September 2022:

- The cost of living was rising by 9.9% with some forecasts as high as 18.6% in the new year, while rises in pay and benefits fell far short of this.
- Typical household energy bills were expected to be over £2,500 a year.
- Interest rates had reached a 20 year high, putting added pressure on rents and mortgages.
- The removal of the temporary £20 a week uplift in universal credit had substantially reduced the income of those living on the lowest incomes.
- For many Wokingham residents, price increases will be a real concern. For

residents on the lowest incomes who were already struggling to heat their homes and feed their families, they're a disaster. Many of these residents cannot increase their income through work, for example because they have full time caring responsibilities or are incapacitated.

Use of foodbanks was soaring even before the latest financial turmoil. Wokingham Foodbank distributed 4,811 crisis food parcels between April 2021 and March 2022, which was a 78% increase on the previous financial year.

Voluntary and community organisations are seeing a steep increase in residents approaching them for help over the course of this year, and they are already deeply concerned. They are seeing increased numbers of people who were previously coping financially but are now struggling.

Responding to this crisis adequately will take community-wide action and central government backing of the kind that we saw during the Covid crisis, at a time that council finances are also under enormous pressure because of inflation.

Wokingham Borough Council therefore declares a Cost of Living Crisis in the borough, and commits to doing all that we can to support our residents during this very difficult time. We commit that this will be one of the council's main priorities during the coming winter, and will work with the Hardship Alliance and the Hardship Alliance Action Group to support our residents.'

RESOLVED: That

Many Wokingham residents are facing severe and increasing financial hardship.

By September 2022:

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- Typical household energy bills were expected to be over £2,500 a year.
- Interest rates had reached a 20 year high, putting added pressure on rents and mortgages.
- The removal of the temporary £20 a week uplift in universal credit had substantially reduced the income of those living on the lowest incomes.
- For many Wokingham residents, price increases will be a real concern. For residents on the lowest incomes who were already struggling to heat their homes and feed their families, they're a disaster. Many of these residents cannot increase their income through work, for example because they have full time caring responsibilities or are incapacitated.

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Wokingham Borough Council therefore declares a Cost of Living Crisis in the borough, and commits to doing all that we can to support our residents during this very difficult time. We commit that this will be one of the council's main priorities during the coming winter, and will work with the Hardship Alliance and the Hardship Alliance Action Group to support our residents.

74.3 Motion 491 submitted by Rebecca Margetts

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

74.4 Motion 492 submitted by Charles Margetts

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

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