

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.45 PM

Members Present

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

95. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Barrie Patman.

96. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor subject to the following amendment: 'Rachel Bishop Firth indicated that the speech attributed to Maria Gee under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23 item, had been given by herself.'

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Charles Margetts declared a Personal and Prejudicial Interest in Item 95 Optalis Contract Renewal 2022, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis Ltd. He left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

Councillor John Halsall declared a Personal Interest in Item 95 Optalis Contract Renewal 2022, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis Holdings Ltd.

Councillor John Kaiser declared a Personal Interest in Item 95 Optalis Contract Renewal 2022, on the grounds that he was a Non-Executive Director of Optalis Holdings Ltd.

98. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked all those that had donated to or bought tickets for the forthcoming Mayor's event. He was pleased to announce that the event was sold out and encouraged the donation of further auction prizes.

The Mayor went on to congratulate Her Majesty The Queen who on the 6th February became the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee after 70 years of service.

99. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

99.1 Adrian Betteridge asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

The sum of the commitments to reduce CO2 in the Transport Section of the Council's

Climate Emergency Action Plan is that, by 2030, vehicle traffic will be reduced by 40%, and levels of walking and cycling will be 250% and 450% respectively of their current levels.

How confident is the Council in achieving this target based on the current actions and investment and what further actions does it intend to take to improve this confidence?

Answer

Thank you for your question.

Wokingham Borough Council has made a commitment to play as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. The Council has demonstrated this commitment by developing a clear and ambitious climate emergency action plan. The plan was prepared as a predictive tool that provides a clear picture on the scale of the challenge and the approach needed to reduce our carbon emissions.

The Council's powers to reduce carbon emissions are, though, limited and we need to look at the wider picture where our role as a community leader and influencer will be equally, if not more, critical. More than half of the emissions cuts needed will rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions - decisions that are made at a local and individual level. Many of these decisions can be positively influenced by having supporting infrastructure and systems in place.

Reducing carbon emissions from transport is one of the biggest challenges in the Borough. The Council is taking a holistic approach that will support our residents with both infrastructure and education and awareness programmes. The Council strives to engage and involve the community through events and educational activities such as cycle training, air quality monitoring, anti-idling campaigns and through supporting our schools.

We want our residents to adopt more active and sustainable ways of travel, and for this the Council is increasing and improving the infrastructure through the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the Greenways and other initiatives, and working closely with public transport providers.

The Council recognises that our current efforts alone are not sufficient to achieve these ambitious targets. The targets in the Climate Emergency Action Plan are attributed to projects though we acknowledge that we will need to refine these targets as they progress and seek alternative and additional policies and projects over the coming years to meet the same level of CO2e reduction. To assist with this, a Low Emissions Transport Strategy has been in development which informs our targets in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Council has set very ambitious targets for its climate emergency agenda, and we continue to innovate and seek new opportunities to deliver our goals.

Supplementary Question:

I am concerned that outside of what it says in the Climate Emergency Plan, the Council's wider commitment to improving active travel rates is not entirely clear or quantified, in contrast to the commitment to making driving easier, which is well funded and regularly publicised by Executive Members. Tonight's budget falls well short of the estimates in the Climate Plan for improving active travel, and that funding actually goes down in 2024.

My supplementary question is, is the whole of the Council committed to increasing walking and cycling as stated in the Climate Emergency Plan, or some other target, and if so, when can we expect to see this quantified as an objective for the Council as a whole, and see the resources put behind it?

Supplementary Answer:

There are a couple of different answers to what you have just asked. So, the first is, is the entire Council committed? Yes, we are. To give you some numbers, the amount we have put into the investment of certain things; cycle routes £1.5million, Safe School routes £0.25million, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan £1.2million, the A327 cycleway £0.75million, Borough Council cycling network £1.5million, and the cycleways with Scape £4.4million. So, we are investing across our community and across the different departments in our Council in order to deliver against more active transport capability,

The follow up to your question is, we need to change people's behaviours, in order to get them more active in their transport. That means providing different solutions to the journeys that they do at the moment, and that means understanding the need. It also means looking at different behaviour change programmes that we can put in place to actively encourage our residents to get moving, get travelling in a more active way. We saw with Beat the Street last year, a very popular programme, it got people out walking, schools in particular, but there are other initiatives that are coming in terms of behaviour change, that we will be working on at the moment. We will be looking forward to announcing them very shortly.

99.2 Rebecca Frazier asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Can you confirm that there will be a full public consultation for the proposal for 3G pitches to be built adjacent to the Maiden Erlegh nature reserve before any planning permission is put in?

Answer

First of all, I would like to reassure you that we are still evaluating the best site option for this much needed facility in the community, following on from the initial site proposal proposed by the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Football Association. It has also been my intention to bring back the most optimal site solution to the Executive after the full evaluation of options in the area. We are still at a very early viability stage. Once we have determined and agreed upon the most viable site for the community, at Executive, I can assure you that there will be a full public consultation on the 3G, and this will happen before any planning permission is submitted.

99.3 Julie Freak asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Please could you tell us why Laurel Park is being favoured as a site for a new 3G pitch when it is quite clearly the wrong location and is facing fierce opposition from many Lower Earley residents that use the park for all manner of recreation purposes, not just football?

Answer

Laurel Park was favoured as a proposed site by the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Football Association. It was always my intention to carry out a full evaluation of options and issues, to understand the optimal site for this important facility in the community. I have already referenced another potential option as Maiden Erlegh School. Following this full options evaluation, the preferred site will be taken to Executive for consideration so that we can begin the full consultation process.

Supplementary Question:

In the hope that it is indeed realised that Laurel Park is the wrong location, when and how will we hear that this is definitely the case, and it be confirmed that it is no longer in the running?

Supplementary Answer:

I cannot give you a precise date, but my guess is that we will complete the options assessment process by April/May and then we will bring it back to the Executive.

99.4 Hazel Bell asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure. Due to her inability to attend the meeting the following written answer was provided:**Question**

I am a resident who is concerned about the proposals for a 3G pitch.

What is the current stage of the 3G proposal and what alternative sites were considered and why were these rejected in favour of Laurel Park?

Answer

Thank you for your question. As stated in response to the previous question we are still in the early stages in determining the location of the 3G pitch and other potential options beyond Laurel Park, such as the Maiden Erlegh school, are being explored and evaluated. This options analysis setting out the viable options and preferred site for formal consultation, following a full evaluation, will be brought back to a future Executive for consideration and agreement.

99.5 Antony Crouch asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:**Question**

Re Laurel Park 3G pitch proposal, if Laurel Park is the main focus, can you please highlight why this valuable park space (currently the main green area for the majority of the development) is being favoured?

Answer

As previously stated, Laurel Park was favoured as a proposed site by the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Football Association for the new proposed site for the 3G pitch. Following on from this a full evaluation of options in the community are being undertaken, including surveys, the outcome of this options analysis will be considered to determine the optimum site on which we will formally consult.

99.6 Debra Taylor asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Re Laurel Park 3G pitch proposal, there are existing sites in the very close locality (literally within walking distance of Laurel Park - no emissions) existing hard courts and floodlights in place. One is Reading FC (based outside Wokingham Borough) with state of the art training facilities at Bearwood, (inside the Borough) 1.6 miles from Laurel Park. A condition of the planning approval for that site was that it opened for community use. Yet, in the WBC letter to residents (received by very few residents), it stated that one of the groups that will use the 3G pitch will be Reading FC.

There is a 3G 1.8 miles and another 3G 3.4 miles from Laurel Park. We are told grass pitches are running at full capacity, yet you are intent on digging up four of these grass pitches. Grassroots, will Laurel Park FC play their league games on a plastic pitch?

Answer

Teams can now only use pitches for match purposes as long as they have the FIFA 5 Star rating, of which a 3G pitch is. As such there is a high demand for 3G pitches, because teams are having to travel long distances across the Borough, and many are having to play their home games outside of the Borough. We are therefore clear that we need such a valuable facility in our community. What we are not clear on is on the optimum site for it, which is why we are undertaking a full evaluation of options as mentioned previously

Reading Football Club Community Trust, which you mentioned, is one of the main users mentioned, this is a registered charity, and is the community arm of the football club, engaging, developing, and educating young people in various community groups in various locations in the Borough. Officers have informed the planning department with regards to the question regarding the football club training facilities being used by them and will look into this further.

Supplementary Question:

Laurel Park FC have to travel just a 5 minutes' walk to Maiden Erlegh for their winter training, so that is not outside the Borough. The Football Foundation have a Grass Pitch Improvement Strategy. They state that the majority of football is still played on grass pitches. They also state that improving these pitches are a priority, and to ensure that affiliated football fixtures are played on a quality football pitch, and keep grass roots football where it should be played, guess where, there is a clue there. Yes, it is on grass and not plastic.

The Football Foundation Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund provides grants also to enhance or sustain these pitches. This one could be used to improve those grass pitches at Laurel Park, and where grass roots football has been played for many, many, many years. I read that 3G pitches have a 10-year life cycle.

Laurel Park sits in what, when it was built, was the biggest housing estate in Europe, surrounded by housing, so why can't and don't you enhance what is already there for the football community and let the wider community still enjoy what is at the heart of that community, and for generations to come? This is what residents need and want. A 3G pitch at Laurel Park would not benefit residents.

Supplementary Answer:

I can assure you that we have, wherever we have tried to build 3G pitches, we have also improved the grass pitches as well, but there is a hell of a lot of demand for the 3G pitches because of the quality that these 3G pitches offer. We are trying to meet that demand within the Borough. We are trying to stop the teams going away from the Borough, to play their home games away from the Borough, and therefore we are trying to reduce our carbon footprint by building these facilities.

99.7 Chris Elliott asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

Re Laurel Park 3G pitch proposal, has the usage profile been assessed - what that means is how is the facility used now, by whom and how often and what is the assessed profile going to change to afterwards?

Answer

The current usage was a key consideration in the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Football Association initially proposing this site. The future of the 3G pitch wherever it will be located, will need to be formulated as part of the Football Development Plan, which will be submitted to and agreed by the Football Foundation.

As stated previously, following this initial proposal we are undertaking an options analysis to arrive at the optimum site for the location, which is yet to be determined.

Supplementary Question:

I just want clarification – so you have not done a current usage profile on the existing facility as it is today?

Supplementary Answer:

It will be done.

99.8 Louise Timlin asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities the following question:

Question

At the WBC meeting on 20 January 2022, in response to a supplementary question from Councillor Kerr, Councillor Soane remarked that although the contract to provide support for domestic abuse victims was awarded to Cranstoun in July 2021, we need to “appreciate” that time would be needed to find an appropriate property for a refuge. I therefore conclude that WBC were aware it would take some time for Cranstoun to provide a refuge in Wokingham and ask why, in that case, was provision not made to continue to provide funds to Berkshire Women’s Aid in the interim period until Cranstoun have a refuge up and running?

Answer

The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Network Group are proud to be working in close collaboration with over 40 voluntary, charity and statutory organisations. This includes making grant funding available to these organisations to help deliver local services and provision to enhance safe accommodation locally.

As part of this work, the Council recognises that Berkshire Women’s Aid is a key stakeholder and valued partner. We, therefore, continue to work in partnership with

Berkshire Women's Aid to support them as a provider of safe accommodation in the Borough.

To add to existing safe accommodation provision, the commissioned provider Cranstoun and the Council continue to work together to address the challenge of finding an appropriate property.

Supplementary Question:

I have been in communication with Berkshire Women's Aid, and I understand that they have had to reach out to the Council to ask to have funds to continue to provide the refuge in Wokingham, and they were told that they needed to acquire an emergency grant which is being provided from November last year to March this year. Does that mean that it is expected that Cranstoun will have a refuge up and running by March, and if not, will funding continue to be provided to Berkshire Women's Aid to run the refuge in Wokingham for victims of domestic abuse?

Supplementary Answer:

I cannot answer whether Cranstoun will have a refuge up and running by March. I would think not at this stage to be honest, but the funding that we offered to the voluntary organisations, as far as I understand, will continue.

99.9 Laura Taylor asked the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure the following question:

Question

There are two 3G pitches, one 1.8 miles from Laurel Park and one 3.4 miles from Laurel Park, plus facilities with outdoor floodlit facilities in place at:

- London Valley Leisure Centre 0.8 miles from Laurel Park
- Maiden Erlegh School 0.9 miles from Laurel Park (where Laurel Park Winter train)
- Sol Jol Park 0.8 miles from Laurel Park
- Chalfont Park 1.4 miles from Laurel Park
- Reading FC training ground 1.6 miles from Laurel Park
- Reading University 1.6 miles from Laurel Park

Local players and members therefore do not have too far to travel for training (most of the above facilities are in fact within walking distance of Laurel Park or no more than a 5 minute drive.

My question is therefore why are WBC intent on digging up the only green space at Laurel Park, installing a 3G pitch which will increase congestion and emissions and when the majority of residents don't want nor need it?

Answer

The pitches mentioned above are all sand dressed or tarmac, and apart from one site they are mainly not suitable for football training or matches. There is therefore an identified need for a 3G pitch in the community, as teams, at present, are having to travel across the Borough, and even out of the Borough to play. Providing a local facility will therefore reduce emissions and congestion.

I can assure you that the specific site options analysis I have previously referenced, will include a consideration of the impact on congestion and emissions.

100. PETITIONS

The following member of the public and Member presented petitions in relation to the matters indicated.

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

Danny Errewalla	Danny Errewalla presented a petition of over 1500 signatures against the proposed one-way system on Woodlands Avenue in Woodley. <i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport</i>
Shahid Younis	Shahid Younis presented a petition relating to the designation of Kennetmouth as protected Local Green Space. He also presented comments submitted in support asking that the Thameside flyover (East Reading MRT) be rejected and to save green space. <i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement</i>

101. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND ASSOCIATED REPORTS

The Council considered four reports which together comprised a single Agenda item:

- The Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23 as set out on Agenda pages 49 to 53;
- The Capital Programme and Strategy 2022/25 as set out on Agenda pages 55 to 91;
- The Treasury Management Strategy 2022/25 as set out on Agenda pages 93 to 137;
- The Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022/25 – Revenue Budget Submission 2022/23 as set out on Agenda pages 139 to 141.

The Mayor reminded Members that a total of 90 minutes would be set aside for the debate.

The Mayor also reminded Members that Appendix A to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (the Statutory Resolution) and the Council Tax by Band and Parish, had been circulated.

101.1 John Halsall, Leader of the Council - Statement on the Budget:

It is three years since you elected me as your Leader. It has been humbling to have had the active and wholehearted support of a professional, dedicated, and hardworking team of Members and Officers. I thank you all; it has truly been the honour of my life.

It has been a very busy three years; it has been pretty much full-on 24/7 during which making a positive impact on our community has always been in the forefront of my mind. It has been a pleasure to serve. We are a great local authority. We aspire to be the best.

We have achieved huge accolades. We are one of the most prosperous, least deprived, healthiest and one of the most desirable places to live. Our climate emergency action plan has been ranked 8th in the whole of the country. UNICEF has chosen us in a bid to be recognised as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly Community – we are only one of a handful in the country.

In the last three years, we have brought forward an unprecedented number of policies and strategies. We have reviewed and renewed almost every aspect of the Council and renewed its relationship with partners across sectors and central Government. We have continued to deliver substantial cost savings and service improvements. This has been despite Covid 19, which has dominated thoughts for the last two years.

I have tried to lead from the front. I have encouraged can-do innovation, conscious that initiatives may not work but believe they are always a source of feedback and learning. Our staff feel valued and supported to come up with new ideas and approaches; they understand the high level of aspiration and expectation. There has been a strong focus on promoting staff wellbeing led by senior officers.

The only reason that we are here is to serve the residents, for whom our mission is to make them happier, healthier, and more prosperous. The tragedy of life is often not in our failure, but rather in our complacency; not in our doing too much, but rather in our doing too little; not in our living above our ability, but rather in our living below our capacities.

I have sought to reinvigorate everything we do, and we have. The recent Peer Review team in their feedback to us found we delivered valued, well performing services that provide a high quality of life for residents. We achieve good outcomes for our residents, despite receiving no central government grant funding. Notwithstanding the recent pressures of Covid, we are financially stable.

This did not happen by accident but by the achievement of Officers and Members throughout the 20 years of Conservative administration. We have demonstrable resilience and financial probity.

Over the last three years despite Covid, we have made great strides in all key areas, for example:

- Clear vision for the Borough and recognised Corporate Plan that is delivering the key priorities.
- Meaningful partnership relationships, including Health, and the Voluntary Sector.
- Focus on data and insight to improve decision making.
- Commitment to enhance and improve the customer experience.
- Significant and genuinely marvellous improvement within the Adults and Children's Services which are reflected in recent inspection visits results visits.

However, I am not complacent. We are the golden thread which runs through our community. We will continue to develop, deliver, and shape the future aspirations for the Borough. The scale of challenge has increased. I am confident that I can lead the way to overcome whatever is thrown our way without reducing our services and without reducing momentum on reform where needed. We recognise this as a journey of continuous improvement.

We are proud of our achievements throughout the Covid pandemic. We displayed organisational strength, resilience, and played a pivotal role in ensuring that the local community had the support it needed throughout. Working in partnership with the brilliant voluntary and community groups.

There has been a focus on deepening collective leadership between the Executive and Corporate Leadership Team; this provides a strong foundation to build on. Officers and Members have worked together to enhance our strategic capacity.

We now need to continue to deliver great outcomes for all our residents in a way that promotes fairness, equality, and diversity. We will

- Restate a clear narrative about our ambitions for our residents and the future vision for Wokingham.
- Recognise the role we play in community and place leadership, and sometimes that means taking tough decisions.
- Continue to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for Members and Officers, and through the delivery of services.
- Ensure there is a commitment to a long-term vision for the Borough co-designed with partners.

As you know, we have worked over many years to attain the highest standards of financial management, including a strong track record of delivery of significant savings. The financial future looks both extremely challenging and uncertain. The degree of uncertainty is at a level seldom, if ever, previously experienced.

The financial impact of the Adult Social Care and NHS reform is potentially the greatest concern given its magnitude. Additional expenditure of between £20million to £30million are anticipated when the impact of the reform is fully felt. Whilst the ongoing grant funding of this is unclear, the current levels of financial support suggested will fall well short of that needed by Wokingham and other authorities with a high proportion of self-funders.

A three-year funding settlement was expected for the financial year 2022/23 and beyond, but unfortunately only a one-year settlement was announced. This leaves considerable uncertainty over our funding after 2022/23. A major review of local government funding in the context of a 'levelling up' agenda is expected to be announced for 2023/24.

Wokingham will need to continue to make its case for a fair deal for its residents in the formulation of a new national funding system; currently we receive the lowest level of support per head of population in the country. The New Homes Bonus is substantial reflecting the scale of development in the Borough. We are concerned that it may disappear.

Inflationary pressures on both Revenue and Capital expenditure have become both severe and unpredictable. Inflation in this budget has been carefully considered but we live in extraordinary times, and it may be understated. The government is consulting on changes to what local authorities must charge their general fund for capital borrowings. Wokingham has embarked on a responsible but ambitious Capital Programme over its recent past to enable the strategic delivery of housing, the regeneration of Wokingham Town and the development of much needed affordable housing. There is a risk of adverse consequences, and we will have to review our approach to Housing Delivery,

Regeneration, the provision of affordable housing and holding assets for the purpose of income generation.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget area is highly regulated which means the opportunity to address the growing demand led statutory pressures relating to SEND is limited. The deficit on DSG is likely to increase significantly in future years and is estimated to be in the region of £13m by 31st March 2023. Options to mitigate the deficit are currently being developed and some may require additional capital investment to deliver them.

The budget proposals put forward for 2022-25 are responsible and affordable, leaving a safe level of General Fund Balances. However, this MTFP is being put forward in an unprecedented landscape of uncertainty and risk. Our financial position will require continual review and there may be a need to undertake some form of mid-year budget review.

This administration has demonstrated its capacity to navigate through the extraordinarily difficult waters of the pandemic and still come in at budgeted levels for 2021/2022. It is vital to do the basics right to provide the capacity and financial flexibility to continue to invest in our community and to build social homes in response to the increase in homelessness. We must be strong and financially resilient, providing high levels of services for resident. In these perilous waters we must always maintain robust control over our finances, and prudently forecast given the uncertainty over future government funding.

We are not in crisis unlike many. The CIPFA Financial Resilience Indicator showed Wokingham to be amongst the top 20 out of 300 councils in the country. We went into this pandemic with excellent cash reserves due to years of excellent Conservative cash management. We will reluctantly have to reduce these reserves, but they will still be maintained at a sustainable level.

Reserves are to support the residents in time of need and hardship. If any Member feels this this is not one of those times, I suggest you look at the havoc wreaked by this pandemic not just in Wokingham or even the UK but worldwide and the personal misery. Think about those who have died before their time and the families facing uncertain times. So yes, we have spent money to ease the suffering and uncertainty of our residents delivering the services they rely on. Would I do the same again? Yes, 100% yes!

Wokingham Borough is a great place to live. More and more people want to live in the Borough. I regret the loss of every field, tree, and hedgerow. While landowners promote their land and developers know they can sell every house they build, it makes it difficult for us to balance the need for new homes with the needs of existing residents. I have managed to materially reduce the number of homes, but I still believe the quantity is still too high. Nevertheless, having a plan is the best of the choices available to us, creates upfront funding of SDLS for high quality infrastructure and has enabled us to oppose speculative development.

Rising prices and rents makes it increasingly difficult for those on low incomes and next generation to acquire or rent homes in the borough. We have a responsibility to help residents. More social homes are required.

We have started the medium-term financial plan on a firm footing and the budget is sound,

but we must recognise the unfavourable winds around us. Mr Mayor, I am recommending this budget to the Council. A budget that contains substantial investment in vital services for the community and contains no cuts. It is safe and prudent and will ensure we continue to deliver the high quality services the residents have come to expect and rely on. As my friend and colleague, the Executive Member for Finance and Housing has said on many occasions “a council which is broke is no good to anyone.”

101.2 Clive Jones, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group - Statement on the Budget

The last two years have been difficult for our residents struggling to cope with the effects of the Covid pandemic. I want to thank all of the staff at Wokingham Borough Council who have during this time worked diligently to continue to provide the Council’s services, that many in our community rely on. Many others in our communities have also worked extremely hard to help their employers keep their businesses afloat, often adapting to new ways of working, such as working from home, with many having to balance this with home schooling. Thanks also to everyone who has helped our NHS and care homes to continue to provide high standards of care. Many have battled through quite horrendous times in the last two years. Life as an NHS professional was very different back in February 2020 to what it is now, while Adult Social Care employees have throughout continued the vital work of looking after some of the most vulnerable in our society. Wokingham Citizens Advice, our Food Banks, and many other charities, have also worked tirelessly to support our residents. We all hope that in the coming months we will be able to see a return to some form of normality, in whatever form that manifests itself. However, we know that many in our communities will continue to face significant challenges.

The Liberal Democrats are firm supporters of social housing. With the looming cost of living crisis, the need for affordable, decent, quality homes is more acute than ever in the Borough. We welcome the fact that the Council works in partnership with our council tenants to deliver our housing service, and that they have been consulted on the Housing Revenue Account budget. We are also pleased to see that the Council has started to look at adapting its housing stock as part of work on the climate emergency. However, we are surprised that the report says absolutely nothing about the major decision which went to the Executive tonight, to bring the Gorse Ride regeneration project back into the Housing Revenue Account. According to the Executive agenda, the budget for this is over £105million. There is an expectation that funding it will involve additional Housing Revenue Account borrowing of £37.5million. Not only is this not in the HRA report, but it is also not in the Treasury Management Strategy, which on page 111 of the agenda, and again on page 125, gives the HRA figures for the next 3 years without any mention of the possibility of more borrowing for Gorse Ride. Failing to include significant borrowing does rather make a mockery of the papers in front of us tonight. Essentially you are asking us to approve a 3-year Treasury Management Strategy, which you know contains incomplete information.

We are all facing a cost of living crisis; increases in energy costs are hitting our residents hard, with many having to suffer an increase of over £700 per year. High energy costs, high increases in inflation, increased taxes on businesses and employees will all take their toll, hitting our most vulnerable residents the hardest. The Government’s proposal to reduce council tax for Bands A to D will help some residents in a small way, but it is nowhere near enough. Pensioners have had their state increases limited to 3.1% now that the Conservatives have scrapped the pensions triple lock introduced by the Liberal Democrats. Inflation is however, now over 5%, so they are losing income. Interest rates have just had their first consecutive rises since 2004. Commentators say that there is

much more to come. The next 18 months could be very difficult for home owners with mortgages. The Bank of England predict that inflation will reach 7.5% in April. All these cost increases will hit our residents. They will also hit the Council. We are already seeing the effects of increases in inflation on Wokingham Borough Council. We share the concerns of the Chief Financial Officer that we are in unprecedented times of uncertainty. We must therefore keep inflation budgets under constant review.

Increases in energy costs have hit budgets and cost increases in raw materials in the building industry have resulted in cuts to the Council's Capital Programme. I am thinking of the Twyford Library, that appears to be on hold following a 20 year plus campaign by local Liberal Democrats to get a new library. It is on hold it appears because of a relatively small amount of money. The crematorium project has been scrapped. Increases in building costs mean it is no longer viable, but has the original need for a crematorium in Wokingham gone away? I think it probably has not.

So, are the Conservatives fit to be in charge of our Borough finances? Conservatives are driven by dogma. A few years ago, their ideology said that outsourcing of services was the key to solving all of our ills. They set up Optalis and outsourced PPP. Neither worked well and we have had to radically change them. Luckily, we now have an excellent management at Optalis which is putting it back on track again. The Council is bringing PPP back in house, but there is a substantial one off cost of £300,000 in 2022/23. Substantial additional revenue costs in the next 3 years are being provided for organisational transformation, or change, including £3.4million in Adult Social Care and £3.7million in Children's Services. These and other costs are predicated substantially or wholly on savings in future years. We welcome additional spend to save and to deliver improved services, but we ask how long have issues that require change existed, and how long have overspends been going on for? How much of the spend is due to the unravelling of the 21st century Council process, so soon after it was implemented? How will hard pressed staff cope with yet more changes? All these scenarios put pressure on the personal finances of our residents, especially the lower paid and the vulnerable. It is therefore incumbent on us as councillors to minimise the Council's council tax increases. Our difficulty is that we have less Government funding for the next financial year. In fact, there has and will be a massive decrease in funding relative to costs that the Council is expected to cover. The new Homes Bonus is a grant from Government to encourage house building. Despite plans to meet increased building targets the new Homes Grant from the Government has decreased from £7.5million in 2021 to £4.8million in 2022/23. Coming down the road is the galloping elephant of the Social Care Reforms that have the potential to bankrupt the Council and other councils unless they are fully funded by the Government.

If we are running the Council, we would broadly abide by this budget envelope, but within that envelope we would have different priorities to the Conservatives. We would look at ways of helping local businesses to recover from Covid. Mental health and wellbeing will be a priority for all ages, especially children's mental health. We would commit the Council to seek White Ribbon accreditation. We will push for affordable, safe travel options. We will review the system of discretionary payments for residents in crisis. We will ensure effective out of hours support for residents in crisis, that ensures that no resident is forced to sleep rough. We will invest in implementing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and ensure that public money spent on climate emergency projects have fully costed business cases. We will push ahead with our idea of a Covid memorial wood, as a place where residents can remember their friends and family members who have been lost to Covid. Mr Mayor, this evening Liberal Democrat Shadow Executive

Members will give some details on what we might do differently to the Conservatives if we were running the Council.

101.3 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23 as set out in Agenda pages 45 to 54, be approved.

Voting on the item was as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Jim Frewin	Keith Baker
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		
Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliari-Symons		
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		
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		

Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That Council approve the following-

- 1) The Housing Revenue Account budget for 2022/23 (Appendix A);
- 2) that Council house dwelling rents be increased by up to 4.10% effective from 4 April 2022 in line with the council's Rent Setting Policy that was approved by Executive on 25 November 2021;
- 3) that garage rents to be increased by 3.80% effective from April 2022 in line with Council's general fees and charges;
- 4) that Shared Equity Rents to be increased by 4.86% based on September RPI, effective from April 2022;
- 5) that the Tenant Service Charges be set based on cost recovery;
- 6) the Housing Major Repairs (capital) programme for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix B;
- 7) that sheltered room guest charges for 2022/23 remain unchanged at £9.50 per night per room.

101.4 Capital Programme and Strategy 2022-2025

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Capital Programme and Strategy 2022/25, as set out at Agenda pages 55 to 92, be approved.

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker
Parry Batth	Rachel Burgess	Rachel Bishop-Firth
Laura Blumenthal		Prue Bray
Chris Bowring		Stephen Conway
Jenny Cheng		Peter Dennis
Phil Cunningham		Lindsay Ferris
Michael Firmager		Paul Fishwick
Jim Frewin		Maria Gee
Guy Grandison		Clive Jones
John Halsall		Sarah Kerr
David Hare		Tahir Maher
Pauline Helliari-Symons		Morag Malvern
Norman Jorgensen		Adrian Mather
Pauline Jorgensen		Andrew Mickleburgh
John Kaiser		Ian Shenton
Abdul Loyes		Imogen Shepherd-Dubey
Charles Margetts		Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey
Rebecca Margetts		Caroline Smith

Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: that Council approve the following:

- 1) the Capital Strategy for 2022 - 2025 - Appendix A;
- 2) the three-year capital programme for 2022 - 2025 –Appendix B;
- 3) the draft vision for capital investment over the next five years - Appendix C;
- 4) the use of developer contribution funding (s106 and CIL) for capital projects as set out in Appendix D. Approval is sought up to the project budget.

101.5 Treasury Management Strategy 2022-2025

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/25, as set out at Agenda pages 93 to 138, be approved.

Voting was as detailed below:

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Rachel Bishop-Firth	Keith Baker
Parry Bath	Prue Bray	Shirley Boyt
Laura Blumenthal	Stephen Conway	Rachel Burgess
Chris Bowring	Peter Dennis	
Jenny Cheng	Lindsay Ferris	
Phil Cunningham	Paul Fishwick	
Michael Firmager	Jim Frewin	
Guy Grandison	Maria Gee	
John Halsall	David Hare	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	Clive Jones	
Norman Jorgensen	Sarah Kerr	
Pauline Jorgensen	Tahir Maher	
John Kaiser	Morag Malvern	
Abdul Loyes	Adrian Mather	
Charles Margetts	Andrew Mickleburgh	
Rebecca Margetts	Ian Shenton	
Stuart Munro	Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	
Gregor Murray	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	
Jackie Rance	Caroline Smith	

Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED that Council:

- 1) notes the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix A including the following additional appendices;
 - Prudential Indicators (Appendix B)
 - Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23 (Appendix C)
 - Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy (Appendix D)
- 2) notes that the Audit Committee agreed the Treasury Management Strategy on 2 February 2022 and have recommended the report to Council for approval;
- 3) notes the cumulative financial impact on the Council of its borrowing activities equates to a net credit to the general fund for the taxpayer of £42.70 per band D equivalent at end of 2022/23 and noting this credit increases to £62.47 at the end of 2024/25.

101.6 Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-2025 Including Revenue Budget Submission 2022/23

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/25 Revenue Budget Submission 2022/23 be approved subject to the tabled sheets.

In line with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken.

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker
Parry Batth	Rachel Burgess	Rachel Bishop-Firth
Laura Blumenthal	Jim Frewin	Prue Bray
Chris Bowring		Stephen Conway
Jenny Cheng		Peter Dennis
Phil Cunnington		Lindsay Ferris
Michael Firmager		Paul Fishwick
Guy Grandison		Maria Gee
John Halsall		Clive Jones
David Hare		Sarah Kerr
Pauline Helliard-Symons		Tahir Maher
Norman Jorgensen		Morag Malvern
Pauline Jorgensen		Adrian Mather
John Kaiser		Andrew Mickleburgh
Abdul Loyes		Ian Shenton
Charles Margetts		Imogen Shepherd-Dubey
Rebecca Margetts		Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey

Stuart Munro		Caroline Smith
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: that Council approve the following:

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/25, including the budget submission for 2022/23 and the Summary of Budget Movements (SOBM);
- 2) the statutory resolution that sets out the 2022/23 council tax levels (as set out in Appendix A to the report);
- 3) that in the event that there are any changes to the provisional precept of the Fire Authority or parishes, arising from their precept setting meetings being held before the end of February, the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) is delegated authority to enact all relevant changes to the MTFP, Statutory Resolution and council tax levels.

Note: The Statutory Resolution is attached as an appendix to the Council Minutes.

Statutory Resolution

102. INTERIM POLLING PLACE REVIEW

The Council considered a report regarding an Interim Polling Place Review.

It was proposed by Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by Clive Jones Jorgensen that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

Pauline Jorgensen commented that polling stations had successfully been placed at Lower Earley library and Earley St Peter's Church Hall previously.

RESOLVED: That the following permanent re-designations be agreed:

- 1) Hillside Ward: Lower Earley Library to be designated as the polling place for all elections for polling district EDW.
- 2) Maiden Erlegh Ward: Earley St Peters Church Hall to be designated as the polling place for all elections for polling districts EFW & EGW.

103. RE-DESIGNATION OF POLLING PLACES

The Council considered a report regarding the Redesignation of Polling Places.

It was proposed by Alison Swaddle and seconded by Clive Jones that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed, subject to the following alteration:

RECOMMENDATION: *That Council agree for any elections held in 2022 that:*

1) *St John's Church Centre, Woodley be designated as the polling place for polling district KCM in Coronation Ward instead of St John's Ambulance, HQ, Woodley;*

This alteration was agreed.

Clive Jones commented that he hoped that in future an alternative polling station to Oaklands Junior School could be found in Wokingham Without ward.

RESOLVED: That for any elections held in 2022 that:

- 1) St John's Church Centre, Woodley be designated as the polling place for polling district KCM in Coronation Ward instead of St John's Ambulance, HQ, Woodley;
- 2) The Assistant Director Governance be delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Ward Member(s), to re-designate any polling place in the Borough which becomes unavailable.

104. ELECTORAL REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

The Council considered a report regarding Electoral Review Arrangements

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

John Halsall commented that he had hoped to be able to put this item forward with cross party support, however, the Leader of the Opposition had declined this. He believed that if consensus was reached within the Council, it would carry a lot of weight with the Boundary Commission. John Halsall went on to add that the recommendation related to the establishment of a cross party Working Group. To ensure all the groups were represented, a Working Group of 18 would have been required which was impractical. He had therefore asked the Independent and Labour Group to share a vote to enable a Working Group of 9 and political balance was preserved. The current undertaking was to consider the shape of the Borough in 2028, which was an officer exercise based on currently anticipated development, and also to determine the number of Councillors that the Council believed should be elected.

Rachel Burgess was of the view that a Working Group would not be impartial because the ruling group would always take forward their view, due to the number of votes they have on the Working Group. She emphasised that the Boundary Commission did not place weight on what the Council agreed, but on the quality of evidence provided. Rachel Burgess stated that the review had been known about for some time, but it felt as if they were being rushed into the Working Group with little time to consider the information.

Clive Jones indicated that the Liberal Democrats supported the establishment of a cross party Working Group to compile a submission to the Boundary Commission. There was a need for wards to have roughly equal numbers of electors and the new wards to reflect local communities. He emphasised that consultation of residents must be balanced. Clive Jones stated that he felt the Working Group process to be rushed and that the Working Group should be made up of Members with equal votes. He questioned the quorum being five Members, which gave the potential opportunity for no Opposition involvement. Clive Jones emphasised that should consensus not be reached a minority report would be submitted.

Voting was as detailed below:

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Shirley Boyt	Keith Baker
Parry Batth	Rachel Burgess	
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Prue Bray		
Jenny Cheng		
Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliar-Symons		
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		
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the arrangements for a review of electoral arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Review for England be noted;
- 2) the setting up a cross-party, Member level Working Group on the basis set out in paragraphs 4.3-4.5 of the report be agreed to;
- 3) the Terms of Reference of the Electoral Review Working Group as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

105. WHOLE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Council considered a report regarding Whole Council Elections.

It was proposed by John Halsall and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendation set out within the report be agreed.

John Halsall emphasised the importance of representing the views of local communities. He commented that elections by thirds came with a cost and disrupted Council business for some time because of Purdah.

John Kaiser emphasised that the money spent on elections by thirds could be spent elsewhere on other services.

The following amendment was proposed by Stephen Conway and seconded by Rachel Burgess. Changes are shown in bold italics.

RECOMMENDATION *That Council be recommended to:*

- 1) *Launch a consultation with stakeholders on moving to a whole council (all-out) electoral cycle **or maintaining the existing electoral cycle;***
- 2) *The consultation document (Appendix C) be changed by deleting the wording in sections “Benefits of all-out elections” and Benefits of Elections by Thirds” to be replaced by the following:
“The Benefits of all-out four-yearly elections*

Holding elections once every four years for all councillors is easier for the electorate to understand. All out elections would make a financial saving, in that there would be one election rather than three (but the one election would be all-out and therefore more costly than in any year of elections by thirds). A four-yearly cycle would reduce the distraction of elections three years out of four, enabling officer time to be devoted to other duties and councillors to take a longer-term perspective.

The Benefits of elections by thirds

Electing by thirds is the current electoral system of the council. A major benefit of this system is that it provides greater accountability than four-yearly all-out elections. Electing by thirds gives the electorate a greater opportunity than all-out elections every four years to be involved in decision-making at the council and so furthers local democracy. It also means that there is greater stability for the Council in terms of its membership. Electing by thirds reduces the risk of wholesale change within the Council and allows for succession

planning because there is always a mixture of new and experienced councillors on the Council.”

3) Agree that the consultation should be for a minimum of six weeks.

Stephen Conway commented that he would prefer a balanced picture. He felt that the amendment offered a balanced assessment of both options and removed a reference to greater fairness in the all out option, which he felt was incorrect. He emphasised that he was not pre-judging the outcome of the consultation.

Rachel Burgess explained that there was no scenario where there would be an inequality in the chances to vote. She was of the view that the amendment presented a more balanced view of both options.

The amendment was not accepted by John Halsall the proposer of the report.

Pray Bray stated that consultation should be carried out fairly to ensure that results were valid. She felt that the Administration had already made up their minds as to which option they would like implemented.

Jim Frewin emphasised that residents should be provided with all the options to make an informed choice.

John Halsall indicated that the wording of the consultation had been drafted by the Monitoring Officer and that he had had no input. He was of the opinion that the amendment was inaccurate.

Stephen Conway requested a point of personal explanation under Section 4.2.13.14 of the Constitution, relating to John Halsall’s suggestion that the reference to the greater stability of the Council in terms of its membership, should be removed. He indicated that these were the words of the Monitoring Officer.

Voting on the amendment was as set out below.

For	Against	Abstain
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Keith Baker
Shirley Boyt	Parry Batth	
Prue Bray	Laura Blumenthal	
Rachel Burgess	Chris Bowring	
Stephen Conway	Jenny Cheng	
Peter Dennis	Phil Cunnington	
Lindsay Ferris	Michael Firmager	
Paul Fishwick	Guy Grandison	
Jim Frewin	John Halsall	
Maria Gee	Pauline Helliard Symons	
David Hare	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	

Ian Shenton	Gregor Murray	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Jackie Rance	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Angus Ross	
Caroline Smith	Daniel Sargeant	
	Wayne Smith	
	Bill Soane	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Shahid Younis	

The amendment was declared to be lost.

Stephen Conway felt that the Liberal Democrats could not support a proposal which contained a material inaccuracy regarding one of the options. They supported the idea of a consultation.

John Halsall responded that the consultation had been drafted by Officers which were independent.

Voting on the original recommendations was as follows:

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

Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That a consultation with stakeholders on moving to a whole council (all-out) electoral cycle, be launched.

106. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Council considered a report regarding Changes to the Constitution.

It was proposed by Stuart Munro and seconded by John Kaiser that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

Stuart Munro took Council through the proposed changes to the Constitution.

Sarah Kerr expressed concern around recommendation 6. She understood the need to have transparency over the cost implications of decisions made but queried the definition of a 'significant sum of money.' She asked the Council to consider the negative consequences of the proposed amendment and indicated that a Climate Emergency would not have been declared had the amendment been in place at the time. The full cost implications of this declaration were still unknown some time later. Sarah Kerr asked that the Chairman of the Constitution Review Working Group remove recommendation 6 from the report and take it back to the Constitution Review Working Group for further consideration. She emphasised that some Councillors who wished to raise issues of concern to residents may not always have full access to cost implications. Sarah Kerr questioned the rationale of sending the Motion to the Executive.

Sarah Kerr proposed that should recommendation 6 be removed, that recommendation 1, 2 and 3 be voted on separately, and that recommendations 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 be voted on separately and that should recommendation 6 not be removed from the report, that it be voted on with recommendations 1, 2 and 3. This was seconded by Imogen Shepherd-DuBey.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey felt that the current threshold proposed around recommendation 6 was not high enough and that not all matters could be fully costed in advance.

Stuart Munro did not accept the removal of recommendation 6. He commented that the threshold had been proposed by the Head of Legal, and felt that should the amendment prove problematic, it could be reviewed again.

Rachel Burgess was of the view that recommendation 6 around the costing of Motions was undemocratic.

Voting on the proposal to remove recommendation 6 and to request that it be reconsidered by the Constitution Review Working Group was as follows.

For	Against	Abstain
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Keith Baker
Shirley Boyt	Parry Batth	
Prue Bray	Laura Blumenthal	
Rachel Burgess	Chris Bowring	
Stephen Conway	Jenny Cheng	
Peter Dennis	Phil Cunnington	

Lindsay Ferris	Michael Firmager	
Paul Fishwick	Guy Grandison	
Jim Frewin	John Halsall	
Maria Gee	Pauline Helliard Symons	
David Hare	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	
Ian Shenton	Gregor Murray	
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Jackie Rance	
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Angus Ross	
Caroline Smith	Daniel Sargeant	
	Wayne Smith	
	Bill Soane	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Shahid Younis	

The amendment was declared by the Mayor to be lost.

Imogen Shepherd-DuBey spoke to the original proposal as not amended. She commented that there were many proposals that the Liberal Democrats could support, but some such as extending the deadline for submitting questions, that they could not. She welcomed the amendments to the Standards Committee terms of reference.

107. CONTINUATION OF THE MEETING

At this point in the meeting, 10.14pm, 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.

108. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION CONTINUED

Recommendations 1,2,3 and 6 were voted on together.

The results of the voting are detailed below.

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Rachel Bishop-Firth	Keith Baker
Parry Bath	Shirley Boyt	
Laura Blumenthal	Prue Bray	
Chris Bowring	Rachel Burgess	
Jenny Cheng	Stephen Conway	
Phil Cunnington	Peter Dennis	
Michael Firmager	Lindsay Ferris	

Jim Frewin	Paul Fishwick	
Guy Grandison	Maria Gee	
John Halsall	David Hare	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	Clive Jones	
Norman Jorgensen	Sarah Kerr	
Pauline Jorgensen	Tahir Maher	
John Kaiser	Morag Malvern	
Abdul Loyes	Adrian Mather	
Charles Margetts	Andrew Mickleburgh	
Rebecca Margetts	Ian Shenton	
Stuart Munro	Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	
Gregor Murray	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	
Jackie Rance	Caroline Smith	
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

Recommendations 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were voted on together.

The results of the voting are detailed below.

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar		Keith Baker
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		
Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
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		
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That the following changes to the Constitution, as recommended by the Monitoring Officer via the Constitution Review Working Group, be agreed:

- 1) the deadline for public and Member questions, that relate to items on the agenda or urgent matters, be amended, as set out in Paragraph 1 of the report;
- 2) Section Rule 4.2.9.9 Written Answers, be amended as set out in Paragraph 2 of the report;
- 3) Section 4.2.8.1 Consideration of motions and Section 4.2.11.3 Motion set out in Agenda be amended as set out in Paragraph 3 of the report;
- 4) Section 4.2.11.3 Motion set out in Agenda, be amended as set out in Paragraph 4 of the report;
- 5) Section 4.2.13.1 No Speeches Until Motion Seconded, be amended as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report;
- 6) Section 4.2.13.13 Motions on Expenditure or Revenue, as set out in Paragraph 6 of the report, be added to the Constitution;
- 7) Section 8.1 Planning Committee Terms of Reference be amended as set out in Paragraph 7 of the report;

- 8) Sections 8.7.1 Function and Composition of School Transport Appeals Panel and 8.7.2 Meetings of the School Transport Appeals Panel, be amended as set out in Paragraph 8 of the report;
- 9) Section 9.1.12 Process for Dealing with Misconduct Complaints be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- 10) amendments to various sections of the Constitution, put forward by the Head of Legal Services, and as set out in Paragraph 10 of the report be agreed.

109. OPTALIS CONTRACT RENEWAL 2022

Charles Margetts left the meeting during the discussion of this item and did not participate in discussions or the vote.

The Council considered a report regarding the Optalis Contract Renewal.

It was proposed by Phil Cunnington and seconded by David Hare that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

Phil Cunnington commented that Optalis had evolved into a joint organisation in conjunction with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to provide adult care services across the two areas and to provide as many of the corporate and operational costs as possible so as to provide value for money. Whilst the objectives of the authorities remained the same, the construct of Optalis was unfavourable to the Council. It was necessary to reset the strategic focus of Optalis to ensure quality of services provided to Wokingham residents as opposed to growth. The Board structure had been slimmed down to allow quicker decision making. The Lead Members for Adult Services and the Directors of Adult Services from the two authorities would be Board members, allowing direct operational control and the setting of objectives to suit shareholders and residents. Services in Wokingham would be run independently from RBWM, giving more flexibility and independence for the Council.

David Hare praised the work of Optalis, and in particular, David Birch, Chief Executive of Optalis, and Matt Pope, Director Adult Services. He referred to some of the improvements being made and highlighted the benefits of the peripatetic team.

Shirley Boyt referred to the care staff who were ‘at the sharp end’ caring for the elderly and disabled. Many of these were some of the lowest paid workers in the Borough. Shirley Boyt commented that whilst it was likely that Optalis was paying the national living wage of £9.50 to those employees who were over 23, she asked whether consideration could be given to paying the real living wage, which was 40p an hour more, and which could make a real difference to people. She questioned whether this could form part of the Council’s Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Phil Cunnington responded that the Council wanted to make sure that services was run as efficiently as possible so as to make the best offers to keep and reward staff, in a very competitive market.

Voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar	Adrian Mather	Keith Baker

Parry Bath		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Anne Chadwick		
Jenny Cheng		
Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Clive Jones		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Sarah Kerr		
Abdul Loyes		
Tahir Maher		
Rebecca Margetts		
Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the attached procurement business case to renew the contract to Optalis be approved;

- 2) authority be delegated to the Director of Adult Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Adult Services to:
 - a) approve and complete the contract with Optalis for £7.3mil – 2022-23; and
 - b) undertake all activities required to complete the joint ownership arrangements between RBWM and the Council as set out under the heading 'Future Arrangements' below.

- 3) authority be delegated to the Director of Adult Services and the Director of Resources and Assets, to add to and remove services within Optalis during the term of the contract provided that in each case, up to the total value of £500k:
 - a) the budget for the costs of the services has already been approved as part of the agreed Council Budget;
 - b) the business case has been approved by both Directors;
 - c) the Executive Member with responsibility for Adult Services and the Executive Member with responsibility for Finance have been consulted.

- 4) the shareholders agreement be noted.

110. CENTRAL AND EASTERN BERKSHIRE JOINT MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN: MAIN MODIFICATIONS CONSULTATION

The Council considered a report regarding the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Main Modification Consultation.

It was proposed by Wayne Smith and seconded by Clive Jones that the recommendations set out within the report be agreed.

Wayne Smith indicated that following the latest modelling data, Brookside in Swallowfield was no longer being considered as a waste site due to the increased flood risk. Clarity had been provided around Star Works and Knowl Hill. In addition, Policy DM15 the operator past performance, had been renamed site history.

The voting was as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Sam Akhtar		Keith Baker
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Jenny Cheng		
Stephen Conway		
Phil Cunnington		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		

Maria Gee		
Guy Grandison		
John Halsall		
David Hare		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
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		
Gregor Murray		
Jackie Rance		
Angus Ross		
Daniel Sargeant		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Main Modifications and supporting documentation for publication and public consultation, be agreed;
- 2) community engagement on the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Main Modifications and associated supporting documents be authorised to take place for at least 6 weeks from February 2022 onwards;
- 3) the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement, be authorised to agree minor amendments necessary to the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan: Main Modifications and other supporting documents prior to consultation.

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