



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS
FOR THE PERIOD**

4 July 2022 to 22 August 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage'.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 14 September 2022



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

	PAGE NO.
Minutes of meeting Monday, 4 July 2022 of Personnel Board	5 - 8
Minutes of meeting Monday, 4 July 2022 of Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	9 - 18
Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 07/07/2022	19 - 30
Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 12 July 2022 of Personnel Board	31 - 32
IMD 2022 7 Wokingham Town Bus Service 13 July	33 - 34
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 13 July 2022 of Planning Committee	35 - 42
Minutes of meeting Monday, 18 July 2022 of Standards Committee	43 - 46
Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 19 July 2022 of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	47 - 54
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 27 July 2022 of Audit Committee	55 - 62
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 27 July 2022 of Personnel Board	63 - 64
Minutes of meeting Thursday, 28 July 2022 of Executive	65 - 80
Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 2 August 2022 of Planning Committee	81 - 84
IMD 2022/09 Local Bus Service SoM4 08/08/22	85 - 86
Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 10 August 2022 of Planning Committee	87 - 92
IMD 2022/08 Homelessness Prevention Grant (2023/24 onwards) consultation response 22 August	93 - 94

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERSONNEL BOARD
HELD ON 4 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.35 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth (Chairman), Clive Jones (Vice-Chairman), Prue Bray, Stephen Conway and Stuart Munro

Officers Present

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Barbara Batchelor, Human Resources and Organisational Development

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Pauline Helliard Symons and Pauline Jorgensen.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 March 2022 and the Minutes of the Extraordinary meetings held on 1 June and 15 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

17. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

18. ANNUAL PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/2023

The Board considered the Annual Pay Policy 2022/23.

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

- For the 2022/23 policy some amendments had been made in line with guidance issued from the Department for Communities and Local Government. To allow for flexibility in the organisational structure and reporting lines in the top tiers of the Council, Assistant Directors had not been listed individually, but were captured within the definition of “chief officer” under the Localism Act.
- Chief Officers could receive performance related pay of up to 10% of their salary.
- The pay ratio, or pay multiple, was used to express the relationship between the remuneration of the chief officer/highest paid employee and that of other employees. A ratio of 8:1 meant that the highest paid individual earned eight times more than the lowest paid individual. The Chief Executive was at £156, 473 and the lowest grade at £19,308.
- Members were advised that the Council applied the NJC national pay agreement. Appointments were normally made at the minimum of a pay grade, but managers could appoint at higher at their discretion.
- Market supplements could be applied should a position prove difficult to recruit to in accordance with policy.
- The Chief Executive’s salary was in line with nationally negotiated rates.

- The Gender Pay Gap report had been published earlier in the year. The Pay Policy was required to be published by the end of March so was late.
- Barbara Batchelor informed the Board how the Council compared with Reading, Slough, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead for salaries. In terms of the highest salary and the ratio to the highest salary, Wokingham was slightly higher than Windsor and Maidenhead. Slough, West Berkshire and Reading were higher than Wokingham. With regards to the highest salary to the median Wokingham at 4.8:1; was lower than the other four authorities. The Chief Executive's salary was slightly lower in West Berkshire but higher in Slough, Reading and Windsor and Maidenhead. Members requested that further comparative salary data for the other Berkshire authorities be provided.
- Councillor Munro questioned whether Adult Social Care remained a vulnerable area in terms of recruitment and retention and was informed that this remained a national problem.
- Councillor Bray questioned whether the lowest grade was above the National Living Wage (NLW) and the Real Living Wage (RLW), and if this could be reflected within the Policy or its covering report when considered by Council. Councillor Bishop Firth questioned whether the Council paid above the National Living Wage and the Real Living Wage for all except interns and apprentices. Barbara Batchelor agreed to confirm.
- Councillor Bishop Firth asked about the Council's policy on the remuneration of the lowest paid workers. Barbara Batchelor commented that the lowest grade paid £19,308 (£10.01p per hour) and that this was stated within the Pay Policy. Councillor Bray questioned whether there was a policy in place regarding keeping this at a certain level. Barbara Batchelor confirmed that payments were in accordance with the NJC Pay Awards. The Council's lowest paid worker earned more than the lowest paid workers in Reading, Slough, and West Berkshire.
- Councillor Bishop Firth questioned whether the Real Living Wage scheme could be considered and brought to a future meeting. Barbara Batchelor advised that once the Council became accredited as part of the Real Living Wage Scheme, it would not have control as to what the RLW could be. If it increased significantly in comparison to the NJC and NLW increases, it could have an impact on the first four pay bands, and then a trickle up effect throughout the organisation. There would also be implications for school staff, contractors, and partner organisations such as Optalis.
- In response to a question as to whether appointments were ever made at below the minimum pay scale, Barbara Batchelor indicated that they were not.
- Councillor Jones noted that Assistant Directors received between £73,000 and £87,000 and asked how this compared to other authorities. He felt that the salary gap between Directors and Assistant Directors was widening.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Pay Policy be recommended to Council subject to the amendments discussed at the meeting.

19. ANNUAL EQUALITY WORKFORCE MONITORING REPORT

The Board received the Annual Equality Workforce Monitoring Report.

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

- The data contained within the report related to the data collation as at April-June 2021. It provided an analysis of the Council's workforce demographics against that of the Borough. The report had been prepared at a time when severe austerity as a

result of Covid had been experienced. Key areas covered included gender, age, ethnicity, and disability.

- There were approximately 1,400 members of staff.
- With regards to gender, there was a reasonable split between men and women in the Borough. In the Council 73% of staff were female and 27% were male.
- 53% of staff earning over £50,000 in the organisation were women. There were a higher proportion of female staff in entry level posts. As the salary bands increased so too did the number of women in those bands.
- The age gap in staff was largely reflective of the Borough. Whilst there had been an increase in leavers aged over 60, there had been an increase in the number of starters in the younger age groups under 29.
- The number of apprenticeships had increased to 73.
- 5% of the workforce had reported a disability. Staff were encouraged to disclose any disabilities so that any necessary adjustments could be made to support them.
- With regards to ethnicity, 16% had declared that they were from an ethnic minority background. 18% of staff had not declared their ethnicity. Barbara Batchelor explained that the way in which ethnicities data had been grouped was different from previous reports.
- Staff could disclose their religion and sexual orientation should they wish.
- Over the last reporting period 20 members of staff had been through formal Grievance, Capability or Disciplinary processes. Councillor Bishop Firth commented that the number of staff of an ethnic minority who had been through a formal employment relation case in 2020-21, seemed high. Members sought information as to the type of employee relation cases and the outcomes.
- Members asked whether there any indications of the number of staff who had gone through formal employment relation cases in 2021-22 and were informed that there was not yet. It was noted that the number had dropped in 2019-20, potentially as a result of Covid, and many staff working from home rather than the workplace.
- The Board discussed staff with disabilities. Members were informed that within the Borough 20% of adults with learning disabilities were in paid employment. Councillor Bishop Firth asked for information on the number of working age adults in the Borough with disabilities.
- Councillor Bray expressed concern regarding capability and grievances relating to disability and questioned whether lessons had been learnt from a previous case. Barbara Batchelor commented that 19 recommendations had come out of the specific case, 12 of which were completed and the remaining 7 were in progress. The Board felt that it would be useful to understand how lessons had been learnt.
- Members were reminded that the Council operated a guaranteed interview scheme for candidates with disabilities who met the minimum requirements of a role.
- Councillor Bray went on to ask about making reasonable adjustments for Councillors with disabilities and which department was responsible for ensuring this.
- It was noted that the report contained one incorrect figure and a typo, which would be corrected.

RESOLVED: That the 2020 - 2021 Annual Equality Workforce Monitoring Report be approved subject to the minor amendments discussed.

20. RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTORS HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT (HR&OD)

The Board received a report regarding the recruitment process for the Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development.

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

- The campaign was in progress and had gone live on 16 May. Adverts had been placed in the Municipal Journal, the Council's website, LinkedIn and the Guardian online website. The advert had closed on 20 June. In response to a Member question it was clarified that the Guardian Online had been recommended by the Council's recruitment partner, Solace.
- A virtual long listing process had taken place on 27 June and technical interviews had been carried out on 4 July. A short list meeting would take place on 12 July. Following this, candidates would undergo an assessment centre comprising of psychometric tests, written exercise, a role play exercise and a panel interview with members of CLT, on 18 July. Final Members Interviews would take place on 27 July.
- Members felt that in future it would be helpful to consider the process prior to it having begun. Barbara Batchelor referred to the change in the Council's Constitution regarding the appointment of Assistant Directors.

RESOLVED: That the report regarding the recruitment process for the Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development be noted.

21. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board agreed the following meeting dates:

- Tuesday 27th September 7pm
- Tuesday 22nd November 7pm
- Monday 27th February 7pm

22. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

23. AGENCY WORKER USAGE

The Board considered the Agency Worker Usage Q4 report.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the Part 2 report be agreed subject to the amendments discussed during the meeting.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.14 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Peter Dennis (Chairman), David Cornish (Vice-Chairman), Shirley Boyt, Laura Blumenthal, Gregor Murray, Alistair Neal, Chris Bowring, Abdul Loyes and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Executive Members Present

Councillors: Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways) and Ian Shenton (Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure)

Officers Present

Narinder Brar (Community Safety Manager), Neil Carr (Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist), Andy Glencross (Assistant Director - Highways), Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking & Road Safety Team Manager) and Callum Wernham (Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist)

Others Present

Adrian Betteridge (Wokingham Active Travel)

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Pauline Jorgensen, Norman Jorgensen, and Chris Johnson.

Councillors Abdul Loyes, Chris Bowring and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey attended the meeting as substitutes.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 May 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was queried why the bus strategy was not on the agenda for this meeting, as had been requested. Andy Glencross, Assistant Director for Highways and Transport, stated that the bus service improvement plan and the enhanced partnership were scheduled to come to Overview and Scrutiny in September prior to being signed off by the Executive. It was requested that any changes to the forward plan be specifically raised with the Chair to ensure that the Committee was aware of any changes, especially when items were of great importance to residents. It was agreed that officers would go away and confirm that the September meeting was still the most suitable time for items related to buses to be considered.

Andy Glencross stated that he would ascertain how much revenue support was available for bus services.

It was requested that any papers related to buses be sent to this Committee prior to being considered at Executive Briefing.

It was noted that an urgent Individual Executive Member Decision was scheduled on 13 July to modify the contract term for Wokingham Town bus services.

It was queried why members were not specifically named within the minutes. Callum Wernham, Democratic and Electoral Services specialist, clarified that it had been agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to not name members within the minutes of any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

16. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

17. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 19 to 34, which gave an update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

The report outlined the strategic priorities of the partnership, including listening to the needs and concerns of local residents, and intervening early and preventing issues from escalating. The Wokingham Domestic Abuse policy had been adopted, which was in line with the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Despite an overall increase of 10.9 percent of total reported crime, Wokingham Borough still had one of the lowest levels of recorded crime in Thames Valley and the Southeast, whilst 2020-2021 had seen some of the lowest reported levels of crime both locally and nationally due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Narinder Brar, Community Safety Manager, attended the meeting to answer member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised the following points and queries:

- Was funding for the 'Here4You' team still in place? Officer response – The 'Here4You' service was the young people's specific service which sat within the youth offending service. The service had supported around 91 new young people this year alone, and was fully funded and looking to enhance its offering. The service was promoted directly via the youth offending team, at schools, via social media and via referrals from other health related services. Information was also made available to parents.
- Was liaison underway with housing associations to help combat antisocial behaviour within social housing? Officer response – There was a very good and well-established relationship with housing associations, however the main issue was the turnover of staff and understanding who was in charge of each property. The service being delivered had improved, hence the light-touch of this issue within the report.
- Was the increase in hate crime a result of people feeling more confident to report these incidents? Officer response – People were being encouraged to report hate crime via police colleagues and voluntary sector colleagues and third-party recording mechanisms. It was crucially important to get a community feel on these issues, and there was a way to go to get more third-party reporting at buildings including community hubs and the Council offices. In general, there had been a 5-to-6-year

Borough wide trend of increasing hate crime including racial, religious, and disability related crime.

- Were there any measures with regards to the success of the prevent program, or was this confidential? Officer response – This was quite confidential, as the Home Office was very careful with the information that was recorded and circulated in terms of the numbers of people coming into the prevent program. Case updates were provided to the prevent board, which outlined the types of risk being faced and the types of risks being de-escalated. The programme had expanded and influences including right wing terrorism, cyber-crime, and influences through gaming were now being investigated and dealt with.
- What training was being provided with regards to the prevent program? Officer response – There was a clear recognition that the word ‘prevent’ caused mixed feelings, especially within the Muslim communities. There was outreach towards local communities, and officers were always open to hearing how this could be increased and done in a more sensitive way. The programme had come a long way, and the year before last referrals from right wing individuals on a national level outstripped any other type of referral. The program was there to help individuals who may just be upset or confused about a range of different issues, and not just in relation to any specific radicalisation. There was a tiered training plan, which ranged from basic training all the way to specialised training for social workers. More granular information on the training program could be shared with the Committee.
- What was the sense of achievement of the specific aims of the service, what was the baseline of reported rape and domestic abuse which would allow members to see whether the increase was due to more people feeling confident to report these crimes, and what were the long-term trends beyond the pandemic years? Officer response – Future reports would contain longer term trends, whilst it was noted that the pandemic years were unusually low crime rate years. In terms of strategic aims, the service was now in a very good place with strong leadership, and had developed the community safety plan, partnership and a strong team which was different from the place where it had historically operated quite poorly on a strategic and operational footing. Violence against women and girls was a key local and national issue that was being addressed, whilst Wokingham now had a 10-person strong antisocial behaviour team which allowed for work to be carried out on the ground. The Borough’s out-of-hours response for antisocial behaviour was previously quite poor, and it was expected to see an increase in reports as the public gained the confidence that came with a new service. Longer term trends and information would be pulled together when the violence against women and girls action plan was developed, and it needed to be assessed as to whether the number of rape and domestic abuse cases were genuinely low or whether this was due to low confidence of victims. Nationally, rape cases were in a very bad place with an average of 600 days between a report being made and a disposal being undertaken.
- Could local, such as South East England, and national trends be added for future reports in addition to data from the years prior to the pandemic? Officer response – Data would be provided via 1, 3 and 5 year trends in future to give all of the data meaning.
- Could a table or graph be provided in future reports to show how Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) compared to other local authorities and to show how many of these

crimes were being solved? Officer response – Detection rates would be provided in future where this data was available.

- Whilst it was dreadful that anyone suffered from domestic abuse, it was good to see people having more confidence to report these issues and we should be setting ourselves targets to see how we could achieve 100 percent reporting.
- Why was fraud excluded from this list? Officer response – This was dealt with by action fraud, which was a separate entity for dealing with such cases. These were often very complex national and international cases which required specialist officers to investigate each case.
- It was commented that excluding fraud from WBC's Community Safety Partnership would be doing residents a disservice. Officer comment – As a partnership, funding had been made available to Trading Standards colleagues and there was some very close working underway to work through a list of vulnerable people within the Borough. A separate agenda item could be scheduled specifically on this issue, including specific data regarding how many instances of fraud and cyber-crime were occurring and the cost implications.
- What was being done to help LGBT children in homes, who were being abused because of their sexual orientation or identity? Officer response – This would be provided as a written answer.
- How was treatment of victims by the police being measured? Officer response – There were a number of different ways that quality control of police officers was being undertaken and monitored, including body cameras and positive actions that police officers must carry out. If a victim was unhappy with the response given, they could ask for a more senior officer to assess the case and body footage, and a formal complaint route was available if required. The partnership wanted to hear any instances of poor experiences with the police.
- How was the issue of inappropriate behaviour within the workplace being dealt with by the police? Officer response – This would be provided as a written answer.
- Was the partnership putting out advice to residents regarding keyless car thefts, and was this a growing issue? Officer response – As an affluent Borough, car ownership was high and investment in technology was high, which was attractive to criminals. Messaging was going out in conjunction with Thames Valley police in terms of the targeting of keyless car thefts.
- Were family gold thefts a priority for the police, and could anything be done to reassure residents? Officer response – This was a priority, however this was particularly difficult to deal with as it was linked to organised crime activity who had information about exactly which houses had gold and where it might be hidden. Insurance companies tended to replace the gold, and when the family took the gold back to the house the cycle often restarted once again and the victims were often repeat targeted, whilst very little proof was required to sell gold. The best thing people could do would be to store gold at a safe location such as a safety deposit box.
- Which category did bike and e-bike theft sit within? Officer response – This could be recorded in a combination of places dependant on where they were being stolen from.

Bike theft was less of a concern within the Borough recently as a lot of messaging had been distributed to the public over time.

- Could a value be placed on investigating and dealing with issues in terms of officer time and community value, in addition to prosecution rates being provided? Officer response – This would be provided by a written answer.
- A number of questions were provided to the Police in advance of the meeting, which can be found below.
- I have a question about the police's 101 number for non-emergency cases. What value does it add, what are the answer times, what resolutions come out of it? I ask because when asking residents to report issues via 101 there is a tendency to say it does not work. And thus, it is not used leading to other issues. To quote one case I tried to contact one Saturday evening and essentially just gave up. Police response - 999 calls to police are for emergencies where life is at risk, or a crime is in progress. 101 calls to police are to report crimes and incidents to Police where life is not at immediate risk, but a police response is required. Examples are far too numerous to detail but include a crime that has already occurred where a suspect is no longer on scene, a missing person where there is no immediate risk to life, a concern or fear for someone's welfare, an ongoing antisocial behaviour issue that requires police intervention. Our force target is to answer 101 calls within 3 minutes. In the year 21-22, 66% of 101 calls were answered within the 3-minute target and there is significant work going on to improve this. When a 101 call is answered, the call taker will go through a series of questions to determine the level of threat, harm, opportunity and risk and to determine how the call will be directed according. This will largely depend on the type of crime or incident that is being reported. For example, someone reporting a domestic violence offence will be prioritised over someone reporting that their neighbours parking is annoying them, but both are reported through 101. The nature of the call and often the crime type will of course dictate not only the response grading that should be applied but the best department to deal with the crime or the incident being reported (E.g., Uniformed response units, CID, specialist domestic abuse teams, local PCSO from dedicated neighbourhood team, traffic officers, safeguarding teams etc.). I have never known 101 not work. At times of high call volume there may be delays in getting an answer. Members of the public can visit the force website and submit an online report if they do not wish to hold on 101. Crimes, Incidents, road traffic collisions (non-injury), updates to ongoing incidents amongst many other things can be reported via the online tool. The online submissions are dealt with in a timely manner and can reach the correct department just as quickly as a 101 call can do.
- How will the police deal with e-scooters once the legislation changes to allow them? Police response - At present E- Scooters that are not part of a local government initiative are dealt with through road traffic legislation. E-scooters that are causing Anti-social behaviour can also be dealt with through Section 59 of the Police reform Act 2002. This provides Police the power to seize any vehicle being driven in an Anti-social manner. Our Neighbourhood Team recently ran two E-Scooter police operations to target areas where there were high usage of E-Scooters causing significant ASB. Even when legislation changes, police will still use Section 59 to target improper use.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Narinder Brar be thanked for attending the meeting;

- 2) More granular information with respect to prevent training be provided to the Committee;
- 3) Future reports contain longer term trends, and detection rates where available;
- 4) A separate agenda item be scheduled specifically on the issue of fraud, including specific data regarding how many instances of fraud and cyber-crime were occurring and the cost implications;
- 5) A written answer be provided as to what was being done to help LGBT children in homes, who were being abused because of their sexual orientation or identity;
- 6) A written answer be provided as to how the issue of inappropriate behaviour within the workplace was being dealt with by the police;
- 7) A written answer be provided as to whether a value be placed on investigating and dealing with issues in terms of officer time and community value, in addition to prosecution rates being provided;
- 8) The Committee receive a further update during the next municipal year.

18. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 35 to 50, which gave an update on civil parking enforcement (CPE) within the Borough.

The report set out that the operation of CPE, as administered by the Council's contractor NSL, had met the objectives set out for the scheme adopted by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) specifically by improving the flow of traffic by challenging drivers' previous parking behaviours. The introduction of the service had been cost neutral as intended, with income from parking fees and penalty charge notices continuing to cover service costs. The service had grown from 4 CPE officers in 2017 to 8 CPE officers in 2020 and now 12 CPE officers in 2022. Additional CPE officers had enabled the service to respond more regularly to parking concerns raised by residents and members.

Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways), Martin Heath (Traffic Management, Parking and Road Safety Team Manager), and Andy Glencross (Assistant Director for Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to answer member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised the following points and queries:

- Were there any specific TROs in place across the Borough in terms of pavement or verge parking? Executive Member response – If there were double yellow lines on the adjacent carriageway, then enforcement could be taken on the verge or footway. If there was obstruction of the footway itself, then this was a police matter.
- How often was the strategy for the location of patrols reviewed by WBC? Executive Member and Assistant Director response – This was reviewed constantly to target the areas where enforcement was needed the most. Every school was targeted every month with many receiving visits every week, and if a particular issue was raised by

residents or members then this was passed to the contractor to tackle until the compliance rate was increased substantially.

- Why were there no figures or targets in relation to the KPIs for the contractor? Assistant Director response – These were operational KPIs in relation to the contractor.
- Had a policy decision been made with regards to moving traffic enforcement? Executive Member response – This was being actively looked at whilst a business case was being evaluated, with the deadline for submission to the DFT (if desired) in January 2023.
- Why were enforcement penalty notices more expensive in Reading compared to Reading? Executive Member and Assistant Director response – This figure was set by the regulator on a national scale, and WBC's were already at the higher level.
- Was the CCTV trial at schools going to be rolled out to other schools, and would Beechwood be included in this? Executive Member response – There were 3 cameras available for use, and the trial would go live in September 2022 at two particular schools. The trial would be undertaken to ensure that this was working, and the cameras could be moved to other schools to address specific issues. A growth bid could be placed in future if the scheme was successful and deemed necessary for expansion. Beechwood was within the top 6 schools in terms of priority of dealing with existing issues and concerns.
- With regards to the contract renewal of 2 plus 2 years, would it be sensible to take such renewals to Overview and Scrutiny in future prior to renewal? Executive Member and officer response – Whilst the renewal was in line with the constitutional requirements, this would be a good idea in future to ensure that contracts were working well and were still the best solution for our residents.
- Were there plans to renew and replace old off-street car parking signs, especially considering the new 24 hour charging period (noting that this did not mean that it costed users money to park at all times)? Assistant Director response – There were some very old signs within the Borough, and these were being reviewed to ensure that they were in line with the most up to date TROs.
- It was requested that Crockhamwell Road car park be assessed for a change away from no return in 24 hours, to be more user friendly.
- What was the basis behind Wokingham Town having 6 to 10 times more penalty notices per month than the other towns? Assistant Director response – This was likely due to having more car parks in Wokingham compared to Woodley and Earley, and potentially a higher propensity for violations within Wokingham town centre.
- Was there data in relation to the usage of electric vehicle charging points and requests from residents for charging points outside of their homes? Assistant Director response – This would be provided as a written answer.
- How were responses to residents in terms of requests for TROs measured? Assistant Director response – TROs were undertaken via a Borough wide amendment which was more efficient in terms of administration however it took around 6 months. A

customer relations management system was being developed which would allow acknowledgements to be sent to residents and members.

- Was enforcement at schools heavily weighted towards town centre schools? For example, Floreat Montague school has seen various issues over time with little evidence of enforcement officers? Assistant Director response – Floreat could not be enforced prior to adoption of the road. It was not the job of the enforcement officers to talk to parents, as it was their job to issue tickets if the rules were being broken. Parking on zigzags were an immediate offence, whilst parents were allowed to unload on double yellow lines which meant it was difficult for enforcement officers to catch parents on double yellow lines long enough to issue a ticket, especially at drop off time. Every school was targeted and patrolled, and if there were specific concerns then members could contact officers to who would pass this on to the contractors to allow them to focus on a specific school for a period of time.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Paul Fishwick, Martin Heath and Andy Glencross be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) A written answer be provided in relation to the usage of electric vehicle charging points and requests from residents for charging points outside of their homes;
- 3) An annual update be provided to the Committee during the next municipal year.

19. LOCAL CYCLING & WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Committee considered a timetable, set out in agenda pages 51 to 52, which set out the timescales for the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways), and Andy Glencross (Assistant Director for Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to answer member queries.

During the ensuing discussion, members raised the following points and queries:

- It was noted that it would be helpful for the Committee to receive a further update in November 2022.
- Could dates and metrics be included within the project plan with regards to actual delivery of infrastructure, and could some projects such as safe railway crossings which would be required regardless of the final shape of the plan be noted within the plan with dates for delivery. Executive Member response – This was a very high priority, and active travel England required an LCWIP, with a report to be produced in October 2022. The Borough had been awarded funding for the Woodley to Reading route, which would be consulted on in July after the previous proposal gathered significant objections. This year would see the start of a compliant LTN 1/20 between Woodley and Reading.
- Adrian Betteridge, Wokingham Active Travel, provided a number of comments to the Committee. Community views had been listened to and taken on board, both in terms of help with local knowledge of routes and how this was to be positioned with the local

public. It was crucially important to sell this to the public as they might otherwise only see the large costs, road vehicle space being given up to cyclists, and temporary disruption. The major benefits of the LCWIP included tackling climate change, air quality, health and wellbeing and congestion. If these priorities were not focussed on, people would likely only focus on the disruptions caused and not the benefits. The target of five-times the number of cyclists in the Borough by 2030, as set out in the climate emergency action plan, would not be met unless the LCWIP was progressed from a funding and delivery point of view.

- When will the proposed consultation and wording be shared with the Woodley Borough and Town councillors? Executive Member response – This would be shared very shortly, hopefully by the coming weekend.
- Had any further investigations been made with regards to the proposed removal of a number of car parking spaces within Woodley, which were used by low income and elderly residents? Executive Member response – A plan would be finalised and communicated prior to this coming weekend.
- Would a more detailed plan and report be presented to the Committee in November? Executive Member response – The original first draft plan was sent out for consultation last year, and responses were being evaluated to inform on a second stage of consultation later this month. More detail would be provided at future meetings.
- Was the consultation regarding a cycle route from Loddon Park to Twyford station part of the LCWIP? Executive Member and Officer response – This was a levelling up fund bid which was also included within the LCWIP, which had the support of Theresa May MP whilst a petition was being arranged by residents to support this proposal. This was a long-term aspiration of the Council to have a cross valley route to link Woodley to Twyford station.
- Would it be ensured that schools were engaged and consulted with? Executive Member response – It would be ensured that schools were thoroughly consulted with.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Paul Fishwick, Andy Glencross and Adrian Betteridge be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) An update be taken to the Committee in November 2022;
- 3) It be ensured that schools were thoroughly consulted on the emerging LCWIP.

20. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their work programme, set out in agenda pages 53 to 56.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Callum Wernham and Neil Carr be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) The Committee work programme be noted;

- 3) An update be sought from officers with regards to bus services, specifically detailing options for funding routes and services as DFT funding was coming to an end;
- 4) An update on tackling fraud within the Borough be considered during September 2022;
- 5) An additional meeting be organised in November 2022 to consider the LCWIP Update and the Arts and Culture Strategy Update;
- 6) It was noted that a budget scrutiny training session was being organised;
- 7) It was noted that Committee members were invited to attend pre-meeting sessions 30-minutes prior to the beginning of each meeting.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.00 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Jim Frewin (Chairman), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Peter Dennis, Graham Howe, Adrian Mather, Stuart Munro, Gregor Murray and Alison Swaddle

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Michael Firmager, Alistair Neal, Clive Jones and Sarah Kerr

Officers Present

Ian Bellinger, Service Manager for Growth and Delivery
Richard Bisset, Lead Specialist, Place Clienting
Laura Buck, Green Infrastructure Special Project Manager
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Andrew Collins, Specialist Climate Emergency Officer
Robert Curtis, Transport Planning Team Manager
Ian Gough, Energy Manager
Rhian Hayes, Assistant Director, Economic Development and Growth
Tabitha Shell, Climate Emergency Project Officer
Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive

14. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR

Jim Frewin (Chair) made the following opening statement.

Before we start the main business, I would like to thank those Members and officers who took up the opportunity to input ideas on what you want from Scrutiny, and your top three priorities for 2022/23. That opportunity remains open should anyone further wish to provide input.

The top points on what you want from Scrutiny were:

- Scrutiny to add value for our residents;
- Work towards a culture of greater openness, transparency and honesty;
- Be more forward looking and ambitious through early engagement;
- Review delivery - if something has not been achieved then understand why, dig down to root causes and then help identify lessons learned;
- Direction-check strategy, influence strategy but don't try to set strategy - that is the Executive/CLT role;
- Influence measures and reporting that enable better understanding of how residents experience our services which can, in turn, be used for better Scrutiny which can lead to service improvements;
- More concise and meaningful questioning, be prepared;
- Engage as a team with CLT, the Executive and officers to add value;
- Try to be non-political, stop political point scoring, be a true critical friend.

15. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by David Cornish and Norman Jorgensen.

Michael Firmager and Alistair Neal attended the meeting as substitutes.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was submitted from Gregor Murray in relation to item 20 – Climate Emergency Action Plan Annual Progress report 2022. Councillor Murray left the meeting during consideration of this item.

18. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chair invited members of the public to submit questions.

Tony Johnson asked the Chair the following question:

Question

In the O&S Work Programme, Appendix A illustrates some two dozen topics, where item 4 is “Scrutinising the underpinning priorities and KPIs for the Corporate Delivery Plan 2020/24 and the Quarterly Performance Management Reports”

How should the KPI’s and performance management reports be improved so that they are better understood and more meaningful to members of the public?

Answer

Over the last year the reports have evolved considerably giving Council Members and members of the public improved understanding into the performance of the Council. The officers responsible for this report take a continuous improvement approach, acting on feedback to improve the report iteratively. These improvements cover both the presentation and style of the report and the way that progress updates are written.

In addition to this, Wokingham Borough Council recently underwent an independent Scrutiny Improvement Review, undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The quarterly performance report and how it is used has formed part of this review. The feedback from the review is expected at the end of July and will be used to ensure that the performance report continues to evolve in a meaningful way in the future.

The specific KPIs and the associated targets are decided by the Executive Members responsible for each portfolio in consultation with the relevant Director. Following the recent election result and the change in Executive, the KPIs are being reviewed to ensure they are relevant, aligned with political priorities and reflect the things that matter to our residents.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for providing such a good and comprehensive answer. From roughly four years’ experience of reporting KPIs to a business, I was aware that communicating them often involved re-explaining to those receiving them – what the KPIs were about, how they were calculated and where the data came from. Therefore, I am asking: How does the Task and Finish Group or this Committee propose to consider introducing measures so that the public can easily understand the opportunities as well as the challenges the Council faces.

Supplementary Answer

Thank you for that supplementary question. I think that this is something we will have to provide a written answer to. I will also take these points into consideration when we look at the Terms of Reference for the proposed Task and Finish Group.

19. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

Gary Cowan asked the Chairman the following question:

Question

The Agenda makes reference to and I quote "Some Members also highlighted the Local Plan Update and Five Year Land Supply. It should be noted that, at the previous meeting, it was confirmed that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny would scrutinise the Local Plan Update (with associated issues) at the meeting on 13-6-22 but due to its importance perhaps the OSMC may wish to take these items back if Members agree.

I notice that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a work programme which includes an EXTRAORDINARY meeting on the 19 September 2022 headed Local Plan Update to receive a progress report on the Local Plan Update from Ian Bellinger. I now see that the meeting is on the website. Liaison with the Planners will identify the best time for O&SMC to get involved in the LPU which perhaps needs to be sooner rather than later.

I also notice that, in March 2023, a Flood Risk Update is scheduled which is an annual report nine months away which is rather long time with Climate Emergency a key concern. I understand that it takes place in March to allow inclusion of any flooding issues over the winter period but with Climate Emergency might it be worth a mid-year review as flooding has occurred in both summer and winter?

In agreeing the work programme for the year and as it's a new administration should the O&S Management Committee now review all the previously considered programmes such as the prioritising of the key business of which the Local Plan Update and the 5 year Housing Land Supply which must be the most important issue to all our residents.

My question is, therefore, should this be for the O&S Management Committee, as a matter of some urgency, to decide to deal with this immediately itself and not leave it to the Corporate O&S? I understand the O&S Management Committee could decide this course of action if that was considered appropriate.

Answer

In Councillor Cowan's absence, the following written answer was provided:

The Committee reviews its work programme at each meeting. At the meeting on 13 June 2022, Members agreed that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee would scrutinise the Local Plan Update. That Committee has already set up an extraordinary meeting in September for this purpose. I am happy with this position. Peter Dennis, as Chair of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be able to keep this Committee up to date on progress.

20. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Clive Jones (Leader of the Council) and Susan Parsonage (Chief Executive) attended the meeting to give a presentation to the Committee on the challenges facing the Council over the coming year.

The presentation covered the following points:

Challenges Facing the Council:

- Budget pressures (e.g. from Health and Adult Social Care reforms).
- Recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Inflation and the cost of living crisis.
- Increasing demand, complexity and costs (housing, poverty, special educational needs and disability (SEND) and Adult Social Care (ASC)).

Service Priorities:

- Chief Executive's Office – customer excellence; tackling poverty and the equalities framework; community engagement; organisational development.
- Resources and Assets – financial sustainability; income generation and commercialisation; high standards of governance and financial management; supporting businesses; health and wellbeing.
- Place and Growth – Local Plan Update; new Anti-Social Behaviour service; climate change; housing demand and needs; sustainable transport options; supporting refugees coming into the Borough.
- Adult Social Care – keeping people safe; involving residents and delaying the need for formal care and support; commissioning services that deliver quality and value for money; integrating health and social care changes; Public Health priorities for the Borough.
- Children's Services – protecting and safeguarding children, young and vulnerable people; championing outstanding education; enabling children and young people to achieve their full potential regardless of their background.

Crosscutting Priorities:

- Customer excellence – embed a customer excellence culture and simplify customer journeys.
- Business intelligence – use data to develop insights which support demand management and decision making.
- Contracts and procurement – drive commercial efficiencies and service quality through contract management and longer term planning.
- Asset opportunities – review the Council's property portfolio and align assets to future business needs.
- Workforce – enhanced organisational design and improved retention through a focus on talent management.
- Community and partnerships – develop relationships which support a cohesive approach to meeting community needs and increase social value.
- Financial sustainability – underpins each of the cross-cutting priorities.

Administration Priorities:

- Recover and prosper – supporting local businesses; homes for local people; arts, culture and libraries.
- Cleaner and greener – preserve green spaces; tackle climate change; highways and transport.

- Caring for everybody – Adult Social Care (funding and partnerships); Children’s Services (school places, SEND and CAMHs); Covid-19 recovery plan; White Ribbon accreditation.
- Being responsible and responsive – equality, inclusivity and diversity; support for residents on low incomes; finance (prudential controls, review of Capital programme, reduce debt and borrowing, review contracts).
- Improve our responsiveness to residents – improving access to the Council and responsiveness of services.

Next Steps:

- Further action on the Budget and Capital re-profiling.
- Continuing the delivery of priority projects.
- Further review of the administration’s aspirations.
- Increase and deepen the quality of partnership working within and outside the Council; improve cross-party working.

In the ensuing discussion Members raised the following points:

The presentation highlighted key priorities which had been identified and addressed by the previous administration. What was different about the priorities identified in the presentation and what new challenges were emerging? Clive Jones stated that the new administration was already making progress on key issues, such as the discussion with Michael Gove about housing numbers in the Borough (to be followed up with the new Secretary of State, Greg Clark). The new administration was looking at the challenges to be tackled in the Local Plan Update and assessing the Council’s financial situation. Susan Parsonage commented that a number of the priorities and challenges were cross-cutting and the new administration was not aiming to change everything. For example, customer excellence was a priority for the previous administration and continued to be a priority for the new administration.

Did the new administration have a target in mind for the reduction of the annual new housing numbers target? Clive Jones stated that work was ongoing to understand the Council’s financial position and the impact on the organisation and key services. In relation to housing numbers, the Liberal Democrat Group had stated in the past that moving below 600 new homes per year was a reasonable target for discussion with the Government.

Did the new administration aim to bring greater transparency to financial decisions such as the sale of assets? Clive Jones stated that the process of taking the draft Budget through the Overview and Scrutiny process would continue. The new administration saw value in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Bringing items to the Committees earlier in the decision making process would add value and enable Overview and Scrutiny Members to influence policy development more effectively.

Potential changes to the delivery of Adult Social Care could have serious impacts on the Council’s financial stability. Susan Parsonage stated that work was ongoing to map out various scenarios with possible risks and mitigation measures. In the meantime the Council would continue to lobby the Government to ensure that its views were heard. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be updated on any new developments relating to changes to Adult Social Care.

Recent publication of Census data had shown that the Borough’s population had increased by 15% over the past 10 years. This was unsustainable. What was the Council

doing to challenge the Government's methodology for future housing numbers? Clive Jones stated that contact had been made with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the issue of Councils which had over-delivered on new homes and should, therefore, have lower targets moving forwards. This should be reflected in the Local Plan Update.

Now that the regeneration of Wokingham town centre was reaching a conclusion, what plans were there for regeneration of the other towns in the Borough? Clive Jones stated that officers had commenced working on options for further regeneration projects, commencing with Woodley.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Clive Jones and Susan Parsonage be thanked for attending the meeting to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the Borough;
- 2) Clive and Susan be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss progress and the identification of emerging challenges and opportunities.

21. CLIMATE EMERGENCY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 173 to 178, which gave details of a Member request to establish an additional Overview and Scrutiny Committee to focus on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency via scrutiny of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The report stated that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 with the aim to playing as full a role as possible in reducing the Borough's carbon footprint to achieve Net Zero by 2030. Scrutiny of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, to date, had taken place through the establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group which produced reports in 2020 and 2021.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee's terms of reference enabled it to propose amendments to Council in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny function, including the establishment of a new Committee. Any new Committee would be established on the basis of political proportionality.

Appended to the report were draft terms of reference for the proposed Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The potential role of the new Committee was summarised as scrutinising, reviewing and assisting with policy development relating to:

- a) the Council's commitment to play as full a role as possible to reduce the Borough's carbon footprint to be Net Zero by 2030;
- b) implementation of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, including the annual progress report to Council;
- c) progress against recommendations, agreed by the Executive, from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group and the proposed Overview and Scrutiny itself;
- d) examples of Climate Emergency "best practice" from other local authorities and public/private sector organisations.

In the ensuing discussion, Members made the following points:

If a new Committee was established, what would be the impact on Democratic Services in terms of supporting the Committee? It was confirmed that Democratic Services had successfully supported the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group in 2020 and 2021. Also, the recent external review of the Council's Scrutiny function would make recommendations about structure and resourcing.

The report suggested that the new Committee be made up of nine Members (five Wokingham Borough Partnership and four Conservative). Could the Committee have a smaller number of Members? It was confirmed that the Committee membership could be 5:4 or 4:3. This would be clarified in relation to the political balance issue.

Rather than setting up a new Committee, could climate emergency be a standing item on each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees? This could reduce the workload for officers currently supporting the Council's work programme. It was confirmed that this was possible, but this approach would also generate additional work for Democratic Services and the officers working on delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, for example in relation to the number of meetings requiring attendance.

Were the proposed Terms of Reference too narrow? It was confirmed that the Committee could expand/refine the draft Terms of Reference before submitting the report to Council.

Following the discussion, the Chair suggested that consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting in order to provide further clarity on the issues raised by Members – officer workload, political balance, Terms of Reference and how the proposed Committee would fit into the existing Overview and Scrutiny framework.

RESOLVED: That consideration of the request to establish a Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee be deferred to the next meeting, to enable further clarity to be provided on the issues raised by Members.

22. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2022

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 13 to 172, which provided the annual progress report on the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The report stated that the Climate Emergency Action Plan had been approved in 2019. The Action Plan was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for comment each year, prior to submission to Council.

Rhian Hayes (Assistant Director, Economic Development and Growth) attended the meeting to present the report, supported by colleagues involved in the delivery of the Action Plan. Sarah Kerr (Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services) attended the meeting to discuss the report and answer Member questions. Sarah confirmed that the annual progress report would be submitted to Council in September 2022. This would enable the comments from Scrutiny Members to be incorporated into the report.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan identified key priority areas for CO2 emission reductions including transport, homes, businesses and waste. It also included SMART carbon targets and projections for the period up to 2030. The Action Plan highlighted the

size of the challenge facing the Council and recognised that, at this point, the proposed actions were not sufficient to deliver the carbon reductions necessary to meet the Borough's 2030 target. However, as a living document, new ideas would be developed over the next period which would support progress towards the target.

The report referred to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group which had produced reports in 2020 and 2021. The most recent report had included 25 recommendations to the Executive. The majority of the recommendations had been accepted and incorporated into the Action Plan.

The report highlighted a number of areas where significant progress had been made, including:

- The Borough's recycling rate had increased from 50% to 54%.
- Council buildings had been built/retrofitted to Net Zero standards – Dinton Activity Centre, Woodley Library, Carnival Hub, etc.
- Carbon sequestration projects had begun – over 15,000 trees planted.
- Renewable energy installations were progressing – significant progress on the Barkham solar farm project.
- Over 1,500 households receiving assistance from Help to Heat, the Council's locally set ECOFlex scheme.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

What were the implications of the Environment Act 2021 on the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan? It was confirmed that the Environment Act had a number of impacts including Biodiversity Net Gain, building standards, the development of an infrastructure strategy and recycling targets.

Was there an overall road map for the Climate Emergency Action Plan? It was confirmed that a road map with key milestones was being developed.

Was the Climate Emergency Action Plan influencing the Local Plan Update, for example in the requirement for new homes to achieve carbon neutrality? It was confirmed that new environmental standards had to be included in the new Local Plan. The zero carbon homes target, for example, could not be included in a supplementary planning document. The new administration was working with officers to progress the Local Plan Update. Work was also ongoing on the updated Local Transport Plan – LTP4.

The Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group, in its two reports, had challenged some of the numbers in the Action Plan. It appeared that there were still inconsistencies and sections where the numbers did not add up. It was suggested that Andy Croy and Sarah Kerr meet with the officers to discuss these issues before the Action Plan was submitted to Council in September 2022.

It was noted that, in the Action Plan column headed "Timescale/Total Cost, there were still a number of sections with "TBC" (To Be Confirmed) in the box. Could there be further commentary in the Action Plan on these sections, to provide greater understanding and a timescale for the TBCs to be resolved? It was confirmed that this suggestion would be given further consideration.

In relation to the projected growth in the number of electric vehicles (EV) in the Borough, had officers done any work on the cost/benefit of recycling EV batteries? It was confirmed that this issue had not been explored to date. Officers would give further consideration to this idea and report back to Members in due course.

The report referred to the use of ecargo bikes which could provide last-mile delivery services. It was suggested that officers contact West Berkshire Council which had received grant funding for its scheme.

Did the Council run a Bike to Work scheme? It was confirmed that WBC did run a scheme in order to encourage more bike usage amongst staff.

It was essential that the Action Plan was able to demonstrate value for money, i.e. a specific project may look attractive but the key issue was the carbon saving achieved against the cost.

In addition to the proposed solar farm at Barkham, were other initiatives being considered such as ground-source heat pumps and district heat networks? It was confirmed that officers were looking at battery storage options at the solar farm site and were also exploring other initiatives, including the ideas raised by Members.

What progress was there in relation to the work on deliberative processes? It was confirmed that the project was coming to the end of the first stage with nine stakeholder groups having met to consider key climate emergency issues and potential solutions.

Sarah Kerr suggested that the business case for the Barkham solar farm be considered by the Committee at its September meeting. This would allow Scrutiny feedback to be considered before the contract was awarded.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Sarah Kerr, Rhian Hayes and supporting officers be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions on the Climate Emergency Action Plan;
- 2) Member comments and suggestions on the Action Plan be fed into the annual update report to be considered by Council in September 2022;
- 3) Andy Croy and Sarah Kerr meet with officers to consider the methodologies used to inform the Action Plan and the resulting accuracy and consistency of calculations;
- 4) a report on the business case for the Barkham solar farm be submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 8 September 2022.

23. WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 179 to 183, which provided an update on the development of the Committee's work programme for 2022/23.

The report reminded Members that, at its meeting on 13 June 2022, the Committee had agreed the list of items to be included in its work programme for 2022/23. From the list of items, Members were requested to highlight their "top 3" priorities for consideration at the July meeting. The priority items highlighted by Members, to date, were:

- The emerging Waste Strategy – 2 votes.
- Discussions with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive – 2 votes.
- Impact of increasing levels of homelessness across the Borough, the cost of living crisis and the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- The Council’s Continuous Improvement Programme.
- Progress against Motions agreed by Council.
- Emissions and Air Quality.
- Adoption of estate infrastructure following new housing development – including litter clearance.

In addition to the list of items for inclusion in the work programme, the Chair suggested that a Task and Finish Group be established to review the way in which key performance indicators (KPIs) supported the delivery of continuous improvement and customer excellence across the organisation.

Following the earlier discussion on the Climate Emergency Action Plan, it was agreed that an item on the business plan for the Barkham solar farm be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the key priorities for inclusion in the work programme, identified by Committee members, be noted;
- 2) the Chair and Vice-Chair agree a draft 2022/23 work programme for consideration and agreement at the next meeting in September 2022;
- 3) an item on the Barkham solar farm be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee;
- 4) the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review the development and effectiveness of key performance indicators be agreed;
- 5) draft terms of reference for the proposed Task and Finish Group be submitted to the next meeting.

24. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its work programme for upcoming meetings and the work programmes of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as set out on Agenda pages 185 to 194.

RESOLVED: That the work programmes be noted.

25. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Executive Forward Programme, as set out on Agenda Pages 195 to 200.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Executive Forward Programme be noted;
- 2) the Committee consider an item on the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order, due to be considered by the Executive in September 2022.

26. ACTION TRACKER REPORT

The Committee considered the Action Tracker report following the meeting on 13 June 2022.

RESOLVED: That the Action Tracker report be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERSONNEL BOARD
HELD ON 12 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.50 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth (Chairman), Prue Bray, Pauline Jorgensen, Stuart Munro, Lindsay Ferris (substituting Clive Jones), Ian Shenton (substituting Stephen Conway) and Wayne Smith (substituting Pauline Helliard-Symons)

Officers Present

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive
Sally Watkins, Assistant Director Digital and Change
Barbara Batchelor, HR &OD
Steve Guest, SOLACE

24. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Stephen Conway, Pauline Helliard-Symons, and Clive Jones.

25. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

26. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

27. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HR &OD RECRUITMENT & ASSESSMENT SHORTLIST RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board received a report regarding the shortlist recommendations for the role of Assistant Director HR&OD.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations contained within the Part 2 report be agreed.

This page is intentionally left blank

Decision made in the presence of:
Rebecca Brooks, Community Transport Manager
Matt Gould, Lead Specialist - Highways and Transport
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION RECORD SHEET IMD 2022 7

Title of the report	Wokingham Town Bus Services
----------------------------	------------------------------------

DECISION MADE BY Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways - Paul Fishwick
Executive Member for Finance – Imogen Shepherd-DuBey
ACTION BY Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
DECISION MADE ON 13 July 2022

Recommendation contained in the report

That the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways in conjunction with the Executive Member for Finance gives approval to modify the contract term of contracts tendered under WBC100 to agree a new end date of 31st March 2023.

Decision

That the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways in conjunction with the Executive Member for Finance gave approval to modify the contract term of contracts tendered under WBC100 to agree a new end date of 31st March 2023.

Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation

N/A

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

Three options were presented to the Individual Executive Members, with option 3 (highlighted in bold) agreed as the preferred action.

Option 1: Withdraw local bus services

- Approximately 132,500 passenger journeys¹ per annum are currently made on the Town services, all of which would no longer be possible.
- There would be a significant impact on residents in terms of access to health care, employment, and education, especially from Wokingham Without, Finchampstead, Hurst, Winnersh, Emmbrook, Woosehill and Sonning.
- The Council would not meet the statutory duty of the 1985 Transport Act.
- It would be detrimental to the climate emergency, air quality, residents' health & wellbeing, and congestion on local roads.

Option 2: Retender Local Bus Service

- There is insufficient time to retender the service before the contracts come to their natural end or by October 2022 when government funding ceases.
- A gap in service would result if a new supplier won a re-tender exercise, as a 70-day registration process post award, along with any appropriate mobilisation & TUPE process would be required.
- A gap in service would result in the same impacts as listed under Option 1.

Option 3: Modify the Contract Term

- **Modifying the contract term would allow the services to continue whilst a retender takes place. Allowing the services to continue would mitigate the impacts identified under Options 1 and 2.**

Summary of consultations undertaken

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comment
Monitoring Officer	No comment
Leader of the Council	No comment

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

Commercially sensitive information which may affect future tender.

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member who is consulted by a Member which relates to the decision

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

PUBLISHED ON: 13 July 2022

EFFECTIVE ON: 21 July 2022

CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES: 20 July 2022

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 13 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.03 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey (Chairman), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, Stephen Conway, Gary Cowan, John Kaiser and Wayne Smith

Committee Members in Attendance Online: Councillor David Cornish

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth

Officers Present

Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Kamran Akhter, Principal Highways Development Management Officer
Brian Conlon, Operational Manager - Development Management
Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor

Case Officers Present

Andrew Fletcher
Stefan Fludger
Christopher Howard

19. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Rebecca Margetts.

David Cornish attended the meeting virtually, which meant that he could participate in the discussion but not vote on any items.

20. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to removal of duplicate attendance of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

21. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Stephen Conway declared a prejudicial interest in item number 25, on the grounds that he was now the Executive Member for Housing and he had been in discussions with officers and other Executive Members about this application. Stephen added that he would take no part in this item, and would leave the room for its duration.

22. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

23. SHINFIELD FOOTPATH 3 DIVERSION ORDER

Proposal: Application for the diversion of part of Shinfield Footpath 3 under Section 119 Highways Act 1980

Applicant: University of Reading

The Committee considered a report about this Footpath Diversion Order, set out in agenda pages 25 to 32.

Whilst no updates were contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda, the Committee were verbally advised that the route would contain a gate on point C to stop cattle from reaching the road.

John Kaiser queried whether any substantial trees would be lost as a result of the proposals. Andrew Fletcher, case officer, confirmed that two very small trees would be lost, which had been identified as low value within the tree survey.

Chris Bowring queried whether assurances could be given that the University of Reading would take good care of the kissing gate, and queried alongside John Kaiser whether the upkeep of the new A to C route had been accounted for in the budget. Andrew Fletcher stated that the maintenance of the route would be picked up within the standard public rights of way maintenance budget, whilst maintenance would likely not be required for between three and five years, and a growth bid could be placed in year 3. The kissing gate was owned by the University of Reading and under the Highways Act they were responsible for its maintenance.

David Cornish stated that he always had a cautious approach to moving public rights of way, as they were one of the most ancient civil rights. David queried why a gate could not be placed along a fence in the existing A to B position to allow the landowner to access their land, and queried why a 1.8m security style fence was required if the concern was with regards to the ingress of cattle. Andrew Fletcher stated that the landowner was entitled to fence either side of the footpath so long as they did not encroach upon it, however the landowner felt that this was impractical in its current location as it would not allow them to use the land as effectively. With regards to the fencing, the applicant wished to keep the land secure and were entitled to choose such a design of fence.

RESOLVED That the order be made, subject to no further objections being received, or if objections were received that the order be sent to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

24. APPLICATION NO.220175 - HOGWOOD FARM, SHEERLANDS ROAD, ARBORFIELD, RG40 4QY

Proposal: Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2179 (as varied by 181194, dated 14/11/2018). The Reserved Matters comprise details of 157 dwellings across parcels P14 and P15 with access via the Nine Mile Ride Extension (NMRE), associated internal roads, provision of Public Open Space (PG2 and AGS5), sports facilities land and allotments land, together with parking, cycleways, footpaths, landscaping and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS). Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.

Applicant: CALA Homes Thames Ltd

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 33 to 72.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included an update to condition 1 to insert updated planning reference numbers.

John Richards, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. John stated that this reserved matters application continued the progress of the Finchwood Park site, whilst phase one was nearing full occupation and phases two and three were under construction. John added that this application for phases fourteen and fifteen would open up the eastern part of the site, allowing delivery to significantly advance. John stated that there was a real community at Finchwood Park, with over 150 occupations across both private and affordable tenures, with critical infrastructure including a SANG which would be transferred to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and the Nine Mile Ride being delivered. John added that this application sought to deliver a further 157 new homes, with 52 being affordable. A mix of housing types including 3-, 4-, and 5-bedroom family homes would continue the establishment of a diverse new community within the Arborfield SDL. Over 2.5 hectares of open space would be delivered as part of this application, including an area of the highest quality and diversity which would include a trim trail, bridleway, wildflower planting, play area, BMX facility and a pocket park. This application would also unlock strategic sport and recreation provision to be delivered by WBC via CIL, including sports hubs and new allotments. Ten percent of the site's energy requirements would be delivered through the installation of photovoltaic panels, whilst electric vehicle charging points would be installed at every property. John stated that each home would include an incorporated bat box, insect brick, hedgehog hole and native tree planting.

John Kaiser stated that whilst he was supportive of the development at Arborfield, he was concerned by the number of four-bedroom homes being delivered. John added that the strategic market assessment carried out in 2016 stated that no more than twenty-two percent of any homes should be four-bedroom dwellings. John noted that the proposed Toutley development later on in the agenda proposed just seventeen percent of four-bedroom dwellings, whilst this development proposed thirty-three percent. John felt that this was not what the Borough needed. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery, stated that the wider site was delivering 1,500 units and the delivery of affordable units and unit types was looked at across the wider site. As this was an edge of settlement development, it was deemed that the proposed mix was acceptable. John Kaiser queried what guarantees were available that only twenty-two percent of four-bedroom homes would be delivered across the wider site. Connor Corrigan stated that calculations were carried out throughout the development of the wider site, and this also depended on what the market was requiring. Connor added that officers accepted the need for a certain type of housing within the Borough, however this site would be delivered over a period of time and officers assessed each parcel as they came forwards to ensure the right balance was reached. John Kaiser commented that more two and three-bedroom homes were required in the Borough for people who already lived here, as four-bedroom homes tended to attract people from outside the Borough.

Stephen Conway commented that two and three-bedroom homes were clearly needed within the Borough, however this application was part of a much wider site where checks and balances would be carried out. Stephen commented that market housing would help to secure delivery of affordable housing.

David Cornish echoed comments made by John Kaiser, and added that the whole SDL was designed in a different time and the current needs of the Borough needed to be addressed through delivery of such developments. David queried how the landscape management plan would be supervised and enforced. Connor Corrigan stated that the SDL team carried out landscape audits on an annual basis, and the developers were required to replant where issues were found. Connor added that there was not enough resource to check more regularly, whilst some Local Authorities carried out no checks.

Connor stated that WBC's approach was quite successful, and developers had been required to replant trees and in some cases an entirely different species when the wrong species was planted originally.

Andrew Mickleburgh echoed comments made by John Kaiser, however in this particular instance Andrew felt that the reasons given within the public documentation with regards to housing mix were acceptable. Andrew queried whether the access to the allotments and sports facilities would be solely through the residential development, queried whether any emergency access would be provided, and suggested an informative to request that the developers included fruit trees outside of the orchard and additional hedgerows which could include fruit bearing plants. Connor Corrigan stated that officers were trying to avoid vehicles parking towards the south of the allotments and the sports areas, whilst the roads had been built with the expectation people from outside of the development would be using some of the facilities. The developer could not deliver over 100 dwellings without providing emergency access, which was hoped to be delivered when parcels to the northwest were taken forwards.

Gary Cowan asked that officers provide current and up to date figures for the SDL sites with regards to housing mix and affordable housing. Gary welcomed the uplift of 340 trees and the charging points being placed on the site. Gary commented that from his experience on the trees and biodiversity task and finish group, officers had been clear that trees were not checked after planning permission was issued. Gary sought additional details in relation to the link between the A327, Park Lane, and the new Nine Mile Ride extension. Connor Corrigan confirmed that a schedule of SDL delivery could be provided to members, and added that the SDL team checked landscaping compliance in house whereas the development management team did not have the resources to carry out such checks. Kamran Akhter, Principal Highways Development Management Officer, stated that the traffic assessment had been checked at the outline planning stage for the junction at Nine Mile Ride, whilst condition 5 required a second emergency access after the occupation of the 100th unit.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey commented that she knew of developments where a large percentage of trees had not survived. Connor Corrigan stated that these checks were carried out on SDL developments, and cited £0.75m worth of trees being replanted in the North Wokingham SDL. Rachelle queried what would determine the emergency access being made into a full access road at a later date. Connor Corrigan stated that policy required an emergency access after the occupation of the 100th units, whilst officers would look at parcels to the north of this site to see if access could be gained.

John Kaiser commented that he would abstain on the vote as he felt that this development was a missed opportunity to meet the current housing needs of the Borough.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed an additional informative, requesting the developer to include fruit trees outside or in addition to the community orchard, whilst also encouraging the planting of hedgerows which might include fruiting plants. This proposal was seconded by Stephen Conway, carried, and added to the list of informatives.

RESOLVED That application number 220175 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 34 to 41, updated condition one as set out within the Supplementary Planning Agenda, and additional informative requesting additional fruit trees and hedgerows as resolved by the Committee.

25. APPLICATION NO.211777 - TOUTLEY EAST, LAND ADJACENT TO TOUTLEY DEPOT, WEST OF TWYFORD ROAD, WOKINGHAM, RG41 1XA

Stephen Conway declared a prejudicial interest in this item and subsequently left the room and took no part in the discussion or vote.

Proposal: Outline application for up to 130 residential units and a 70-bed care home (all matters reserved except access to the site).

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 73 to 138.

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

- Reference to an additional neighbour comment;
- Extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2022 in relation to this application.

Matt Pope, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Matt stated that he was reading out a statement prepared by David Hare, the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services, who was running late. Matt stated that Toutley East was included as part of the North Wokingham SDL when the Core Strategy was adopted in 2010, and had been expressly promoted for housing within the recent Local Plan Update. The proposals would deliver a positive number of truly affordable housing which would help to meet the projected housing need of the Borough in a very sustainable location with good access to facilities and close to Wokingham Town Centre. Matt added that opportunities would be explored to reduce the carbon footprint of the site in line with the Council's declared climate emergency, in addition to exploring options to improve biodiversity. Matt stated that David Hare was primarily passing comment to champion the proposed specialist dementia care home which was required by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) immediately. The long-term term trend for those who would require long-term dementia care was set to increase from 160 to 190 in 2025, and to 265 in 2035. Matt added that the impending reforms to adult social care in addition to increasing demand were a storm waiting to happen, and provisions needed to be made to meet this demand. Matt stated that David Hare had a constituent who was asked to leave his care home as he could become violent with staff and other patients, whilst no other care home would want to take him, whereas a WBC dementia care home could meet this type of need. The proposed care home would provide a modern and flexible type of care designed to support personalised care enabling residents to live healthy lives whilst providing better value than current provisions and ensuring enhanced in-Borough service provision for our residents. Matt stated that officers had been working hard to mitigate the problems, and added that David was confident that this facility would provide for the needs of our residents. Away from the prepared statement from David, Matt added that there was nothing of a higher priority for him than providing high quality dementia care ran by WBC.

Rachel Bishop-Firth, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Rachel stated that whilst she was in support of additional social and affordable housing, issues including access and noise still remained unresolved. Rachel stated that residents tended to agree that issues remained, as 36 comments of objection had been received whilst no comments of support had been submitted. Rachel felt that those with the least choice of where to live

should not be placed adjacent to a motorway whereby they could not even open their windows due to excess noise. Rachel added that some gardens would see noise levels over and above acceptable levels, whilst there was currently no bus service in operation. Rachel stated that she would prefer to see the dementia care home and affordable housing placed at a more appropriate site, and added that if the Committee were minded to approve the application that the highways and access issues be made safe.

John Kaiser was of the opinion that this application was a breath of fresh air, with eighty-five percent of homes being one, two, and three bedrooms, with profits re-invested to deliver a much-needed dementia care home.

Wayne Smith felt it was disappointing that not all members managed to attend the site visit, which had proved to be informative. Wayne stated that his concerns had been eased with the suggestion of a 3m high noise bund with tree planting on top. Wayne was of the opinion that work needed to be carried out to the junction of the road in order to reduce speeds, as simply changing the speed limit was very difficult. Wayne commented that a local bus service would be accessible via the new bridge. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager – Planning and Delivery, commented that there would be enough funding for approximately 7 years of a bus service, after which the development should be built out and occupied which could provide the income for the route.

David Cornish applauded the scheme, which made use of a defunct piece of land to provide a high-quality dementia care home. David felt that private purchasers of homes could make their own decision with regards to whether this was the right location for them, whilst the care home was in the hands of expert officers who supported the scheme and felt that it would meet the needs of residents. David sought clarity that the speed limit restriction would be in place on the north side of the bridge. Stefan Fludger, case officer, stated that the extent of the 40MPH limit had not been formalised, however the application rested on reducing the speed limit across the site. There was a condition which required the speed to be reduced, and the extent of where this reduction would occur would be decided upon at that point. Connor Corrigan stated that the 40MPH zone would be pushed back north, most likely past the motorway and this would be finalised at the detailed design stage. Kamran Akhter, Principal Highways Development Management Officer, stated that the new speed limit sign would go on the north side of the bridge under condition 48, whilst a road safety audit would also be required.

Andrew Mickleburgh noted that officers had confirmed that the designation of this site within the draft Local Plan Update and the employment needs assessment were material considerations. Andrew queried whether the 62-bed care home in Winnersh located next to the M4 had seen any concerns raised, and whether any needs of future residents and staff at Toutley could be compromised by its location. Matt Pope, Director of Adult Services, stated that no issues had been raised in relation to the Winnersh site, which was a well-used care home. In relation to Toutley, there were no specific issues identified and the design of the care home would mitigate against any such issues. Matt added that it was a key priority to deliver a brand-new specialist dementia care home within the Borough.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether, if approved this evening, actions taken at the reserved matters stage would adequately address issues including noise levels, and queried what would be done to ensure that the junction would be made safe for users from the time that construction began. Stefan Fludger confirmed that condition 13 would require additional details to be submitted with regards to the noise bund if this was deemed to be

required. Stefan added that at present the noise bund was part of the indicative scheme. Each phase of development would require the applicant to submit noise protection measures for the living rooms, bedrooms, and dining rooms. Stefan confirmed that condition 48 required speed limit reduction to be in place prior to commencement of the development. Connor Corrigan stated that this was an outline application which had proposed the upper limits of the residential property number. These number could be reduced if additional space was required for noise suppression measures, or if those properties sat inside an area of unacceptable noise. Noise levels would be checked and monitored throughout development.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey commented that whilst a dementia care home was needed, forcing occupants of flats to have their windows to closed due to noise levels would not be ideal. Connor Corrigan stated that mitigation measures would be put in place to reduce noise levels, and there were examples of new development within the Borough at a similar distance to the motorway which had mitigation measures in places including noise bunds.

Chris Bowring sought assurances that if in the first instance speed reduction measures were not adequate that they would be fully addressed. Connor Corrigan stated that a road safety audit would be required to be passed. Kamran Akhter stated that this condition was covered by both a road safety audit and a separate traffic regulation order.

Gary Cowan stated that the report made reference to the current Local Plan allocating the site for employment use whilst the Draft Local Plan Update had allocated the site for residential development. Gary emphasised that the Draft Local Plan Update had limited weight against the weight afforded to the existing policy. Garry questioned how there was compelling material consideration to change the usage of the site given that the Draft Local Plan Update carried less weight, and the Planning Committee were not privy to the information regarding the assessment of the site for employment use. Gary stated that as Councillors, members could look beyond the limited scope of planning considerations and ensure the health and wellbeing of residents. Gary raised concerns that this application was being recommended for approval against the current core strategy and prior to a decision being taken by the Executive, which he felt could limit their options for other uses of the site. Gary stated that whilst other developments had been approved next to motorways, those properties were for private buyers whilst families of dementia patients would not have such a choice. Gary felt that approval of this application would undermine the Executive and put the health and wellbeing of residents at risk, and felt that the application should be deferred until such time that the Executive had made a decision. Connor Corrigan confirmed that the planning decision being made was entirely separate from any Executive decision. From a planning policy point of view, officers felt that the site could be built out and issues such as noise could be mitigated against. Advice had been given from care providers that similar sites had been developed and operated successfully, and it was now down to the planning Committee to make a judgement on the suitability of this application based on its planning merits.

Gary Cowan commented that when looking at a planning application on land which WBC owned, the application should be looked at in its entirety. Gary was of the opinion that approving this application would undermine the Executive's ability to make a decision on the use of the land. Gary felt that it would do no harm to defer this decision by one to two months to allow the Executive to make a decision. John Kaiser noted that the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services and the Director for Adult's Services had spoken in support of this application, and the Executive could still reject the business case should they wish.

Gary Cowan stated that under the Town and Country Planning Act allowed members to have this debate, as this was WBC determining a planning application on its own land. Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor, clarified that the rule that Gary Cowan had read out was in relation to considering information under Part 2 (private) papers, where there was an exemption for the Council's own applications. Mary added that deferral for non-material planning reasons, for example waiting until the Executive had made a decision on the business case, was not an appropriate reason. Gary Cowan stated that the Planning Committee could make any decision that it wished, whether that was based on a material planning decision or not. It would then be up to the applicant, in this case WBC, to decide whether they wished to appeal the decision and allow the Planning Inspectorate to make a judgement. Brian Conlon, Operational Lead – Development Management, stated a material planning reason needed to exist now which did not exist when this application was previously deferred in order for a deferral to be legitimate.

Gary Cowan stated that he would resign from the Planning Committee after the vote on this item.

Wayne Smith felt issues including bollards, lighting, ventilation and the noise bund should return to the Chair and the Vice-Chair for approval.

John Kaiser commented that it was the decision of the Council to change speed limits on roads.

RESOLVED That application number 211777 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 74 to 92.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 18 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.45 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Sam Akhtar, Graham Howe, Chris Johnson, Morag Malvern, Adrian Mather and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Parish/Town Council Representatives:- Sally Gurney (Co-Optee, Wokingham Town Council), Roy Mantel (Co-Optee Twyford Parish Council) and Sheena Matthews (Co-Optee Earley Town Council)

Officers Present

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

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

The Committee elected a Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That Morag Malvern be elected Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Committee appointed a Vice-Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That Imogen Shepherd-Dubey be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

3. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from John Kaiser.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Tony Johnson asked the Chair the following question:

Information published as regards the outcome of the public consultation on the Election Cycle appears to be:

- Inadequate for Member (<2 days) or Public (<0.5 day) understanding.
- Inconsistent with Rules 3.2.7 & 3.2.8 of WBC's Constitution.
- Inconsistent with the provisions of clauses of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.
- An analysis which omits to mention that out of circa 1000 written responses - 40% were in favour of "all-out" and 60% were in favour of "thirds".
- An analysis which gave mis-impression by omitting over 450 responses on topics the summary did mention.

- An analysis which failed to acknowledge 27 public challenges as regards the true costs of elections.
- An analysis which omitted any public concern or challenge as to the conduct of the consultation.
- “Information Hiding” of Appendix B by publishing on a lower level web-page.
- Providing a misleading answer to a public question at a Council Meeting.

And where publication of a non-existent clause in WBC’s Constitution - Rule 6.3.34 d) - may have led to suppression Call-In of the Executive’s decision in January.

Please could the Council explain why this pattern of conduct occurred?

Answer:

At the meeting of the Extraordinary Council on 22 June, Members received an officer report on the electoral cycle which included a range of information including a section summarising the results of a public consultation.

The detailed consultation feedback was highlighted in the report as a “background” document. This means that the information is available to Members and the public, and, in fact, the document was provided in advance of the meeting to all Members and uploaded as a background document on the relevant agenda page on the Council’s website.

As a background document, it was dealt with in accordance with Rule 3.2.10 of the Constitution, which states that such documents will be made available for public inspection for four years after the date of the meeting.

Notwithstanding the above, in the interests of continuous improvement, I understand the Monitoring Officer is reviewing what learning may be appropriate to ensure the Council can provide the further assurance to members of the public like yourself that the Council does not, as you suggest “hide” information but meets its commitment of full and open transparency.

Turning now to your query about the January 2022 Executive meeting, I can confirm that Rule 6.3.34d) does exist and states that “no decision taken by the Council or due to be referred to Council for final approval” can be called-in. Therefore the decision, relating to Whole Council Elections, made by the Executive in January, which I believe is what you are referring to, was not eligible for call-in as it was due for consideration at the February Council meeting.

Supplementary Question

This is not an expression of concern about service delivery and it is not a complaint about a specific person’s or persons’ conduct at this time. In the content of Appendix B there are 20 allegations of bias. There are 15 concerns as to the voting methodology, specifically voting twice. The word condescending appears. The word patronising appears. I am happy to circulate details of this and my analysis to you.

If the Nolan Standards are to mean anything around here, what action does the Standards Committee propose to take to improve the conduct of everybody?

Supplementary Answer

That is a good question which requires considerable thought and attention. As you know, I am new to this role, so I will provide a written answer in due course.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

8. PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from Town or Parish Members.

9. UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 9 to 16, which provided an update on progress relating to Councillor Code of Conduct complaints.

The report stated that, since the previous meeting in March, five complaints had been received – four relating to WBC Members and one relating to a Town/Parish Councillor. No action was taken in relation to four complaints whilst one was subject to further investigation.

Appendix A to the report gave details of the complaints received in 2022/23 to date. Appendix B gave details of previously outstanding complaints relating to two Parish Councillors.

The Monitoring Officer reported that he had met with the Town and Parish Clerks in March to discuss options to raise awareness of Code of Conduct. The Clerks reported that their Councils had either recently adopted the new LGA Code of Conduct or were actively considering it. It was agreed that further promotion and awareness training could take place in 2022/23. It was also agreed that the Monitoring Officer would develop an online training package for use by the Towns and Parishes. This work was ongoing.

In the ensuing discussion Members raised the following points:

What was the role of the Standards Committee in resolving alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct? It was confirmed that the Standards Committee's role was to set the standards of behaviour expected, ensure that Members received adequate training and support and identify any trends or issues requiring further intervention. A small number of complaints ended up at a Hearings Panel, made up of members of the Committee. The work of the Committee was publicised with any Members found to have breached the Code of Conduct being the subject of a public decision notice.

In relation to the backlog of complaints, what has been done to speed up the process? It was confirmed that additional resources had been identified, for example through the role of Deputy Monitoring Officer.

It was apparent that breaches relating to the use or misuse of social media were increasing. What was the Council doing to address this trend? It was confirmed that training for Members would be delivered in the autumn of 2022. In the meantime, the Monitoring Officer was happy to talk to Members about specific issues or concerns.

In relation to cases where Members did not co-operate with the Monitoring Officer, was it possible to introduce additional sanctions under the Code of Conduct. It was confirmed that this suggestion would be given further consideration.

In relation to Member training, it was felt that induction training for new Members should be supported by an annual refresh on the Code of Conduct for all Members.

Was it possible to provide additional support for Town and Parish Chairs, to help them to deal with complaints locally? It was confirmed that the Monitoring Officer already provided support for Clerks who were dealing with complaints. Additional support for Chairs could be considered but would be dependent on the finite resources available for the Monitoring officer. The Monitoring Officer was happy to have further discussions with the Clerks on these issues.

In relation to the high number of complaints relating to Woodley Town Council, did this relate to a small number of repeat offenders or were the complaints spread amongst a wider group of Members? The Monitoring Officer undertook to consider this issue further before reporting back to the Committee.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the update on Code of Conduct complaints be noted;
- 2) a further update on the training issues raised by Members be provided at the next meeting of the Committee on 24 October 2022.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.50 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Adrian Mather (Chairman), Beth Rowland (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Phil Cunnington, Rebecca Margetts, Alistair Neal, Jackie Rance and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Others Present

David Hare, Executive Member Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Tracy Daszkiewicz, Director Public Health
Lyndon Mead, Public Health
Matt Pope, Director Adult Services

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Adrian Mather be elected Chairman for 2022-23.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Beth Rowland be appointed Vice Chairman for 2022/23.

3. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Andy Croy declared a general personal interest on the grounds that he worked for an Adult Social Care company.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

8. OPTALIS UPDATE

The Committee received an update on Optalis from David Birch, Chief Executive of Optalis.

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

- Optalis was the Council's own Adult Social Care company. It worked closely with the Council's Adult Social Care Team.
- Matt Pope and Councillor David Hare were Directors of Optalis.
- Optalis was jointly owned by Wokingham Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council.
- The contract had recently been renewed for a further 5 years which gave continuity in provision.

- Optalis' formal aims were to:
 - Transform and improve the delivery of adult services
 - Secure the stability of the workforce
 - Identify and deliver opportunities for joint commissioning
- David Birch highlighted the range of services provided to residents including day services for residents with learning disabilities and with physical disabilities, extra care services, residential care, and supported employment services.
- Members were informed that services continued to run well. However, a current spike in Covid was creating some pressure on service delivery.
- In terms of the last 3 years, efficiency savings had been consistently delivered. In 2021/22 the budget had been met and additional savings of £184,000 had been delivered to the Council.
- With the support of the Council, staff were paid at the rate of the National Living Wage or above in 2022/23.
- David Birch stated that it was anticipated that the next few years would be increasingly challenging from a financial perspective, primarily because of the impact of the rising cost of living on the recruitment and retention of care staff. Use of agency staff was expensive, and work was being undertaken to minimise this in a very difficult employment market.
- Optalis was supporting the Council by taking on at least 10 new and existing services across the Borough, covering a wide variety of different care needs. This expansion had been made possible by the Council's investment in a new Peripatetic Team which had given capacity to expand, and initiative new service as required.
- Members were informed of the new Learning Disability and Mental Health services at Hatch Farm in Winnersh. Feedback from customers and their social workers had been very positive.
- The respite service at Loddon Court in Earley had recently transferred from the previous provider Dimensions to Optalis.
- David Birch provided an update on how existing services were being improved.
- Capacity and productivity enhancements were planned for the START team, to support residents where reablement would give them a higher quality of life than they would receive through traditional care packages.
- Optalis had relaunched its Day Services for those with physical and learning disabilities, under the Community Lives brand. The pandemic had shown how much residents and their families had valued the services and the difficulties that they had experienced when they had been unavailable. There had been increasing demand for a wider range of more innovative activities taking place across and within the local community, instead of traditional buildings-based services. Optalis was therefore working with the Council to develop an enhanced range of services.
- Members were informed of the Ability Travel Service. Wokingham was the number one Council in the South East for this service in terms of outcomes for service users, and second nationally.
- Other opportunities that were being worked on were highlighted.
- Members asked about the impact of Covid on staffing levels. David Birch responded that there were enough workers to continue to run the services safely, but the situation had been difficult particularly in the last week, as Covid cases had spiked. Optalis was able to draw down on agency staff if required. Many staff were not ill for long periods of time, but the situation was being closely monitored. A Member went on to ask about looking ahead to the autumn period and was informed that Optalis was trying to fill as many vacancies as possible to reduce the

reliance of agency staff. The Resourcing Manager had been very active in advertising Optalis, for example to those in vaccination teams in Frimley who were now looking for alternative employment.

- In response to a question as to the impact of Brexit on staffing, David Birch commented that it had been less than anticipated.
- A Member questioned how inflationary pressures would be dealt with; whether it would be through staff budget management, income optimisation, or something else. David Birch commented that the approach taken would be a mixture, making sure that services were not compromised, and that the workforce was stable. Income generation would take place where possible and further efficiencies would be looked for. David Birch referred to the electronic Care Management package which would potentially create further savings. Members were assured that this would not create redundancies.
- In response to a Member question regarding the interaction with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM), David Birch informed the Committee that operations were kept separate from a financial perspective. However, opportunities were taken to share good practice and ideas.
- A Member noted that paying the National Living Wage had assisted in staff recruitment and retention. He questioned whether there was an increased willingness from other providers to pay the National Living Wage. David Birch stated that as Optalis had taken over services from existing providers, there was a general willingness from existing staff to join Optalis because of its culture and the fact that it paid the National Living Wage. He was not able to comment on other providers. He went on to confirm that it was the Outside London National Living Wage which was sometimes a challenge given the Borough's proximity to London.
- Members asked whether the new services would be replacing or enhancing existing services, and what the financial impacts would be. David Birch referred to the enhancing of existing services, and in particular to the proposed dementia care home at Toutley. Matt Pope added that one of the strategic aims for Optalis was to help manage the market. Some services would enhance existing services, whilst others were new business cases which had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Members asked about the governance structure. Matt Pope indicated that when he had become Director, he had had concerns about the Council's level of control over Optalis and its direction. The Shareholder Agreement had been redrafted and he was comfortable with the current governance structure.
- In response to a Member question regarding the integration of data into WBC systems and the levels of transparency and accessibility, Matt Pope indicated that the Optalis' IT sat on the same infrastructure as the Council's. David Birch added that the Council undertook routine audits to ensure continued quality.

RESOLVED: That the update on Optalis be noted and that David Birch be thanked for his presentation.

9. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Tracy Daszkiewicz, Director Public Health Berkshire West and Lyndon Mead, Public Health, provided an update on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

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

- Matt Pope commented that the agenda items were to provide the committee with a high-level overview of some of the important areas of work in Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing.
- Members were advised that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been adopted jointly across Berkshire West. Wokingham had developed a Strategy into Action delivering the Wellbeing outcomes specifically for the Borough.
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy aimed to incorporate all aspects of local authority input into residents' health and wellbeing and across the whole life course.
- Health inequalities and equity were important topics.
- Resident's health and wellbeing sat within a broad context:
 - Wider determinants of health – e.g., housing, jobs, school readiness, schools, and economic prosperity;
 - Health behaviours and lifestyles – e.g., green open spaces and active travel;
 - Integrated health and care system – planning future services and joined up thinking;
 - Places and communities we live in, and with – ensuring safe and thriving communities.
- The Committee considered a diagram representing the Social Determinants of Health. Consideration was given to how services were accessed throughout the life course.
- The development of the Integrated Care System gained Royal Assent on 1 July. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy sat within the Health and Wellbeing Board and was the springboard from which the Integrated Care Partnership strategy was being derived. Having a clear and needs driven Health and Wellbeing Strategy was essential for meaningful representation of the health and wellbeing of residents within the Integrated Care System.
- Guided by the overarching principles of the Berkshire West Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Wokingham Strategy into Action (SiA) determined the priorities for focus within the Borough to improve resident health and wellbeing.
- Five Berkshire West wide priorities had been adopted as well as a Wokingham specific priority of 'Creating physically active communities.' The priorities had been mapped to a range of relevant action or partnership groups. They were developing action plans on delivering against their particular area. Each action/partnership group was responsible for delivery of their action plan and for reporting progress to the newly established SiA Steering Group, who provided operational oversight of SiA delivery on behalf of the Wellbeing Board.
- The Committee noted the governance and reporting structure. Some areas were further along in terms of action.
- A Member was of the view that the Committee should monitor the work on making the Borough dementia friendly and particularly how this was filtered out to the parishes, which could be more isolated.
- A Member commented that a lot of the action identified for improving physical activity already appeared to be underway. Matt Pope commented that the action plans had a good focus on the priorities and were making a difference.
- Members felt that it was important to highlight action that would otherwise not have taken place had the Strategy not been in place.
- In response to a Member question, it was clarified that the Strategy had been updated as the previous strategy had been out of date. Priorities had been selected following consultation.
- A Member wished to focus further on the priority around achieving a better outcome for children and young people. Matt Pope emphasised that it was important that the

work of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee not be duplicated.

- In response to a question regarding reporting timelines, Lyndon Mead indicated that each group had reported to the Steering Group at least once. It was hoped that those groups that had reported first would be able to evidence progress within the next 2-3 months. He emphasised that different groups were at different stages. Members felt that it would be useful to see what areas were progressing and what were not.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy be noted and that Tracy Daszkiewicz and Lyndon Mead be thanked for their presentation.

10. ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRIORITIES - ADULT SOCIAL CARE REFORMS

Matt Pope updated the Committee on one of the main Adult Social Care priorities, the forthcoming Adult Social Care Reforms.

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

- The proposals in the 'People at the heart of care' White Paper represented an enormous change for Adult Social Care. Matt Pope suggested that the Committee may wish to focus on the matter as it developed.
- Adult Social Care had been chronically underfunded and needed reform.
- Matt Pope believed in order to reform Adult Social Care, funding, how it was funded and how it was paid for, should be considered. Other areas of Adult Social Care also needed improvement and reform including quality and workforce, control of care and tailored support.
- Matt Pope felt that there should be a National Social Care Minimum Wage which was on par with the NHS.
- The amount and variety of support available needed to be addressed.
- Members were reminded that the Government had put a health and social care levy on National Insurance which raised approximately £12 billion a year of which £1.8 billion in the first 3 years was planned to go to Social Care.
- The Charging reform would have a massive impact on the Borough giving a huge funding gap. From October 2023 more private funders would be able to come to the Council, either for the Council to set up care accounts to monitor against a capped amount or, be able to access local authority rates where they had been unable to do so previously.
- Wokingham had a high level of private funders. At present approximately 1,800 people received formal social care support. This could increase by in the region of a further 3,000 people, which would require additional staff, services, and IT systems, to support. Without central government funding, the delivery of services to an additional 3,000 residents would be extremely challenging.
- Members were advised that it was proposed that the proposals come into effect at the same time, which was very difficult from an operational stand point. Matt Pope highlighted the timetable for the reforms.
- The principles and the content of the White Paper had been well received by the social care world, but the funding and detail needed to be correct.
- Key themes of the White Paper were highlighted.
- A Member questioned how the shortfall would be manifested – would the Borough have insufficient revenue to pay, and would the Council receive insufficient funding from the Government to address the shortfall? Matt Pope advised that over 3 years the funding gap would be significant, possibly £20 million.

- In response to a question regarding IT systems, Matt Pope advised that guidance stated that if an individual wanted to start metering their spend against their care cap, the local authority had to undertake an assessment and decide what the needs for the individual were and an appropriate amount. The local authority had to set up a care account on an IT system as the individual paid for their care, which monitored the spend. This would require a new IT system.
- The Committee asked how likely it was that the Council would be able to fill the funding gap and the implications if it could not. Matt Pope commented this was still under review. Government was being lobbied.
- A Member asked how the Council could think outside of the box to lessen the impact and referred in particular to the recruitment and retention of social workers. She questioned whether more non-social workers could be used to undertake assessments. Matt Pope indicated that the Association of Adult Social Services was asking for a national approach to training for Occupational Therapists and Social Workers prior to the bringing in of the reforms. Locally, the Council looked to grow its own staff and also had apprenticeship schemes in place.
- Industry studies showed that Councils in the South East would be disproportionately impacted by the proposed reforms due to the number of private providers and high costs of care, and the differential between local authority and private rates.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Adult Social Care Reforms be noted and Matt Pope thanked for his presentation.

11. ADULT SERVICES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Matt Pope presented the Adult Social Care Key Performance Indicators for Q4.

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

- A Member referred to the KPI ‘% of safeguarding concerns leading to an enquiry completed within 2 working days.’ She felt that 2 days was a long time for a very urgent issues and sought clarification about the triage arrangements. Matt Pope indicated that all referrals were triaged and something which appeared to be very urgent would be dealt with very quickly. There had been some issues regarding staffing that were being ironed out. There has been a large increase in safeguarding reporting. Certain agencies such as the Ambulance Service had been over reporting and not undertaking their own triaging. The Council was working with them to improve this. Whilst performance against the indicator had decreased because of increased demand, Matt Pope anticipated that it would improve.
- A decision had been taken in several areas to work with stretch targets. A Member questioned if there were any indicators where a lot of money would need to be spent to make minimal improvement. Matt Pope commented that this varied according to the indicators. Some targets were deliberately set to push services in a particular direction or to have a high standard. Matt Pope also commented that some of the KPIs and stretch targets would be reviewed and potentially amended over the next 12 months. Given the backdrop of the forthcoming Adult Social Care reform maintaining a performance level was a likely future target.
- Members were encouraged with the KPI performance.

RESOLVED: That the Adult Social Care Key Performance Indicators for Q4, be noted.

12. FORWARD PROGRAMME

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

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

- It was noted that mental health post Covid, and also the Autism Strategy had been delayed several times. Members felt that these topics should be brought forward.
- The Chairman commented that regular updates from Healthwatch were useful.
- Members felt that it would be useful to look at work regarding dementia and how this was being disseminated around the Borough.
- A Member was of the view that the Committee had traditionally had a smaller workload than some of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 27 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.40 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachel Burgess (Chair), Maria Gee (Vice-Chair), David Davies, Peter Harper and Mike Smith

Also Present

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Stephan Van Der Merwe, Ernst & Young (online)
Michael Bateman, Complaints Manager - Children's Services (online)
Graham Cadle, Assistant Director Finance (online)
Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance (online)
Mark Thompson, Chief Accountant (online)
Jackie Whitney, Head of Customer Excellence (online)
Clare Mundzar, Corporate Complaints Manager (online)

13. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Tahir Maher.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

Councillor Smith commented that Callum Wernham had been present at the meeting. In addition, he indicated that he had commented on the Risk Register on their timescales and how they were trending. Finally, he requested that future Minutes indicate if someone was attending the meeting virtually as opposed to in person.

It was confirmed that no comments had been received on the previous minutes from Members present at the meeting.

The Chair informed the Committee that progress was being made on appointing an Independent member of the Audit Committee, and the Committee would receive an update at its September meeting. With regards to training general Audit Committee training could be provided by a representative from CIPFA. The Chair indicated that she had set up monthly meetings with the Head of Internal Audit to discuss circulating internal audit reports and monitoring the internal audit recommendations.

15. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no Public questions.

17. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

18. FORMAL COMPLAINTS - ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY 2021/22

The Committee received the annual report summary 2021/22 from Jackie Whitney, Head of Customer Excellence, Clare Mundzar, Corporate Complaints Manager and Michael Bateman, Complaints Manager Children's Services.

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

- 71% of complaints (including enquiries as well as formal complaints) had been resolved early, using early resolution.
- The number of formal complaints handled in 2021/22 was 305 (from 203 individual customers) this was an increase of 61, compared to 2020/21. It was thought that the rise may be the result of customers feeling more confident to submit a complaint post Covid. Complaints had become more complex and therefore could take longer to resolve.
- Other local authorities had seen the same trend with their complaints.
- Members were informed of a new programme to improve writing skills to ensure that language used was easier to understand. A new approach was being taken to communication; the three C's; Care, Clarity, and Confidence.
- Jackie Whitney indicated that those who complained were asked how they felt that their complaint had been dealt with. Ratings were currently good.
- Michael Bateman added that a decrease had been seen in the volume of formal Children's Services complaints received and an increase of complaints resolved at the early resolution stage. The number of cases escalated to Stages 2 and 3 remained consistent with the last 2 years. There had been an increase in the number of cases dealt with via the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. However, the LGSO had been dealing with a heavy backlog due to the pandemic when they had closed for some time, and were only now beginning to catch up with cases once more. Members were informed that the number of formally recorded compliments outnumbered the number of complaints received in Children's Services.
- Michael Bateman advised Members that Children's Services complaints often related to alleged inaccuracies in social worker assessments or decisions reached by staff. Bite sized training sessions and staff supervision sessions had been run.
- Michael Bateman highlighted areas of development, including training for managers across Children's Services around the complaints process, and best practice of handling complaints. Sessions had been delivered on sharing the learning from complaints, with staff. Two sessions had been held so far and more would be undertaken.
- Councillor Harper noted that the data went back to Quarter 1 2021/22. He asked whether information could be circulated from several years as it was difficult to establish long term trends. Jackie Whitney agreed to provide the data going back 3-4 years. She indicated that the complaints process and recording had improved which might mean that the data was not fully comparable. An increase would be seen but this was partly the result of a tightened recording process. A new online system for recording complaints had been introduced and training had been carried out.
- In response to a question from Councillor Davies regarding early resolution, Jackie Whitney explained that early resolution was when a complaint came in, Officers apologised and the situation was quickly resolved or expectations managed, without it escalating to a Stage 1 formal complaint. The total number of formal complaints had increased by 61 on the previous year. Clare Mundzar clarified that early resolution had been in place in the previous year, but recording had improved.

- The Chair requested that the Committee be sent data on the level of early resolution from the previous year.
- Councillor Smith questioned if there was a mean time for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to determine complaints by, and if there was a matrix of what matters were referred to the LGSO. He was noted that there were still several cases which were to be determined by the LGSO. Clare Mundzar explained that the LGSO looked to undertake its work within 6 weeks. However, closing during the pandemic had created a backlog as requests had continued to be sent in. The resultant backlog was starting to be addressed. The LGSO would only look at complaints which were under 12 months' old.
- With regards to corporate complaints, officers aimed to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 15 working days and within 20 working days for Stage 2 complaints.
- Councillor Harper asked whether officer time spent addressing complaints was recorded and was informed that it was not. There was a full-time officer who dealt with complaints at Stage 2 and the LGSO but information was also provided from the specific service area.
- Councillor Smith indicated that some residents had informed him that they had filled in an online form and had not received a response. He questioned whether such interactions were recorded. Clare Mundzar explained that if someone filled in an online form, they received an automated response acknowledging receipt from the Complaints Team, indicating that they should receive a response within 5 working days. The Complaints Team passed the correspondence to the relevant team for a response and reminded them of deadlines. More staff had been recruited to ensure that this was carried out. Jackie Whitney added that delays were more likely to occur if someone emailed an officer directly and copied in several others, for a number of reasons, for example, the officer was on leave, or there was confusion as to who was responsible for providing a response. Members were informed that a mediated process could also be run for those who could not access the online form.
- Councillor Smith asked whether many complaints were received regarding councillors not responding to residents and was informed that complaints regarding councillors were dealt with via a different route.
- Councillor Gee questioned how 71% of complaints had been resolved via early resolution when she had calculated that it was 58%. Clare Mundzar agreed to check on the calculations and feed back to Members.

RESOLVED: That the formal complaints annual reports summary 2021/22 be noted.

19. UPDATE ON 2020-21 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Members were updated on the 2020-21 Statement of Accounts by Graham Cadle, Assistant Director Finance.

- At the last Committee meeting it had been reported that there were two issues outstanding; the first being around Pensions, and the second around infrastructure assets, which was a national issue. Neither of those issues had yet been resolved.
- Graham Cadle advised that the Pension Fund was waiting on the completion of the audit of the Fund, which was administered by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. It was hoped that they were likely to conclude in August. At that point so long as there were no changes to their standing, this element could be signed off. Presently the only assurance that Deloitte, the pension fund auditors, would provide was that its work continued and that it did not expect any changes.

- Graham Cadle explained that the infrastructure issue related to infrastructure assets such as roads. Historically when money had been spent to re-lay the roads it had been added to the Capital Asset Value. At an audit sector meeting it had been raised that this was not appropriate and did not reflect the true value. CIPFA had undertaken a consultation in order to understand what the best approach may be, including an interim arrangement to help Councils close their more immediate accounts. The Council had participated in the consultation but had not yet received the outcomes. Options should there continue to be a delay were, to ask to close the accounts with a gap, undertake work on what it was believed would be required, or continue to wait. Officers proposed continuing to wait and then updating at the next Committee meeting.
- Councillor Harper questioned whether a deadline should be set for making a decision. The Chair proposed that the Committee receive the update at the September meeting and if there was no further progress, a decision be made on how to proceed.
- With regards to the infrastructure issue, Councillor Gee questioned whether the bottom line would be impacted because it was expected that assets where the cost was greater than the accumulated depreciation, but no proceeds were received, were removed. She went on to ask that if this was the case what the extent of derecognition of these assets were. Graham Cadle responded that the bottom line was not impacted. The current process did not truly reflect the value of what a road would be. There was not a material impact on the bottom line in the accounts.
- Councillor Burgess also questioned why the infrastructure matter was now an issue of concern. Stephan Van Der Merwe indicated that the issue related to the actual accounting of the infrastructure and whether or not these were at a granular level to enable Councils to be able to derecognise components within the infrastructure that had been replaced. A more detailed explanation on how the assets were accounted for, if they were recorded at cost or accumulated depreciation, if the Asset Register was accurate, and an estimate of the amount taken out of cost and accumulated depreciation, would be provided to Members outside of the meeting. Councillor Gee requested that the response be included in the Minutes of the meeting.
- In response to a question from Councillor Davies, the assets impacted by the infrastructure issue were clarified.
- In response to a question from Councillor Smith regarding the Pensions element, Stephan Van Der Merwe emphasised that assurance needed to be obtained from the Pension Fund auditor. Assurances had been received from Deloitte with the caveat that work was ongoing. It was likely that this caveat would be removed in September. All Councils that were part of the Pension Fund and the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service were impacted.
- Councillor Harper asked if there was flexibility over who managed the Pension Fund on behalf of the Council. Graham Cadle commented that whilst there had been issues with delays previously, the Chief Finance Officers were committed to supporting the Pension Fund and improvements were being made. The Chair suggested that any penalties to withdraw from the Pension Fund scheme would be high.

RESOLVED: That the update on the 2020-21 Statement of Accounts be noted.

20. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL AUDIT PLANNING REPORT YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Stephan Van Der Merwe presented the Wokingham Borough Council Audit Planning Report year ended 31 March 2022.

- The report explained the audit risks that EY would be focusing on during the 2021/22 audit.
- Audit processes remained ongoing, and a further update would be provided to the Committee at the conclusion.
- Stephan Van Der Merwe brought to the Committee's attention, the risks that had been identified and which would be focused on during the audit. These risks were largely unchanged from the previous year's audit. The risks relating to accounting for Covid 19 grants and unreconciled imprest accounts were no longer considered areas of focus.
- The new focus for the audit was around the accounting for infrastructure assets. Depending on the outcome of the national consultation the level of risk may vary.
- Members noted the proposed audit fees for 2021/22.
- The Committee was informed that as the audit for 2020/21 was still ongoing the final audit fee was yet to be determined.
- Stephan Van Der Merwe highlighted an error in the report. In the planned fee column, the revised fee should read £154,643.
- The PSAA had recently determined the final fee scale variation for the 2019/20 audit of £68,541.
- Councillor Davies expressed surprise that the planned fees and the final fees would be aligned, and that the planned fees for 2021/22 were identical to the planned or final fees for 2021/22, given inflation. Stephan Van Der Merwe explained that the scale fee rebasing fee was essentially the evolving risks that EY considered related to the audit and what that would cost. This was a standard increase in the fee going forwards. In terms of the additional fees set by PSAA these were based on the latest guidance.
- Councillor Gee asked why the fee for 2021/22 was the same as that for 2020/21 if there was an increased infrastructure risk. She was informed that the costs for the additional risk identified were still to be determined based on the hours spent by the auditors.
- Councillor Harper noted that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) paper "Measures to improve local audit delays" had moved the publication date for audited local authority accounts from 31 July to 30 November. Graham Cadle explained that during the pandemic greater leeway had been given in the whole of the accounting process.
- It was clarified that PPE stood for Property, Plant and Equipment.
- In response to a question from Councillor Smith as to the Committee's role with regards to the Audit fee, the Chair clarified that the Committee role was to have a view on the fees. Officers had not raised any concerns on them with her. Stephan Van Der Merwe added that the fees were submitted to the PSAA as part of the contract with them and they then reviewed them and determined if they were appropriate.
- Councillor Smith asked how value for money was considered on very large contracts, and the management of them by officers. He was informed that during the planning process EY looked at the various arrangements the Council had in place to ensure economy, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- Councillor Smith asked what large value contracts there were by department. Stephan Van Der Merwe indicated that this was not part of the Value for Money

process. Graham Cadle added that the external audit work did not cover specific contracts, however, some of this was covered by the work of Internal Audit.

RESOLVED: That the Wokingham Borough Council Audit Planning Report year ended 31 March 2022, be noted.

21. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2021-22

The Committee considered the Treasury Management Outturn 2021-22.

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

- Graham Cadle highlighted the performance against the Strategy. The income generated on the investments still provided a net benefit to the Council although it had reduced because of market pressures and additional MRP contributions.
- The General Fund debt had reduced and was lower than had been expected.
- Graham Cadle highlighted the level of realisable assets.
- Councillor Gee commented that the percentage of internal borrowing to CFR was 44% when the Strategy was 29%. She felt that unless this was an exception the Committee could not agree recommendation one of the report. Graham Cadle agreed that it was outside the target but emphasised that it was not a negative impact because of the reprofiling of the capital expenditure, an increase in and the timing of inward grants had meant that the Council had had to borrow less. He suggested a specific comment around that target in the report. Councillor Gee agreed that it needed to be noted as an exception and an explanation as to why and the fact that it was positive, included.
- With regards to Table A and the net annual benefit to the tax payer, Councillor Gee felt that the information provided was misleading. She felt that the taxpayer would incur a cost because the subsidiaries would have an interest cost in their accounts. When the Council and the subsidiaries were consolidated the benefit would disappear. Graham Cadle disagreed that the value should be removed. He stated that with regards to the subsidiaries it was an element of their costs of which they would be charging an income and delivering a service to make them an ongoing concern. They were a separate entity and overall would deal in a profit situation over a long period of time.
- Councillor Gee questioned whether losses were being accumulated in the subsidiaries whilst increases were being recorded in the General Fund, in recording the figures as such. Graham Cadle emphasised that the subsidiaries had been set up to run as a self-financing model.
- In response to a further query from Councillor Gee, Graham Cadle responded that there were rules around the interest rates that the Council could charge the subsidiaries. He felt that the information had been correctly reflected.
- Councillor Davies commented that he appreciated Councillor Gee's concerns but felt that a valid approach had been taken.
- The Chair questioned whether information could be included under Table A to address the concerns raised by Councillor Gee. Councillor Gee suggested that the net annual benefit to the tax payer be clarified between the amount that was accruing to the Council and also the offset.
- With regards to Table A, Mark Thompson commented that although the income for the companies for the loans that the Council had made to them was being shown, in the top row of the table was the cost to the Council of providing that expenditure to the companies through a loan. A note could be added to the net margin that the Council would make.

- Councillor Gee indicated that in the previous year's report the income of £700,000 had been included. She was of the view that the income to the Council was effectively cancelled by the cost to the housing companies, and that when looking at the Council as a whole then there was no net benefit to the tax payer. She believed that the income should be noted as a cost in the subsidiaries. Graham Cadle expressed concern that this would not reflect that the cost was enabling an income stream and investment.
- The Chair noted that the total gross finance cost had increased to £8.8million but borrowing had decreased. She questioned the reason for this. Mark Thompson explained that the Council had borrowed less money so debt costs had reduced. In addition, since the mid-year, interest rates had started to increase. At the point of the mid-year estimates the 2020/21 accounts were still being closed. Part of the work with the auditors had been looking at the Town Centre and in particular at what point assets became operational. The Council's policy was that as soon as assets were operational MRP was charged on them. Therefore, in the Outturn report, on reviewing the Town Centre position a greater amount of MRP had been provided on some assets than originally estimated.
- In response to a question from Councillor Harper regarding the graph on page 50 of the agenda, it was confirmed that the figures were correct.
- The Committee agreed that an explanation would be added to the report to explain that the internal borrowing was outside of the range, and that this wording would be agreed by the Chair.
- The Committee approved recommendation 1) ("that all approved indicators set out in the treasury management strategy have been adhered to") but wanted it noted that in fact the indicator for % of internal borrowing to CFR (29%) had not been met, with the outturn indicator at 44%. It was agreed this was in fact a positive reflecting a reduction in required external borrowing (reprofiling of the capital programme) and increase in cashflow of grants received.)

RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021/22 be supported and recommended to Council, and that the Committee note:

- 1) that all approved indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy have been adhered to, noting the exception that the percentage of internal borrowing to CFR is 44%, which is outside of the range noted in the Strategy, but that this is a positive movement;
- 2) the contents of "Table A", as set out in the report, which shows the net benefit per council tax band D equivalent, from the income generated less the financing costs on all borrowing to date equates to £22.25 per band D for 2021/22. This credit provides income to the Council to invest in its priority services.
- 3) As at the end of March 2022, the total external general fund debt was £196m, which reduces to £72m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness).
- 4) the Council's realisable asset value of approximately £443m, of which its commercial assets are estimated at approximately £249m.

22. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22

Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance, presented the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22.

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

- All local authorities were required to produce an Annual Governance Statement to sit alongside the Statement of Accounts.
- It had been concluded that a good system of control was in place.
- The Statement detailed the seven core principles of the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance which was based on the CIPFA/Solace model of good practice around corporate governance in local authorities
- The Annual Governance Statement had been based on best practice.
- Andrew Moulton took the Committee through the different sections of the Statement.
- Section 3 Review of Effectiveness detailed some of the different assurance mechanisms used. Andrew Moulton requested that reference be made to the internal audit of Corporate Governance which took place in 2021/22 which gave a good level of assurance. This was agreed.
- Councillor Gee stated that she was pleased to see the clarification of the reporting lines around the Chief Audit Executive. She went on to question whether the Monitoring Officer continued to report to the Section 151 Officer and whether he should report directly to the Chief Executive. Andrew Moulton indicated that this had been previously considered and improvements had been put in place. The Statutory Officers met on a monthly basis to discuss governance matters.
- With regards to Section 6 Areas of Significant Changes, Councillor Harper suggested that reference to a minority Liberal Democrat administration be amended to reflect the existence of the Wokingham Borough Partnership. The Chair noted that the description of a Liberal Democrat administration was indeed accurate, however she requested that Andrew Moulton review the wording to ensure the political make up of the Council was fairly represented.
- Councillor Smith asked about the weight given to the issues detailed in Section 5 Governance Issues and Improvements. Andrew Moulton emphasised that they had not been ranked and described measures put in place over the past 12 months to make improvements.
- Members requested that the reference in Section 5 to cyber security, be strengthened.
- The Chair was pleased to note that there was a strong awareness of the Whistleblowing Policy within the Council. She questioned how the Fraud arrangements were being strengthened and how this would be communicated to staff. Andrew Moulton indicated that the Fraud Policies were being updated and would be presented to the Committee later in the year. Online training on fraud awareness was being developed for staff. The Internal Audit team was considering its Fraud Strategy and would present it to the Committee. Members were informed that the most recent Staff Survey had highlighted a good awareness amongst staff of the Whistleblowing Policy.

RESOLVED: That the draft Annual Governance Statement attached at Appendix A be recommended to the Leader and Chief Executive and subsequent publication with the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts, subject to the amendments discussed at the meeting.

23. FORWARD PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Committee considered the forward programme.

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERSONNEL BOARD
HELD ON 27 JULY 2022 FROM 9.15 AM TO 12.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth (Chairman), Stephen Conway, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Lindsay Ferris (substituting Clive Jones), Rebecca Margetts (substituting Pauline Jorgensen), Ian Shenton (substituting Prue Bray) and Bill Soane (substituting Stuart Munro)

Officers in Attendance

Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive
Steve Moore, Interim Director Place and Growth
Steve Guest, Solace
Barbara Batchelor, HR

28. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Prue Bray, Clive Jones, Pauline Jorgensen and Stuart Munro.

29. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

30. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

31. RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTORS HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT (HR&OD)

The Board interviewed for the position of Assistant Director Human Resources and Operational Development.

RESOLVED: That Louise Livingston be appointed as Assistant Director Human Resources and Operational Development.

This page is intentionally left blank

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 28 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Clive Jones (Chairman), Stephen Conway (Vice-Chairman), Rachel Bishop-Firth, Lindsay Ferris, Paul Fishwick, David Hare, Ian Shenton and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Committee Members Present Online

Prue Bray

Other Councillors Present

Norman Jorgensen
Pauline Jorgensen
Caroline Smith

12. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sarah Kerr.

Councillor Prue Bray was unable to be present in person at the meeting but attended remotely. In accordance with the legislation Councillor Bray took part in discussions but did not take part in voting during the meeting.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillors Prue Bray, Stephen Conway, David Hare and Clive Jones declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 19 Council Owned Companies Update by virtue of the fact that they were non-Executive Directors of Council owned companies. These Councillors remained in the room and voted on the item.

Councillor Stephen Conway declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 22 Relocation of Twyford Library To The Old Polehampton Boys School Site by virtue of the fact that he was the Council's representative on the Polehampton Charity. Councillor Conway left the room and did not take part in any discussion or vote on this item.

Councillor David Hare declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 23 New Dementia Care Home In The Toutley East Development Construction Consultation And Contract by virtue of the fact that he was a non-Executive Director of Optalis Limited. Councillor Hare left the room and did not take part in any discussions or vote on this item.

15. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER

Good evening everyone and welcome to the Executive meeting of 28 July 2022. I am very pleased that the new administration has decided that we will be supporting families in receipt of free school meals during the school holidays up to and including May of 2023. There are a few teething problems, we are moving with a provider called Charris and I contacted them last week and they have reacted very quickly to sort out the issues.

The theme as most people will know by now of this administration is to promote partnership working wherever possible across the Council and with outside bodies. I've asked the Deputy Leader of the Council to look into developing partnerships across the Borough and he will give us a short update of his plans at either the next Executive meeting or the next full Council.

16. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

16.1 Colin Watts asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Question

At the end of April visit to the University of Reading campus to present the SOLVE group alternatives to housing at Hall Farm, you were clear in your objections to the building of 4,500 houses at Hall Farm. Can you confirm that this remains your position and that the next version of the Local Plan Update will not include any significant development at Hall Farm?

Answer

My colleague Cllr Lindsay Ferris responded to a similar question at the 30 June meeting of Executive.

The last administration approved the strategy put forward in the Local Plan Update Revised Growth Strategy Consultation 2021 which proposed 4,500 houses at Hall Farm.

My administration will be working with Officers to look carefully at options for how we can best plan for our housing and development needs going forward in ways that ensure that our Local Plan will pass as 'sound' at public examination.

Clearly, I cannot pre-determine this process, however I can assure you that we are going into this process open minded, as we must, and that we will carefully consider all the views that have been expressed by residents alongside those of stakeholders and importantly, the technical evidence that must guide us to the best and most sustainable locations for new development to be located.

Since the election we have written to the Secretary of State highlighting our concerns about how the high housing numbers currently expected of Wokingham Borough are calculated and enforced. We have engaged our local MPs and have received their strong support to our efforts.

Experience both here and elsewhere across the country shows that we must put a new local plan in place which delivers on our development needs. No doubt what it eventually includes will not suit everybody, but not having an effective plan would mean less control over where development happens. Hall Farm cannot be dismissed as a possibility without good reason and at this stage our officers are still gathering evidence upon the best options and solutions available.

Supplementary question

I think it is clear to the residents around the whole farm site that huge, and I mean huge amounts of work are going on by the university and the planning department, and our great concern is this becomes a fait accompli. Even this week we got a drone flying over

for a week and a half over the site, constantly having people come from the university and the conversation that we had with the university just the other week, it is totally clear that whatever the university says about engaging with the local community, they are lying about the 4,500, it is there and it will stay there from the university's mind. So my question is that the concern about it being a fait accompli because of all the work that both the Council's planning department and the university are engaged in.

Supplementary answer

All I can say is that I cannot pre-determine the process. So, thank you very much.

16.2 Paul Stevens asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question

The Local Plan Update has to set out housing plans for Wokingham up to 2038. The Hall Farm proposed plan goes way beyond that date, with only half of the 4,500 homes being completed by 2038. Can you confirm that the next version of the LPU will only cover the period up to 2038 and will not try to create a plan beyond that date?

Answer

My colleague Cllr Jones has already outlined in his answer to an earlier question that the new administration will be working closely with officers to look at all options for how we best plan for and manage the development we need going forward in ways that ensure our Local Plan is found to be 'sound' at public examination.

As Cllr Jones explained, we cannot pre-determine this process.

The National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) requires local planning authorities to put plans in place which provide for new housing supply for at least 15 years from its date of intended adoption, so this we must do.

In addition, where a strategic allocation of scale is proposed, Government expects the Council to look at that allocation on a comprehensive basis and make clear within the Local Plan what is proposed in the longer term, to ensure the most sustainable development solution is planned for that site over time, rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

The approach would be the same for Hall Farm or any other major allocation of similar scale proposed by the Plan.

Cllr Jones has also outlined our lobbying of government and our concerns regarding how housing needs are calculated. We will be continuing to lobby Government to change the methodology in parallel to our work on the Local Plan, whilst being clear in our aim to work towards having a new Local Plan which can be found to be 'sound' at examination.

Supplementary question

The number of houses proposed are at least in part predicated upon the developers need to build 4,500 houses to pay for the level of infrastructure required to make the site viable. Can you clarify precisely how many new houses are required for Wokingham to have a viable plan that would meet the requirements set by the current national government housing targets?

Supplementary answer

We have at the moment a figure of 781 houses per annum, and as a Local Plan we have to have 15 years of housing supply from the start of the Local Plan.

16.3 Tony Johnson asked the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

Please could the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing and Adult Services comment on the Equalities Impact Assessment for WBC's proposed 70 bed dementia care home which was approved by WBC's Planning Committee under Application [211777](#) on 13th July?

Answer

Adult Services has worked in partnership with Optalis Ltd technical advisors and the council's property team in the development of our outline planning application. The application ensures that the building design meets the appropriate standards and utilise best practice from across the sector.

As is required, a Stage 1 Equalities Impact Assessment was completed by Wokingham Borough Council in the early stage of the project and the assessment did not identify an adverse impact on the protected characteristic under the Equalities Act.

However, the Council's Adult Services has always been committed to making certain that this site is appropriate and has planned due diligence ahead of a reserved matters planning application. This will include commissioning an independent external care provider to complete an assessment of the site to ensure its ability to deliver high quality care to vulnerable people.

It is worth noting that the proposed dementia care home at Toutley East will provide us with the capacity it needs to meet the demand and complexity of an ageing population. We estimate that the number of older people expected to require residential and nursing care provision, funded by the council, will rise by at least 17% by 2025.

Forthcoming reforms to Adult Social Care will place increasing pressure on the care sector from October 2023. Central government's ambition to reform the sector has not, unfortunately, been matched by the funding required to meet this enormous challenge. These reforms only increase the need to deliver the right care, at the right time and at the right price.

Supplementary question

Thank you for providing an answer on behalf of the Council, especially for talking about the due diligence at the reserved matters stage where you plan to have somebody else to come in and do a report. Although, there are many other impact assessments made as part of the planning application, the equalities impact assessment doesn't appear to have been included within the document pack, which given Justice Lewis' 2018 ruling to Bath and North East Somerset Council that the Public Sector Equality Duty applies at the Outline Planning stage and not just at the Reserved Matters is somewhat odd. If it had been published then Members of the Planning Committee might have been able to take a properly informed judgement. However, as Lord Chief Justice Hewart pointed out in 1924, justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. So please can you explain why Wokingham Borough Council has not shown itself to be compliant with the case law and thus may have opened itself up for judicial review?

Supplementary answer

I am not sure and will send you a written report. I am quite honest, I am not a planner.

17. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

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

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

Question

A key issue for residents in my ward is provision of a sixth form in the south of the Borough. In early 2022, WBC announced the provision of a 6th form, additional Year 7 places, and additional SEND places at Bohunt School. Can the Executive Member update me on progress including when this provision will open?

Answer

Charles is not here and this is essentially the same question that he asked me at the Council meeting last week. But I know that maybe people watching would like to know what the answer is. So I can confirm that the plan is still that the sixth form at Bohunt will open in September 2023, and Charles and his fellow ward Councillors have already been sent that information in the update that I promised them at last week's Council meeting.

17.2 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Planning and the Local Plan:

Question

At the Planning Committee I voted against Toutley East as putting people who have no say in their placement next to noisy polluting motorways is quite wrong. Dementia patients or their relatives have no say where they live if they are occupants of a Council run care home.

The business case makes no reference to other Council owned land away from motorways such as Farley Hill's closed Primary School.

The business case recommends the delivery model should be a Joint Venture with a development partner but fails to consider the Councils own Housing Companies.

Would a better business case be the location of the care home at the closed Farley Hill School site and use the Councils own Housing Companies to build even more desperately needed affordable houses at Toutley East.

Answer

We were pleased that the Planning Committee accepted that this is a suitable location for a care home. Mitigation against road noise will of course need to be taken into account in the design of the building and I am confident that the Council can deliver a high-quality care home on this site to the standards that our residents both expect and deserve.

With regards to the decision-making process for dementia patients, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 protects vulnerable people over the age of 16 around decision-making. Adult Social Care will support residents to make their own decisions if they can; we want to uphold their rights while living in care homes.

If a person is assessed to lack capacity to consent to living in a care home, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards mandate a set of assessments that are undertaken by two assessors independent of those commissioning the placement, to consider what is in the persons Best Interest and the less restrictive option.

In making this Best Interests decision the assessor is required to consult with a variety of people including the adult concerned (who will still have views, wishes and feelings even if lacking capacity) and 'relevant others' (including friends/family/advocates).

With respect to your subsequent points, it is true that the Council owns other land and that other such sites might also be suitable for new care home provision. However, having established that the Toutley East site is acceptable under planning, this site is the quickest route to deliver the facility and thus start addressing the increasing revenue spend pressures that the Council is facing from having to fund placements in private care homes. Failure to proceed on this site will lead to a delay in the delivery programme of approximately 18-24 months; whilst an alternative site is identified, survey work undertaken, designs worked up and planning secured. A two-year delay in delivery will only act to exacerbate financial pressures on Adult Social Care, especially in light of the impending Social Care reforms.

In terms of the residential delivery, please note that the business case for the residential delivery is not being presented in the Executive report. Rather the Executive is being asked to note the delivery options. As is set out in the report, the full business case will be prepared and reported back to Executive and potentially full Council in due course.

Supplementary question

Thank you for that answer. In yesterday's Daily Mail headline is new evidence that in a landmark report by a committee of government advisors stating that air pollution, not just noise, contributes to the decline in mental ability and vascular dementia, and I believe the Council should not disregard the committee of government advisors who will be much more informed than our Borough Council Council Officers. With the availability now of a government landmark report on air pollution as a cause of dementia, it is now for the Executive to decide if Toutley is still a good option or should they look elsewhere for a more suitable site.

I raised the suitability of Toutley and other sites with planning Officers but they simply stated that they were not material considerations. That view was supported by the Council's Legal department. I would point out that planning regulations clause nine of schedule 12a of the Town Country Planning Act of 1992 on exempt information states, and I quote: "Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission. To withhold information from a Member is in breach of the Act and it is as reprehensible as withholding information from the public about the expenditure of the public monies on projects." Where the Borough Council is effectively the judge and jury as is the case with Toutley East. An independent enquiry into the role of the planning department would not go amiss here either, as I am sure our residents would appreciate it and it would give greater public confidence in that department.

So, really if you see the Daily Mail headline yesterday which is that it would suggest that air pollution is a very serious issue and to take a decision based on the limited information you've got now, I think it would be inappropriate.

Supplementary answer

Thank you Gary, yes I did see reference to that issue and report of the committee that was in the papers yesterday, and I think we will need to take due reference to that from that. On the other point that you raised, can I suggest that obviously you were, felt uncomfortable as to what happened on this issue, that you feel so much, there is a complaints process through Andrew Moulton, to do that. And I would also recommend that you write to me with some of your concerns so that I can look at them as well.

17.3 Jim Frewin asked the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Adult Services the following question:

Question

This question relates to item 21 Toutley master plan.

In answer to the full Council 21 July question (34.2) it was clear that vulnerable residents will be moved from Suffolk Lodge to Toutley as part of this project. Please provide risk assessment and mitigation details on how this move would impact vulnerable residents especially how the changes in noise levels and air quality (A329M proximity) impacts.

Answer

Suffolk Lodge currently provides less than 30% of the residential care the Council commissions. Although, it has a Care Quality Commission rating of "Good", it cannot meet the needs of all the older individuals the Council has to provide residential and nursing care for.

The proposed Dementia Care Home at Toutley would provide local residents with the care and support needed to meet an aging population. It will promote a better quality of life and improved welfare for residents through more personalised care and support.

We are committed to ensuring the scheme reflects best practice in dementia design and the design of the new home is inspired by recent research and learning from the pandemic to create a safe, welcoming place, that promotes the wellbeing and good health of people with dementia.

We intend to work closely with Optalis Ltd to ensure a safe and smooth transition for residents to the new care home and indeed we have made provision of £500K in the Medium Term Financial Plan for this. Individuals have different needs and this funding will ensure any transition works for all.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 protects vulnerable people over the age of 16 around decision-making. Adult Social Care will support residents at Suffolk Lodge to make their own decisions if they can, in order to uphold their rights while living in care homes.

If a person is assessed to lack capacity to consent to living in a care home, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards mandate a set of assessments that are undertaken by two assessors independent of those commissioning the placement, to consider what is in the persons Best Interest and the less restrictive option.

In making this Best Interests decision the assessor is required to consult with a variety of people including the adult concerned (who will still have views, wishes and feelings even if lacking capacity) and 'relevant others' (including friends/family/advocates). The

assessment will consider the benefits and burdens of a particular placement against other available options to determine what is in the individuals' best interests.

Supplementary question

Thank you David, you didn't actually answer the question about air quality and noise but I joined the partnership because I believed we would build on the good things started by the previous administration and that we would challenge the things we believed to be not so good. In my opinion this Toutley plan is not such a good idea, it appears to be done for speed to provide a number of places and it is not taking into account the health and wellbeing of the residents being placed there. Given the fact that the public question tonight and now two of the Members questions highlighted a number of concerns with this Toutley plan, my supplementary question is this: Will this Executive defer the decision on Toutley until clarification is made on the points raised tonight and points raised outside?

Supplementary answer

I don't think we can defer a decision, but certainly as the process goes along we will make sure that the air pollution and noise are kept to an absolutely minimum and within all legal standards of this country and we would do that anyway, and that is the most important thing. I do not want the people who I am serving as Executive Member to be any worse off at this new chapter development at Suffock Lodge and I am sure that is why you said this as well. And we will endeavour to make sure that this is as fair as possible and yes, the noise is kept down low below standards and also air pollution.

18. CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW

The Executive considered a report relating to the Capital Programme review. The review had identified savings which would help the budget gap identified in the MTFP. Further work would be ongoing as part of the capital monitoring throughout the year and the budget setting process for 2023/24 to look at options to close the budget gap.

The Executive Member for Finance Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey stated that it had become apparent that the Council had been increasing its level of borrowing under the previous administration. This level of borrowing was putting pressure on the revenue budgets and interest repayments on these loans.

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey informed that the report highlighted areas of improvement and efficiencies to help to bridge the gap identified in the MTFP. Some items had been moved to later years and some had been removed altogether.

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey stated that the report also sought approval to fund the 'Active Travel and Bus Priority' from savings identified from the 'Managing Congestion and Pollution' project.

The Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways Councillor Paul Fishwick emphasized that the £4m saving identified would be re-invested in Active Travel and Bus Priority, this was aligned with the Local Cycling and Walking Strategy and would support the revision of the Bus Service Improvement Plan for 2022, following discussions and feedback from the Department for Transport.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The capital programme review carried out by directors and lead members be noted and approved, which includes;

- Confirmation for £136m of capital projects to continue as planned.
 - Savings of £12.5m achieved through the removal of projects or reductions in budget. Taking into account lost capital receipts, the net saving is £9.3m. Details set out in Appendix A.
 - Re-profiling capital budgets of £15.7m from 2022/23 into future years. Details set out in Appendix B.
- 2) The £4m saving identified from 'Managing Congestion & Pollution', to be reinvested in 'Active Travel and Bus Priority' over two years (£2m in 2023/24 and £2m in 2024/25) and considered as part of the medium term financial plan for 2023/24 be approved;
- 3) The figures in recommendation one are in addition to the financial information presented in the Capital Monitoring 2022/23 - Quarter 1 Executive report be noted.

19. REVENUE MONITORING 2022-23 Q1

The Executive considered a report relating to the revenue monitoring 2022-23 Q1 which outlined the current forecast outturn positions for 2022/23 for the Council's net revenue expenditure, its General Fund Balance (GFB), the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey informed that the report showed a predicted shortfall of £2.2m in the Revenue Budget for this year. She recognised that when this Budget was set, no one could have predicted the war on Ukraine, the fuel crisis and the inflation raises. However, there had been an over ambitious target, which had been set in order to deliver a balanced Budget.

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey stated that some of the challenges identified included a £558k overspend in the Home to School Transport Budget. This was due to a large number of SEND children needing transport, and a large number of children arriving from Hong Kong and Ukraine for whom transport was necessary as they were being sent to various locations in the Borough where the available school places were.

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey informed that a £780k shortfall in car parking income was expected. This was because an over ambitious target had been set. Also, since the covid pandemic, people's driving habits had changed and people were using their cars less.

It was explained by the Executive Member for Finance that another challenge was the increase in inflation which meant that goods were costing more to buy. For example, there was a shortfall of £250k in the Budget to buy the blue bags for waste collection due to an increase in the price of plastic.

Councillor Shepherd Du-Bey stated that it was necessary to either increase the income or find savings in order to bridge the shortfall identified in the Budget. Officers were undertaking a lot of work to find more efficiencies.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing Councillor Stephen Conway wished to emphasise that a lot of work was being undertaken to address the projected challenges identified.

RESOLVED that the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) illustrated in the Executive Summary and appendices attached to the report be noted.

20. CAPITAL MONITORING 2022/23 - QUARTER 1

The Executive considered the capital monitoring 2022/23 – Quarter 1 report which outlined the progress of the Council in delivering its capital programme for the financial year 2022/23.

Councillor Shepherd-DuBey informed that the report highlighted a challenge at the Winnersh Triangle Parkway, where an unexpected water mains was found during the building process. This project now had a £1.3m of unallocated cost attached to it.

Councillor Shepherd-DuBey pointed out that the report sought approval of a capital budget supplementary estimate of £5.5, for the building of a SEND school in the Borough. Funding for the SEND school was coming from central government, and the building of this school would help the Council to significantly reduce the amount of money spent on sending children to specialist places outside of the Borough.

Councillor Paul Fishwick informed that the issue with the Thames Water Main had been identified in 2021. However, no supplementary estimate had been established at the time to remedy the shortfall.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The position of the capital programme at the end of Quarter 1 (to 30 June 2022) as summarised in the report and set out in detail in Appendix A to the report be noted;
- 2) The proposed carry forwards in the capital programme as set out in Appendix B be approved and noted; and
- 3) A capital budget supplementary estimate of £5,576,900 for SEND sufficiency plan to help meet the actions identified under the High Needs Block management plan. This budget will be funded through a budget virement from reallocating existing SEND project budgets (£425,000) and allocation of the Higher Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) Grant (£5,151,900) be approved. Further information is set out in the report.

21. COUNCIL OWNED COMPANIES UPDATE

(Councillors Prue Bray, Stephen Conway, David Hare and Clive Jones declared a personal interest in this item.)

The Executive considered the Council owned companies update. The report outlined changes to the boards of the Council owned companies.

The Leader of the Council Councillor Clive Jones, Leader of the Council thanked the Councillors who were retiring from their positions in Council owned companies for their contributions during their tenure.

Councillor Clive Jones stated that the new non-Executive Directors were looking forward to working with the Council Owned Companies to deliver the necessary infrastructure in the Borough.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing and Adult Services Councillor Dave Hare reported that he had had the first meeting with Optalis, this had been positive and new HR person had been introduced to the Board. He was hopeful that things would move forward in a positive way.

The Executive Member for Children's Services Councillor Prue Bray informed that she had attended the first meeting with Berry Brook Homes and she too felt that this had been a positive meeting.

RESOLVED That the following changes to the non-executive directors of the Council owned companies as follows be noted:

- 1) WBC (Holdings) Limited – Retirement of Cllrs John Kaiser, Stuart Munro and Wayne Smith and appointment of Cllrs Clive Jones (Chairman), Stephen Conway, Prue Bray. Re-appointment of Graham Ebers;
- 2) Wokingham Housing Limited and Berry Brook Homes Limited – Retirement of Cllr John Kaiser and appointment of Cllr Prue Bray;
- 3) Loddon Homes Limited – Retirement of Cllrs Shahid Younis and Norman Jorgensen and appointment of Cllrs Clive Jones (Chairman) and Stephen Conway; and
- 4) Optalis Limited – Retirement of Cllr Charles Margetts and appointment of Cllr David Hare

22. IMPLEMENTING THE LEISURE STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report which gave details of a proposal to enhance sports and football facilities, addressing the shortfall in 3G pitches within the community.

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure Councillor Ian Shenton stated that the report sought approval to progress a 3G pitch proposal in Lower Earley and to approve the release of S106 funds to finance improvements to physical activity facilities at the Forest School.

Councillor Ian Shenton explained that problems had been identified with proposals for a 3G pitch at Laurel Park, however there remained a need for additional football facilities in the Borough, both for training and for weekend fixtures. An analysis had been carried out which had identified the Maiden Erlegh site as the most suitable site.

Councillor Ian Shenton informed that extensive public consultation would be carried out prior to the planning application submission. Following the planning application, a bid for funding from the Football Foundation would be submitted. Installation was expected to happen during the 2023 summer holiday, with the facility opening in September 2023, whereafter income would exceed ongoing costs.

Councillor Ian Shenton explained that approval was also being sought for improvements to the swimming pool and sports facilities at the Forest School, including refurbishment of the gym and swimming pool floor. Once the improvements were completed, the facilities would be available for the community to use. The swimming pool would provide for 'modest swimming requirements', which would be a unique feature within the Borough's swimming pool facilities.

Councillor Dave Hare wished to emphasise that the consultation should be thorough and that football clubs should be consulted too, he believed that the facility should be built to meet the needs of the community.

Councillor Ian Shenton confirmed that the consultation would be thorough, the final details were being finalised with comms.

Councillor Clive Jones agreed with the previous comments about the consultation and added that a workshop with Earley Town Council would also take place.

In response to a question Councillor Ian Shenton confirmed that the 3G project was dependent on the funding from the Football Foundation being obtained, which put some pressure on the timescales.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Subject to planning, Football Foundation funding and endorsement by formal public consultation prior to planning application, the outcome of the option appraisal analysis, Maiden Erlegh School, is progressed as the proposed 3G pitch site; and
- 2) Funds for use of S106 finance for physical activity enhancements at Forest School be approved and released.

23. TOUTLEY EAST DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The Executive considered a report which contained an update on the Toutley East Development.

The Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty Councillor Rachel Bishop-Firth spoke on behalf of the Emmbrook Ward Members and stated that there was consensus that more affordable housing and care home beds were needed in the Borough. However, there were concerns about this particular site, and objections had already been raised on this issue, and work would be undertaken to address these concerns at the reserved matters stage.

Councillor Stephen Conway acknowledged the concerns raised by local ward Members. He added that this plan had been approved by the Planning Committee, however this was an outline planning permission and as such there was scope to address some of the concerns previously raised.

Councillor Stephen Conway emphasized the fact that the realisation of the plan was dependent upon the building of housing to pay for the project. It was pleasing to note that the plan included 35% of affordable housing.

Councillor David Hare stated that a new care home was desperately needed in the Borough. He drew attention to the fact that the facility would be of high quality and be one of the best in the southeast, if not in the country. He added that although Suffolk Lodge was a much loved facility, but it did not serve the purposes of the residents.

The Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan Councillor Lindsay Ferris supported the plan. He proposed to add a recommendation to take on board the points raised by

Councillors Gary Cowan and Jim Frewin with regard to noise and pollution. This additional recommendation was agreed by the Executive.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) This update on the delivery of the Toutley East development be noted;
- 2) The proposed strategic masterplan and land uses for the site, including a new 68-bed dementia care home and up to 130 residential units (on 13th July 2022 Planning Committee resolved to grant outline planning consent for the strategic masterplan) be noted;
- 3) The financial business case (Return on Investment) for the Toutley East development, including how the proposed land uses financially support each other and the net revenue benefit of £337,000 per annum rising to £700,000 per annum over an approximate 4 year time period be noted;
- 4) The delivery options for the residential development identified at this stage, which will be subject to a future business case being approved by Executive and Council be noted;
- 5) Authority to the Director of Assets and Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development and the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services, be delegated to deliver the strategic masterplan in line with the approved financial business case; and
- 6) Officers provide a report on the impact of poor air quality and noise on dementia as reported in the national press.

24. RELOCATION OF TWYFORD LIBRARY TO THE OLD POLEHAMPTON BOYS SCHOOL SITE

(Councillor Stephen Conway declared a personal and prejudicial interest on this item, he left the room and did not take part in the discussions or vote.)

The Executive considered a report containing an update on the proposal to relocate Twyford library.

Councillor Clive Jones explained that there had been a campaign for a permanent library in Twyford for around 20 years, with a huge amount of public support. He thanked the Polehampton Charity for engaging with Council for so long. He also wished to pay tribute to the late Dave Turner, who was a trustee of the Polehampton Charity and worked very hard to transfer the library to the old Polehampton Boys School historical site.

Councillor Clive Jones explained that historical buildings played a vital role in the community and helped to connect people with their heritage. The old Polehampton Boys School site would provide a permanent home for the library and was a good example to partnership working between the Council and Polehampton Charity.

Councillor Lindsay Ferris pointed out that this was a facility within the northern area of the Borough, which another positive aspect of the project. This facility would be used by residents of not only Twyford, but also Hurst, Charvil and other villages around. He

extended his gratitude to the Polehampton Charity and the late Dave Turner in helping to achieve this project.

Councillor Prue Bray confirmed that the campaign to move the Twyford library had been ongoing for over 20 years. She too wished to thank the Polehampton Charity for their patience for the time it had taken to agree to the relocation of the library. She informed that there was also a vision for a Twyford Hub in the site, this was the stage 1 of the project.

Councillor Prue Bray extended her gratitude to Councillors Stephen Conway and Lindsay Ferris, and Dee Tomlin who had been a councillor for many years for Twyford and had also campaigned for the relocation of the library.

Councillor Lindsay Ferris explained that there would be an opportunity to raise revenue from the current library site, which could then be used to fund the new library.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The relocation of Twyford library be proceeded;
- 2) The allocation of £330,000 of S106 funds to the project be agreed; and
- 3) The lease agreements for the new library site (as summarised in the report), and delegates authority to the Director of Place and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Member for Climate Change & Resident Services and the Executive Member for Business & Economic Development, to complete the lease be approved.

25. NEW DEMENTIA CARE HOME IN THE TOUTLEY EAST DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANT AND CONTRACT

(Councillor David Hare declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, he left the room and did not take part in the discussions or vote.)

The Executive considered a report which outlined details of proposal for a new dementia care home and residential development of up to 130 residential units and supporting infrastructure.

Councillor Clive Jones explained that the report sought the approval of the procurement process for the new dementia care home in Toutley. Optalis would continue to be the provider, however a new contract with Optalis was required as the new home would be larger than Suffolk Lodge. The current financial modelling predicted that the new care home would deliver around £377k per annum worth of financial efficiencies by 2025. The reforms within Adult Social Care however, were likely to increase the potential saving from this scheme. It was therefore envisaged that that care home would support the delivery of additional cost avoidance in the region of £700k per year.

Councillor Clive Jones informed that the Council was starting to look at potential sites for a second care home.

Councillor Imogen Shepherd-DuBey stated that most of the people living care homes in Wokingham were in private care homes. She informed that under the new Adult Social Care reforms, the Council would be required to start assessing those people for their care needs and subsequently be expected to start covering the care costs when they reached the threshold of £86k. So, in order to manage these costs, care places would have to be

offered in Council run care homes. Having Council run care homes would be the only way to manage the cost of care going forward, therefore she supported this proposal.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The proposal to transfer service provision from existing care services at Suffolk Lodge to the new dementia care home at Toutley East, and delegates authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and the Director of Resources and Assets, jointly, in consultation with the Executive Members for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services and the Executive Member for Finance, to make any changes necessary to the contract between Wokingham Borough Council and Optalis Ltd to give effect to this change in service, up to a value of £2m per annum be noted;
- 2) Authority jointly to the Director of Adult Services and the Director of Resources and Assets to increase the value of the care contract in place with Wokingham Borough Council's Local Authority Traded Company (Optalis Limited), by way of contract variation, up to the value of circa £4m, subject to inflationary increases, to deliver the staffing requirements for the care home, be delegated, that in each case:
 - 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.
- 3) The procurement strategy set out in the Procurement Business case for the construction consultants and contractor required for the development of the new dementia care home and associated works; and delegates authority to the Director of Resources and Assets, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to implement and/or adapt this strategy within the approved budget be approved.

26. EDUCATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROCUREMENT

The Executive considered Education Management System Procurement report. The report sought approval to extend the contract for the Capita One Education Management System until March 2026 and complete a procurement process to enable any new system to be implemented by April 2026.

Councillor Prue Bray explained that Children's Services the management system which was used by Children's Services was coming to the end of its contract. The report sought approval to extend this contract in order to enable the service to have more time to explore the best options going forward.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The extension of the contract for Capita One for another two years from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2026 be approved; and
- 2) The procurement business case for the Education Management System be approved.

This page is intentionally left blank

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 2 AUGUST 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.52 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey (Chairman), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, Stephen Conway, John Kaiser, Rebecca Margetts, Wayne Smith and Alistair Neal

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Peter Dennis

Officers Present

Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Ian Bellinger, Service Manager for Growth and Delivery
Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Lyndsay Jennings, Senior Solicitor
Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor

Case Officers Present

Joanna Carter

26. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor David Cornish.

27. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

John Kaiser stated his surprise and disappointment that a decision taken at a previous meeting of the Planning Committee had been taken back to the Planning Committee. John added that whilst he accepted the dilemma faced by officers to try and avoid costs at appeal, he felt that the decision should not be taken back to Committee as they had already made their decision. John Kaiser added that he would declare a personal interest on item number 29, and would abstain on the vote.

28. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

29. APPLICATION NO.203544 - LAND TO THE WEST OF ST ANNES DRIVE, AND SOUTH OF LONDON ROAD, WOKINGHAM, RG40 1PB

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 54 units (including 19 affordable homes) with associated access road from St Anne's Drive, landscaping and open space.

Applicant: Beaulieu Homes

The Committee considered a report, set out in agenda pages 5 to 96, which set out the background to this application, including the previous decision by the Committee to refuse Planning permission, and the subsequent appeal that had been lodged by the applicant. A Part 2 report was also included within the members' packs.

Mary Severin, Borough Solicitor, stated that since the time that this application was refused on 13 January 2022 confidential legal advice had been received from the barrister instructed to represent Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in the course of the upcoming appeal. The barrister had provided WBC with new information which was not available at

the time of the January meeting. Whilst all Council meetings and information provided as part of those meetings must be held in public unless an exemption applied, in this case paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1975 applied as it dealt with legal professional privilege. Mary stated that in order for officers to provide members with the information that had come to light and the legal information that came with it, the Chair would invite the Committee to exclude members of the public prior to debating the contents of the Part 2 report.

John Kaiser stated that to his knowledge this had never happened before, and he could not understand why the Committee were being asked to reassess a decision made by a previous Committee. Mary Severin stated that the decision to grant planning permission was now with the Planning Inspector, and the Committee were being asked as to whether they wished to proceed with the reasons for refusal given originally, given the new information.

Stephen Conway confirmed that he had given his apologies for the meeting where this application was considered, and added that he came into the meeting with an open mind. Stephen added that he could recall other times where the Committee had been asked to consider reasons for refusal when an appeal was upcoming.

In response to a query from the Clerk with regards to public speaking, Mary Severin confirmed that Peter Dennis (Ward Member) could instead speak within the Part 2 session so long as the Chair agreed. The Chair confirmed that she was happy with this approach.

Wayne Smith stated that he was unaware, during his three years as Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement, of any applications being sent back to the Committee to reconsider reasons for refusal. Wayne felt that it was not right to exclude the public from the meeting, or from the information provided to members. Mary Severin stated that this situation had happened before, but it was very rare. Mary added that it was difficult to go into detail as to why this had been taken back to Committee without disclosing information contained within Part 2. Mary added that officers felt that they could not allow members not to be aware of the latest information and developments with this application. Mary added that members were, as always, free to make whatever decision they wished after listening to all representations and considering all information within the Part 2 report.

Harish Chowdary Gottipati, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Harish stated that there were a number of issues relating to the environment and local wildlife associated with this application, whilst any expansion of the area would cause other issues including with public transport. Harish added that there was not enough public transport in the area, whilst he found the train services to be unreliable. Harish noted that a number of families had immigrated to the Borough, for example from Hong Kong, and schools within the area were already full. Harish reiterated that his main concerns were in relation to public transport, congestion, and the associated environmental impact from increased vehicle emissions. Harish stated that there was a lot of hard water in the area, whilst the general water quality was poor. Harish added that he was disappointed that this meeting was happening in the school holidays when a lot of people were away, and part of the meeting was being held in private.

Rebecca Margetts stated that a vast amount of residents had objected to this, and those people would not be allowed to understand the information as to why members were being asked to consider aspects of the application again. Rebecca added her concern that part of the meeting would be held in Part 2.

Chris Bowring stated that he was very disturbed by the process that members were being asked to go through. Chris added that he had been a member of the Planning Committee on and off for a number of years, and what was being proposed was a rare event and very undesirable. Chris stated that at present, the applicant had the right to appeal to the planning inspectorate who may overturn the original decision if their application was refused by the Committee. Chris stated that members were being asked to intervene in this process because others believed that the reasons the Committee resolved to refuse the application were now invalid. Chris felt that this could set a precedent which could undermine the well-established democratic process where a decision refused by the Planning Committee could be appealed against and sent directly to the Planning Inspectorate. Chris stated that he had Chaired the meeting where this application was refused, and whilst he had voted to approve the application he would not support the process this evening as the original decision had been properly and democratically made.

Stephen Conway stated that everyone would feel uncomfortable with this process, and a fully Part 1 report would always be preferable. Stephen added that the Committee were being asked to consider some very sensitive and confidential legal advice, which if heard in Part 1 could prejudice WBC's case at appeal. Stephen added that in light of this, he felt it right to move into Part 2.

Mary Severin commented that a note could be placed within the Part 1 minutes which would give the public information in relation to the Committee's decision. Mary reiterated that the reason that members were being asked to consider this item was to save WBC costs at appeal.

Upon being put to the vote, the Committee resolved to move into a Part 2 session.

The Committee considered a report in Part 2, which presented them with a set of recommendations.

Upon deliberation and a subsequent vote, the Committee resolved to accept the recommendations as set out in the Part 2 report. In addition, the Committee resolved to place the following statement in the Part 1 minutes:

"Since this application was refused, the Council can no longer demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. In preparation for the appeal the Council's Planning Committee were asked to closely consider the reasons given to refuse the planning permission in January. The Committee have now authorised officers not to present evidence to the appeal for reasons for refusal 1 and 2 providing appropriate negotiations can be reached with the Appellant in relation to the appeal."

RESOLVED That the recommendations as set out within the Part 2 report be agreed, and the statement in relation to this decision be included within the Part 1 minutes as resolved by the Committee.

30. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting to consider and determine the Part 2 information within agenda item number 29 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

Decision made in the presence of:
Rebecca Brooks, Community Transport Manager
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION RECORD SHEET
--

Title of the report	Local Bus Service SoM4
----------------------------	-------------------------------

DECISION MADE BY Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways - Paul Fishwick

ACTION BY Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

DECISION MADE ON 08 August 2022

Recommendation contained in the report

That the Individual Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways and the Executive Member for Finance give approval to modify the contract term of contracts tendered under WBC100.

Decision

That the Individual Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways and the Executive Member for Finance gave approval to modify the contract term of contracts tendered under WBC100 to agree a new end date of 31st March 2023.

Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation

The end date of 31 March 2023 was added to specify when the modified contract would cease.

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

Three options were presented to the Individual Executive Members, with option 3 (highlighted in bold) chosen as the preferred action.

Option 1: Withdraw local bus services

- Approximately 1,226,256 passenger journeys¹ per annum are currently made on the Leopard and Tiger services, many of which would no longer be possible.
- There would be a significant impact on residents in terms of access to health care, employment, and education, especially from Spencers Wood, Swallowfield, Riseley, Finchampstead and Arborfield.
- The Council would not meet the statutory duty of the 1985 Transport Act. It would be detrimental to the climate emergency, air quality, residents' health & wellbeing, and congestion on local roads.

Option 2: Retender Local Bus Service

- There is insufficient time to retender the service before the contracts come to their natural end or by October 2022 when government funding ceases.
- A gap in service would result if a new supplier won a re-tender exercise, as a 70-day registration process post award, along with any appropriate mobilisation & TUPE process would be required.
- A gap in service would result in the same impacts as listed under Option 1.

Option 3: Modify the Contract Term

- **Modifying the contract term would allow the services to continue whilst a retender takes place. Allowing local bus services to continue would mitigate the impacts identified under Options 1 and 2.**

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comment
Monitoring Officer	No comment
Leader of the Council	No comment

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

Financial modelling which is commercially sensitive and the Council has signed a NDA for.

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member who is consulted by a Member which relates to the decision

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

Background papers

IEMD Report and IEMD Part 2 paper

PUBLISHED ON: 8 August 2022

EFFECTIVE ON: 16 August 2022

CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES: 15 August 2022

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 10 AUGUST 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey (Chairman), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, Stephen Conway, David Cornish, John Kaiser and Alistair Neal

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Andy Croy

Officers Present

Kamran Akhter, Principal Highways Development Management Officer
Brian Conlon, Operational Lead – Development Management
Connor Corrigan, Service Manager - Planning and Delivery
Sean O'Connor, Head of Legal Services
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Sophie Morris
George Smale

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Rebecca Margetts and Wayne Smith.

32. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

35. APPLICATION NO.220822 - READING FC TRAINING GROUND, PARK LANE, BARKHAM, RG40 4PT

Proposal: Application for the approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline planning consent 163547 for the erection of 140 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), associated amenity spaces, play area, access, garages, parking, internal roads, pathways, drainage and associated landscaping (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be considered).

Applicant: Vistry Partnerships (Thames Valley)

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

Whilst there were no updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda, the Committee were informed verbally by the case officer that informative 10 was no longer required as it was covered by informative 6.

Nina Lloyd, agent, spoke in support of the application. Nina stated that she was delighted with the officer recommendation for approval, and thanked all involved for their efforts and collaborative working. Nina added that the principle of development was established in 2021, and the application had received no technical objections from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) officers or statutory consultees. Nina stated that the scheme was policy compliant, and would deliver 140 high quality houses which reflected the existing local character. 40 percent (56 houses) of houses delivered on site would be affordable and tenure blind, whilst a 2.8 hectare SANG had been approved and would connect to an existing SANG. Top quality walking and cycling routes would be installed across the development, in addition to community green space with local and native species. The existing perimeter landscape would be maintained, and the site was considered to be located in an extremely sustainable location. Nina supported the officer recommendation of approval, and hoped that the Committee would grant planning permission.

John Kaiser stated that the strategic market assessment indicated that 22 percent of all homes should be four-bedroom, whereas this development proposed 35 percent. John added that there was a housing crisis within the Borough in relation to small and affordable homes, and questioned why four-bedroom homes were being overdelivered with recent planning applications. Sophie Morris, case officer, stated that the dwelling mix had been considered against the 2020 housing needs assessment, and fell comfortably within the specifications and was therefore considered acceptable. Sophie added that it was not considered suitable for 1- and 2-bedroom flats to be delivered in this edge of settlement location, whilst apartment blocks would be delivered in other locations within the Arborfield SDL. John Kaiser stated that members needed to see the running total of homes delivered within the SDL locations, including dwelling mix and affordable homes. John stressed that the borough needed more smaller homes and not 4-bedroom houses.

John Kaiser stated that this development was presented as part of the wider SDL, and queried how this could be justified with no highway link to the wider SDL. Connor Corrigan, Service Manager – Planning and Delivery, stated that a highways link could not be provided due to the positioning of the school and leisure centre pitches. Connor added that a link was available at the top of the Hogwood spur and onto the Nine Mile Ride extension, providing easy access for pedestrians and cyclists to the district centre. Connor stated that there was no physical ability to link the two, and the site was no different to the sites in the norther part of the SDL

John Kaiser queried whether S106 charges for buses were being reflected in the increasing costs being sought by bus operators. Connor Corrigan stated that officers were in consultation with bus companies, and this was generally reflected within S106 contributions.

David Cornish felt that the best possible use of land should be sought, as residents would likely prefer more dwelling density at edge of settlement locations rather than having to give up more green space in other areas. David added that small homes had long been part of the rural landscape, and queried whether all pathways within the site were open to cyclists and horse riders. Sophie Morris stated the Arborfield SDL supplementary planning document gave a broad density range of up to 35 dwellings per hectare. Due to the location and edge of settlement status, the proposed 27.5 dwellings per hectare was considered acceptable. Sophie stated that the paths around the perimeter of the site were 2m wide and were open to cyclists, whilst the pedestrian cycle path secured by S106 would provide a route up to Biggs Lane. Connor Corrigan confirmed that horses would not

be permitted in the SANG, as Natural England did not want the conflict between horses and dogs.

Stephen Conway stated that the scope of member deliberations were limited as this was a reserved matters application. Stephen was of the opinion that the design of the dwellings was attractive and of high quality, and he was very pleased to see 40 percent affordable homes, with 70 percent of those being social rent whilst being of high-quality design and tenure blind.

Andrew Mickleburgh was pleased that many issues raised at the outline stage had been addressed, particularly noise and odour concerns which had resulted in positive assessments being carried out. Andrew added that he was pleased with the overall designs being proposed, and with the proposed levels of tenure blind affordable housing.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be proposed as per the officer recommendation, minus informative 10 as advised by the case officer. This was seconded by Stephen Conway.

RESOLVED That application number 220822 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 14 to 17, with the omission of informative 10 as advised by the case officer.

36. APPLICATION NO.221453 - 25 PALMERSTONE ROAD, EARLEY, RG6 1HL
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed first storey extension and raising of the roof to create a habitable first floor, single storey rear extension and changes to fenestration.

Applicant: Mr S Sidhu

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 47 to 76.

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

Tim Marsh, ACER residents' association, spoke in objection to the application. Tim stated that ACER had reviewed over 400 planning applications in Whitegates since 2016, including a variety of bungalows, however no applications to convert a bungalow in the middle of a row of bungalows to a two-storey house had been considered until now. Tim added that such a development would be out of keeping and out of character. Tim felt that the bungalow development to number 42 was acceptable, with the overall height only being increased by 0.75m, whereas the proposal for number 25 would add an entire additional storey and had received 9 objections. Tim requested that the application be refused as the conversion of the bungalow to a two-storey property was out of keeping with the character of the area and was not in keeping with the row of bungalows in which it resided, and the allocated parking for a 5-bedroom tenanted property was inadequate.

Peter Dorward, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Peter stated that policy CP3 was the key policy regarding planning permission, and proposals must meet key criteria and requirements including appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character of the area whilst being of no detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and their quality of life, whilst integrating with the surrounding existing

dwellings. Peter added that number 25 was in a row of 5 houses with very similar design, with the same frontage and same height, creating a section of the road with its own unique character. Peter felt that the proposed changes demonstrated a very significant change, with the proposed building being much taller than existing dwellings. Peter stated that other properties including his own had been sympathetically increased in size, but had remained in keeping, met planning requirements, whilst retaining their existing height. Peter added that his dining room would see a loss of light from the proposed dwelling, whilst number 23 would also experience this same issue. Peter felt that the application should be refused as it did not meet the requirements set out within CP3, and presented a number of signatures from objectors on Palmerstone Road.

Andy Croy, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Andy felt that the mass, scale and layout of the proposal would detract seriously from the existing street scene. Andy added that this section of the road was a section of bungalows, and a two-storey home in the middle of this section would detract from the character of the area. Andy stated that other properties had undergone sympathetic redevelopment, utilising space towards the rear of the property, which remained in keeping with the road. Andy expressed his disappointment that officers made reference to the flats at the bottom of the road as an example of different built forms in the area, which he felt was totally out of keeping with the area and should never have been developed. Andy felt that the application should be refused, which would give the applicant the opportunity to go back and return with a scheme which was sympathetic with the existing character of the road.

Stephen Conway contemplated whether the character of the road as a whole or the immediate context of the building's surroundings formed the street scene and character of the area. Stephen added that the road had a variety of styles however this particular section of the road appeared to be a row of bungalows with lots of gables which were also incorporated into any extensions. Stephen emphasised that gables appeared to be a common feature of the road, and sought officer comment on this matter. George Smale, case officer, stated that there were a wide variety of different property designs in the area, some with gables but also bay windows. George added that all windows on the proposed design were symmetrical to each other. Stephen Conway queried whether retention of gables the ground floor but then proposing a completely different design on the second floor was acceptable in design terms and in accordance with policy R23. George Smale stated that the most unique character of the property were the gables on the ground floor towards the front and the rear of the property, which would be retained.

Andrew Mickleburgh sought clarity on the proposed height increase of the property, thanked officers for clarifying the intended design of the property compared to the shaded plans provided, queried whether the materials to be used would match the existing materials, and sought details regarding any potential loss of light to neighbouring properties. George Smale confirmed that the property would see a 1.85m increase in height, whilst materials would match those of existing materials by condition. George stated that the nature of any two-storey house would result in a loss of light to neighbouring dwellings, however side glazing would be conditioned for each side window. George added that loss of light would only be detrimental to a main habitable room, and number 27 had a habitable room to the front of their property with a window. Brian Conlon, Operational Manager – Development Management, stated that it was the nature of side-to-side development that there would always be some level of overbearing, however the application was situated within a suburban area which had established side to side development. Brian added that members needed to determine whether the variety of

dwelling being proposed was harmful in planning terms in and of itself. Brian confirmed that the proposal did not breach any guidelines in terms of vertical or horizontal levels.

With regards to further queries about obscure glazed windows, George Smale stated that loss of light to the ground floor of neighbouring properties already existed. Peter Dorward commented that the room in question was his dining room, and not his kitchen. Brian Conlon stated that a dining room was a habitable room, however it had a north facing elevation and most habitable rooms were situated to the front or rear.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried under what circumstances loft conversions required planning permission. Brian Conlon stated that if an existing roof void was converted then this would not require planning permission until the built form protruded significantly in which case permitted development or planning permission would be sought. Brian added that internal use of a roof void was not a material planning consideration.

Alistair Neal was of the opinion that the proposal was completely out of character with the area, as the proposed 2-storey dwelling was situated within a row of bungalows opposite other bungalows.

John Kaiser was of the opinion that this application would have a fundamental and detrimental effect on the street scene. John queried how much the space of the property would increase by. George Smale stated that there were a mix of dwellings on this road, and several properties had enlarged their roof spaces by between 40 and 50 percent. George confirmed that the proposals conformed to separation gap requirements either side of the property.

Chris Bowring queried how many consecutive bungalows persisted on this part of the road. Brian Conlon stated that this was a very long road, and this section had 5 bungalows in a row with two on the opposite side. Chris Bowring was of the opinion that the overall street scene was very mixed. Chris queried how many additional rooms would be added by the proposal. George Smale stated that the property would comprise of a total of 5 habitable rooms, with 3 car parking spaces which complied with car parking standards, whilst no highways safety concerns had been raised by highways consultees.

David Cornish stated that the neighbouring property's dining room was classed as a habitable room, which would be affected by loss of light. David added that the question of 'how long is a street scene' was a subjective question, however when you broke the road down into smaller sections these proposals would be out of keeping with its surroundings. David stated that he was not against redevelopment, however these proposals were not in keeping in his opinion.

Stephen Conway queried whether any planning guidance was available as to how changes to a street scene were assessed. Brian Conlon stated that members had to consider whether the proposals fundamentally changed the street scene in their opinion, whilst also considering whether the design was good and whether it would cause harm.

Andrew Mickleburgh felt that given the diverse nature of the street scene and the professional advice received with regards to loss of light, the application should be approved.

John Kaiser proposed that the application be refused as it failed to retain the existing character of the street scene. This was seconded by Alistair Neal. Upon being put to the vote, the motion fell.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be approved as per the officer recommendation. This was seconded by Chris Bowring.

RESOLVED That application number 221453 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 54 to 55.

Decision made in the presence of:
 Francesca Rowson, Policy Officer (Housing and Projects)
 Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

**INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER
 DECISION RECORD SHEET
 IMD 2022/08**

Title of the report	Homelessness Prevention Grant (2023/24 onwards) consultation response
----------------------------	--

DECISION MADE BY Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing
 - Stephen Conway
ACTION BY Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
DECISION MADE ON 22 August 2022

Recommendation contained in the report

That the Executive Member for Housing authorises Wokingham Borough Council to respond to the Government’s Homelessness Prevention Grant consultation for 2023/24 onwards, as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

Decision

That the Executive Member for Housing authorised Wokingham Borough Council to respond to the Government’s Homelessness Prevention Grant consultation for 2023/24 onwards, as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

Reasons for Decision if different to recommendation

N/A

Alternative options considered and rejected at time of the decision

N/A

Summary of consultations undertaken

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comment received.
Monitoring Officer	No specific comments.
Leader of the Council	No comment received.

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

N/A

Any Conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member who is consulted by a Member which relates to the decision

None

Any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service in respect of any declared conflict of interest

None

Background papers

IEMD Report - Homelessness Prevention Grant (2023/24 onwards) consultation response

Enc. 1 - Proposed WBC Consultation Response

PUBLISHED ON: 22 August 2022

EFFECTIVE ON: 31 August 2022

CALL-IN PERIOD EXPIRES: 30 August 2022