

TITLE	Agreement of Task and Finish Group Reports
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2023
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny provides an independent “critical friend” challenge to the Executive, whilst working with the Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. Submission of recommendations for improvement to the Executive, on issues of particular importance, is an example of good governance.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Consider and agree the Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group report, set out as Appendix 1 to this report;
- 2) Consider and agree the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan Task and Finish Group report, set out as Appendix 2 to this report;
- 3) Confirm the formation of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group, to assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis and to scrutinise specific schemes prior to consultation;
- 4) Notes that the Active Travel Task and Finish Group will provide periodic updates to the Committee, on the work undertaken since the last update.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report seeks approval of two task and Finish Group reports and associated sets of recommendations to the Executive. The two Task and Finish Groups are the Preferred Registered Providers (PRP) Task and Finish Group, and the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Task and Finish Group. The reports are scheduled for submission to the Executive at their meeting on 21 March 2023, where a list of officer responses will be provided for each recommendation.

Agreement is sought for the formation of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group, to assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis and to scrutinise specific schemes prior to consultation.

Background

PRP Task and Finish Group

- 1.1 The Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group consisted of Councillors Shirley Boyt (Chair), Chris Johnson (Vice-Chair), Laura Blumenthal, Andy Croy and Rebecca Margetts.
- 1.2 The Preferred Registered Providers Task and Finish Group was established by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 25 May 2022. The Group has met on 7 occasions, and has engaged with a range of stakeholders including the Executive Member for Housing, tenants of social housing, the Association of Retained Council Housing, and the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel. The Group surveyed tenants of Preferred Registered Providers (PRPs), and received over 165 responses which helped to provide a snapshot of the concerns and issues of our residents.
- 1.3 WBC's new set of preferred partners were agreed by the Executive at their meeting in February 2023. The Group's recommendations seek to add to and amend the draft partnership agreement, which is to be finalised and signed by each PRP prior to commencement in April 2023.
- 1.4 The Group agreed the following Terms of reference:
 - To look at the service provided by each of the Council's preferred registered providers (PRPs) and to compare performance with WBC's housing service, WBC housing companies and industry best practice.
 - To recommend minimum service levels which tenants will expect of PRPs and WBC housing.
 - To consider the Council's current approach to appointing and monitoring Preferred Registered Providers.
 - To consider the legal framework underpinning this process.
 - To consider the views of local stakeholders.
 - To consider the views of Housing Associations and WBC's own social housing stakeholders.
 - To consider examples of best practice.
 - To consider how tenant satisfaction, housing provider performance and other KPIs are measured by PRPs, WBC and other social housing providers.
 - To consider how appointment of Preferred Registered Providers could be improved to create a single excellent level of service, regardless of whether a resident uses a housing association or WBC provision.
 - To produce a final report to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, the Executive with recommendations for improvement.
- 1.5 The Group considered evidence from the following stakeholders:
 - Steve Bowers (Chair of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel)
 - Councillor Stephen Conway (Executive Member for Housing)
 - Jonathan Cox (Director of Data and Business Intelligence at Housemark)

- Paul Price (CEO of the Association of Retained Council Housing)
- Rhian Hayes (WBC - Assistant Director Economic Development and Growth)
- Frances Haywood (WBC - Head of Strategic Housing)
- Zulfiqar Mulak (WBC - Interim Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Communities)
- Simon Price (WBC - Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Communities)
- Tenants of PRPs within the Borough via survey
- Snapshot information from WBC Councillors via email.

LCWIP Task and Finish Group

- 2.1 The LCWIP Task and Finish Group consisted of Councillors Al Neal (Chair), Peter Dennis (Vice-Chair), Laura Blumenthal, Chris Johnson and Pauline Jorgensen.
- 2.2 The LCWIP Task and Finish Group was established by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29 November 2022, whilst their Terms of Reference were agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2023. The Group has met on 2 occasions, and has engaged with Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways, a WSP consultant and the Transport Planning Team Manager. Due to time constraints, the Group were only able to review the main LCWIP report, whilst the related appendices were not considered by the Group, such as early outline maps and designs.
- 2.3 The Group agreed the following Terms of reference:
- To consider the latest draft and information relating to the LCWIP, and to formulate any recommendations for improvement to the Executive;
 - To consider the summary of results from the latest consultation, to inform any potential recommendations to the Executive;
 - To consider how the plan may be shaped to help encourage more residents to use sustainable transport methods, for example improving and promoting cycleways;
 - To produce a final report to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, the Executive with any recommendations for improvement.
- 2.4 Due to time constraints, the Group were unable to review the detailed appendices to the LCWIP report. As such, their Recommendations focus solely on the LCWIP report and not the detailed appendices, which include maps and consultation responses.
- 2.5 The Group considered evidence from the following stakeholders:
- Robert Curtis (WBC – Transport Planning Team Manager)
 - Councillor Paul Fishwick (Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways)
 - Andy Winmill (Associate Director, WSP)

Analysis of Issues

The LCWIP Task and Finish Group is recommending that an Active Travel Task and Finish Group is formed, to assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis and to scrutinise specific schemes prior to consultation. It is recommended that this Group initially consists of the same membership as the LCWIP Task and Finish Group, and subsequent membership is agreed annually at the first meeting of the municipal year of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Active Travel Task and Finish Group will likely be required to meet periodically for a number of years, assessing developments to the LCWIP and scrutinising detailed design proposals for specific projects as and when bids were submitted. Whilst the core Group will assess the LCWIP on a 6-monthly basis, relevant Ward Members and Town and Parish Council representatives will be included in meetings relating to detailed design of specific schemes prior to public consultation.

Periodic updates from the Group will be presented to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, detailing their review of any changes to the LCWIP in addition to their overview and scrutiny of specific proposed schemes. Any specific recommendations to the Executive which require a report will be agreed by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Suggestions and alterations relating to specific schemes, where the Group (including Ward Members and Town and Parish Council representatives) were fully supportive in addition to highways officers and the Executive Member are proposed to amend scheme proposals directly for expediency purposes, with a summary update provided to the Committee at a later date.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	R
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	R
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	R

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The formation of the Active Travel task and Finish Group would necessitate officer time, which can be delivered via existing resourcing.

Cross-Council Implications

The Active Travel Task and Finish Group will allow for scrutiny input into design proposals for major Active Travel schemes alongside local Ward Members and representatives from relevant Town and Parish Councils, prior to public consultation.

Public Sector Equality Duty
Due regard has been given to WBC’s duties under the Equality Act.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
The LCWIP seeks to promote and improve active travel throughout the Borough, which facilitate considerable improvements to the Borough’s net zero ambitions. The Recommendations of the LCWIP Task and Finish Group seek to make improvements to the LCWIP report and facilitate ongoing Overview and Scrutiny of the document and schemes as they develop. There are no negative impacts associated with the recommendations of either Task and Finish Group with regards to WBC’s declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
Preferred Partners Report, February 2023 Executive; LCWIP Executive Report, March 2023 Executive.

Contact Callum Wernham	Service Governance
Telephone No 0118 974 6000	Email callum.wernham@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank