

Motions Agreed by Council – 2021/23 – Full Wording

Motion 467 by Ian Shenton (November 2021):

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

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

Motion 468 by Gregor Murray (November 2021):

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

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

Once the above conditions are met an application for Tree Cities of the World status should be made as soon as possible. Further information on the Tree Cities of the World status and benefits can be found at www.treecitiesoftheworld.org.

Motion 469 by David Hare (November 2021):

RESOLVED: That White Ribbon UK is a leading charity engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. Their mission is for all men to fulfil the White Ribbon Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women and girls. It is not enough for men to not be violent towards women and girls. Men need to take responsibility for helping to make change happen. All men can help prevent physical, mental, or emotional violence against women and girls by speaking out whenever they encounter such behaviour. If men do not act to correct this, women and girls will continue not feeling safe to do many of the things men do without thinking, making us a morally corrupt and emotional poor society, as we trivialise the sickness that is any type of violence against women and girls.

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

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

Motion 480 by Rachel Burgess (July 2022):

RESOLVED That:

- 6 Wokingham Borough Council must continually review the support offered to families facing financial crisis to ensure a robust safety net is in place for those in need.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic there were already too many families in Wokingham struggling to make ends meet, and now many more families have been thrown into crisis, without the ability to pay their rent, heat their homes or feed their children. The Local Welfare Provision Scheme exists to provide immediate financial support to households facing an emergency situation.

However the number of people helped by this scheme in Wokingham Borough has fallen by 76% since 2016-17, with just 21 people helped in 2020-21. In 2019-20 just £3,000 was spent providing support through this scheme. Over the three years to 2020-21 only 23% of the allocated budget was actually spent, on average.

Wokingham Borough Council will:

- Review the effectiveness of Wokingham's Local Welfare Provision Scheme;
- Consult with residents and the voluntary sector to ascertain how those who need crisis assistance can be better supported;
- Ensure residents in need of support can easily access the scheme and work to remove barriers to application;
- Ensure effective signposting of the scheme in conjunction with the voluntary sector;
- Ensure frontline staff are trained so that they are fully aware of the scheme and are able to advise residents on how to apply;
- Consider prioritising the delivery of cash-first support, which is more empowering and respectful to those on lower incomes;
- Aim to provide support within 24-48 hours of a successful application;
- Consider relaxing the qualifying criteria and disclosure requirements for the scheme, ensuring that residents' dignity is respected throughout.

Motion 482 by Adrian Mather (July 2022):

RESOLVED That:

There needs to be a fundamental change in how we generate and consume energy in all aspects of our lives. Both electricity generation and distribution are undergoing rapid evolution, in both shape and scale.

The distribution grid, must now cope with power flows in both directions. In scale, electrification of heat and transport will require a quadrupling of electricity capacity. Local, community-based energy schemes can make a significant contribution to addressing both issues and encourage a sense of local empowerment to tackle climate change.

Community schemes encourage local generation and storage to match local demand thus relieving pressure on the grid. Local schemes would be given new impetus and be able to contribute more renewable energy if local people could buy their electricity directly from local suppliers. But the disproportionate cost of meeting regulatory approvals makes it impossible to be a local energy supplier at a local scale and so, under the current system, this local energy gets sold back to the central grid.

70 The Local Electricity Bill is a private members' bill with cross-party support that was introduced unopposed in June 2020. If this Bill was passed in Parliament it would give the energy regulator, Ofgem, a duty to create a Right to Local Supply. This would enable local community energy groups to achieve their vision of supplying generated energy back to the local area, help us as a Council to meet our carbon reduction aspirations for the Borough, and also bring multiple benefits to the local community. It is supported by many stakeholders, local authorities, and town councils and currently has the backing of 208 MPs.

Council Agrees to:

Resolve to support the Bill.

- Authorise the Leader to contact our MPs to discuss their support for the Bill and how they can enable its passage into law;
- Authorise the Chief Executive to write to the Minister of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, supporting the aims of the Bill and asking for these aims to be taken into account in the forthcoming Energy White Paper.

Motion 484 by Charles Margetts (July 2022):

RESOLVED That:

Wokingham Borough Council believes in promoting alternatives to car travel wherever possible. The Council has supported sustainable transport in the past and will continue to do so in future.

The rail service between from Earley to London Waterloo, including Winnersh, Winnersh Triangle and Wokingham, is ridiculously slow. The journey usually takes one hour and ten minutes to cover a distance of 36 miles to London. Some years ago, a scheme was proposed for trains on this line to not stop at intermediate stations between Twickenham and Waterloo, reducing journey times down by 15 minutes.

This Council calls on South Western Railway to implement measures to improve journey times from the Wokingham Borough stations to London Waterloo and to make these services more competitive.

71 Motion 485 by Gary Cowan (July 2022):

RESOLVED That:

Wokingham Borough Council:

- is concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year, regarding pets given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media and other channels in England - and notes the issue predominantly concerns goldfish
- is concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes
- recognises that many cases of pets being as prizes may go unreported each year
- supports a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Wokingham Borough Council land.

The Council agrees to:

- ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes in any form, on Wokingham Borough Council land.
- write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.

Motion 489 by Laura Blumenthal (October 2022):

RESOLVED That:

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

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

Motion 490 by Rachel Bishop-Firth (October 2022):

72 RESOLVED That:

Many Wokingham residents are facing severe and increasing financial hardship.

By September 2022:

- The cost of living was rising by 9.9% with some forecasts as high as 18.6% in the new year, while rises in pay and benefits fell far short of this.
- Typical household energy bills were expected to be over £2,500 a year.
- Interest rates had reached a 20 year high, putting added pressure on rents and mortgages.
- The removal of the temporary £20 a week uplift in universal credit had substantially reduced the income of those living on the lowest incomes.
- For many Wokingham residents, price increases will be a real concern. For residents on the lowest incomes who were already struggling to heat their homes and feed their families, they're a disaster. Many of these residents cannot increase their income through work, for example because they have full time caring responsibilities or are incapacitated.

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

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

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

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

Motion 494 by Gary Cowan (January 2023):

RESOLVED: That this Council sets up a working Group to review the Council's Constitution with the aim of making it fit for the 21st century by attempting to reflect the needs of Councillors, Officers, and Residents. To achieve that aim we ask the LGA to work with us in putting into place a modern, fit for purpose, new Constitution.

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Motion 496 by Rebecca Margetts (January 2023):

RESOLVED: That Wokingham Borough Council congratulates the England Lionesses on their incredible achievement of becoming European Champions. Many of these women were not offered the opportunity as children to play football at school and the only reason for their success was they were prepared and able to travel great distances to pursue their dream. Wokingham Borough Council believes all children should be offered the opportunity at school to play football and calls on all primary schools in Wokingham Borough to ensure that football is offered to every child who wishes to play.

Motion 499 by Shirley Boyt (March 2023):

RESOLVED: That this Council values the contribution of all key workers. The pandemic highlighted those who provide an invaluable service to our community and who should be regarded as key workers. Key workers in our community are suffering hardship caused by a combination of low pay and the high cost of living in this Borough. Many are in receipt of means tested benefits and qualify for Council Tax Relief. Many are using foodbanks and/or other help provided by the Hardship Alliance.

The cost of living in the Borough means that there are shortages of key workers. A google search in the first week of January revealed 73 local NHS vacancies, 72 care worker vacancies and more than 100 vacancies for teachers and/or classroom assistants.

This Council seeks to address this issue by:

Undertaking a full review of Key Worker Housing Provision including but not limited to:

- 1) setting a more realistic income threshold;
- 2) reviewing the list of eligible occupations;
- 3) working with Preferred Registered Partners and developers to provide a range of Key Worker Homes suitable for families as well as single occupants;
- 4) using S106 agreements to ensure that all new developments include Key Worker Homes for 'social' rather than 'affordable' rent.

Motion 500 by Andy Croy (March 2023):

RESOLVED That:

74 Over many years, residents and Members have made submissions to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) asking for road crossings, traffic calming, and other requests related to Highways and pedestrian safety in their area. And for many years there has been a distinct lack of transparency in dealing with requests from residents and Members. Requests have been described as 'in the pool'. This has become a synonym for 'sunk without a trace'. The petitioning process is particularly problematic as once a formal response from WBC has been received by the petitioner, there is no obligation on WBC to provide any future update.

Council calls on the Executive Member for Highways to usher in a new era of transparency and cause to be published on the WBC website a Schedule which allows residents and Members to see at a glance the status of road crossings, traffic calming and other resident and Member requests related to dangers on WBC highways. The Schedule should rank and grade requests and schemes by their stage in the assessment and delivery process in such a way as to give residents and members and understanding of the likelihood and timing of a request progressing, an outline of future milestone and any constraints.

The Schedule should include requests made by petitions in the last four years. Where any request had been rejected, the request and reason for rejection should also be shown on the Schedule. The Schedule should not rely on administrative versions of the 'pool', such as deferral to the finalising of the Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plan or Local Transport Plan, as a way of delaying an assessment as resident and Member requests deserve to be considered on their own merits.

The Schedule would be updated at least twice a year and the first version would be published by 1st October 2023.

Motion 502 by Caroline Smith (July 2023):

RESOLVED that:

“Wokingham Borough is a place renowned for being welcoming and friendly and for the strength of its communities. It is a place where every resident and place matters, and this should be a part of its vision and mission.

We recognise the potential contribution of asylum seekers and refugees to our Borough, and believe that a comprehensive, co-ordinated and forward-looking approach that promotes community cohesion is the best way to ensure the welfare of people moving into the Borough.

This Council:

- a. Agrees to make Wokingham Borough a recognised ‘Borough of Sanctuary’, welcoming those fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries, no matter their country of origin or how they arrived in our Borough;
- b. Becomes a supporter of City of Sanctuary UK by signing their organisational pledge and making a voluntary donation of the suggested amount for an organisation of our size of £250;
- c. Will amend its vision and mission to recognise that status;
- d. Recognises the positive contribution asylum seekers and refugees make to the social, cultural and community life of Wokingham Borough;
- e. Is committed to taking practical steps to welcome and include refugees and asylum seekers in our activities and will actively seek ways of supporting them, looking for opportunities to do so both within our existing and future budgets and through seeking additional income such as grants;
- f. Will support our communities and voluntary, community and faith groups in assisting asylum seekers and refugees wherever possible.”

Motion 508 by Prue Bray (October 2023):

RESOLVED: That Wokingham Borough Council has been under increasing financial pressure due to continued underfunding by the government over more than 20 years. High inflation, high interest rates, and increasing demand for statutory services have made the pressure worse.

In order to ensure that we make the best use of finite resources, that services are as sustainable as possible for the future, and that the most vulnerable in our community are protected, this council endorses an approach to decision-making by the Executive that is based on:

- recognising our responsibility to act in the interests of the community and the climate
- operating as one organisation
- practicing fiscal responsibility
- seeking to maximise income from external sources such as grants
- working constructively with partner organisations of all kinds
- pursuing a collective vision for the area, formed with the community
- taking into account the needs of less well-off and vulnerable residents
- planning for the long term
- making decisions that are informed by evidence
- maintaining good quality prevention and early help services -
- providing efficient and effective access to services and information for residents
- observing the principles of openness and transparency
- welcoming internal overview and scrutiny, enabling all Councillors to contribute.