

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2016 FROM 8.00 PM TO 9.50 PM

Members Present

Councillors: Parry Batth (Mayor), Bob Pitts (Deputy Mayor), Mark Ashwell, Keith Baker, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, David Chopping, UllaKarin Clark, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Mike Gore, Guy Grandison, Kate Haines, Mike Haines, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Tim Holton, Philip Houldsworth, Dianne King, John Jarvis, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Abdul Loyes, Tom McCann, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Ian Pittock, Barrie Patman, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Beth Rowland, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane, Rob Stanton, Alison Swaddle, Simon Weeks, Bob Wyatt and Shahid Younis

64. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Alistair Auty, Laura Blumenthal, Gary Cowan, Nicky Jerrome, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Nick Ray, Chris Singleton and Paul Swaddle.

65. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tom McCann declared a Personal Interest on the grounds that his daughter was employed by a company involved in the marketing of the Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration Project.

67. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

67.1 Mel Horton asked the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities the following question;

Question

Will the Council review their decision to appropriate the land at Elms Field in the light of 1,500 signatures demonstrating that the land at Elms Field is still required by the community for its current purpose?

Answer

The short answer is no. In 2004 the Council embarked on the process of producing a Local Plan to identify how local growth would be best accommodated across the Borough. This process involved several years of research and studies looking at the local area and its infrastructure, both current and required.

Extensive research and review was undertaken as part of this process which led to the adoption of documents such as the Core Strategy, Managing Development Delivery document, and supplementary planning documents such as those for the North and South Wokingham Strategic Development Locations and Wokingham Town Centre.

All of these documents have been the result of extensive consultation with residents, local businesses, developers and, in regards to the Local Plan core documents, have undergone Examination In Public by the Planning Inspectorate prior to adoption.

These documents clearly identify the level of local growth required and where it should be located within the area, including the town centre sites which are being addressed through the Council's regeneration. This is summarised in Policy SAL08 of the MDD which lists Peach Place, Elms Field and the Carnival Pool areas as Allocated Mixed Use Sites.

The Appropriation of Elms Field in 2007 was a part of this long process of delivering the infrastructure required for the Borough. It was a formal legal process which has already been completed and will not be reversed.

The Council has a responsibility to all its residents, both those who are living here now and those who will be living here in the future.

We need to ensure that Wokingham has the right infrastructure in place to support a great quality of life, providing people with everything they need from top quality school places and sports facilities, to entertainment facilities and an improved retail experience, to country parks and play areas.

Our proposals for Elms Field show how we are committed to achieving a great town centre experience for our residents.

Supplementary Question

Is the Council satisfied that, whilst they have followed the correct legal process to complete the appropriation of the land at Elms Field, they have also acted in a morally correct way, as will be judged by all the people of Wokingham who have signed the petition and others calling for the land to be maintained as public open space and facilities. And, indeed, by the Ellison family themselves, who left this land for the enjoyment of the people of Wokingham and not for it to become the Elms Field cashpoint, as Members of the Council openly refer to it; and not to be turned into an Aldi supermarket and a Premier Inn which adds no value to anyone in Wokingham as far as the community are concerned?

Supplementary Answer

That is quite a statement. The Elms Field cashpoint. I have never heard that one before, but thank you for mentioning it. We do feel that we have a moral right to go ahead with this. Quite simply, 1,500 residents who have signed the petition, as you say, are a small number compared to the remainder of the town and all the people on the doorstep who, for many years now, have said simply "get on with it, we want it finishing".

67.2 Clive Jones asked the Leader of the Council the following question; Question

Having gone through the 10 Year Capital Vision on pages 93-96 of the Medium Term Financial Plan, I could find no reference to any money being spent on anything in Earley at all for the next 10 years. Can you please tell how much you are planning to invest in Earley?

Answer

First of all can I explain the context of the Capital Programme contained within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. This is a plan for the Borough and not a plan for the towns and parishes. Therefore, it will generally not link any expenditure or indeed savings to any particular parish or town area. This is especially so for the Borough-wide items in the capital plan like the replacement of street lights or highways maintenance.

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will become less detailed as you go further out in this 10 year period. Who knows what the landscape might be then? Who might actually be on this Council by then? So it would be difficult to provide an answer to your question beyond the 3 year period identified in the MTFP pages 26 through 28.

If you look at page 27, the top graph, you will see where the funding for the Capital Programme comes from. Increasingly the funding for our Capital Programme will be coming from housing developments. As this happens that money, be it S106 or CIL, will be expected to be spent on infrastructure in the areas taking the housing. 37% of the total 10 year capital budget is already designated to be spent in those areas. I am sure you will agree with me that if an area takes nearly 3,000 houses then they deserve the improved infrastructure to mitigate against them. Unfortunately, and I am sure you will agree with me, Earley is practically “full” which means the volume of new houses built there is very small and therefore the funding for capital projects there will be quite limited.

Looking at the Borough wide items in the programme clearly Earley will get their fair share of investment through them. Whilst it is impractical to itemise every little bit of expenditure at town level a good approximation is the Earley tax base as a percentage of the total tax base. So when that is applied to the 10 year total minus the ring-fenced items associated with the new houses you get an estimated spend of £80 million or 18% of the total 10 year programme.

I would also like to stress that even where capital investment is made outside the area of Earley, it will be of benefit to the residents of Earley. This may be the provision of vital road links or the provision of school places in nearby schools.

Supplementary Question

The regeneration of Wokingham town centre was supposed to generate money that could be spent in other areas like Earley, Woodley and Twyford to help with their regeneration. How much profit are you expecting to get from the Wokingham town centre regeneration that you can spend on other areas and when are you expecting to get it?

Supplementary Answer – Provided by Councillor Philip Mirfin

Very simply, the profit that will come from the town centre will be substantial enough to support many of our critical services as we move forwards. Clearly we will be building residential properties which will be sold and commercial properties which, hopefully, we will be renting on a commercial basis for many years to come. It is yet to be confirmed as to how long and where those properties will be, but you can rest assured that, first of all, it isn't costing a single ratepayer £1 and every £1 that comes from it in profit will be ploughed back into those essential services, as required.

68. PETITIONS

The following member of the public presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

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

Nicola Greenwood	Nicola Greenwood presented a petition of 1,203 signatures, on behalf of Wokingham Bridleway Group, requesting that 30% of the Borough's Rights of Way network be bridleway/suitable for horse rider use by 2030.
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	<i>To be forwarded to the Executive Member for Environment.</i>
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69. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed Members of a number of visits he had made before Xmas and recent visits to schools as part of Careers Week. The Mayor also stated that the Mayor's Golf Day, supporting the ARC Charity, would be held on 19 May 2016. Members were encouraged to enter teams for the event.

70. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN ASSOCIATED REPORTS

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

- the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2016/19 as set out on Agenda pages 35 to 46;
- the Capital Programme and Strategy 2016/19 as set out on Agenda pages 47 to 58;
- the Treasury Management Strategy 2016/19 as set out on Agenda pages 59 to 104;
- the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/19 – Revenue Budget Submission on Agenda pages 105 to 108, subject to the tabled statutory resolution, Updated Parish Precepts 2016/17 and Updated Council Tax by Band and Parish 2016/17.

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

Keith Baker, Leader of the Council, made a statement on the 2016/17 budget, together with his budget proposals (attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes).

Following his statement, Councillor Baker proposed that the recommendation under Item 66.2, Capital Programme and Strategy 2016/19, be amended as follows:

Replace the existing recommendation under 66.2 with the following:

The Council approve the Capital Programme and Strategy for 2016/19 *subject to the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Capital Programme budgets for Car Park Entry/Exit Barriers being reduced to zero pending further review.*

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock.

The proposed amendment was put to the vote and was declared by the Mayor to have been carried.

Councillor Baker then proposed that the recommendation under Item 66.4, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/19, be amended as follows:

Replace the existing recommendation under 66.4 with the following:

Council is recommended to approve:

1) the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/19, including the Revenue Budget submission for 2016/17 *subject to the following adjustments:*

- (a) the introduction of Transitional Grant of £2.1m in 2016/17 and 2017/18 following the final Local Government Finance Settlement announcement;*
- (b) the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Capital Programme budgets for Car Park Entry/Exit Barriers be reduced to zero pending further review;*

- (c) the provisional precept figure for Arborfield, Earley, Winnersh and Woodley to be amended to final figures;
- (d) the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority precept to be included at £4,043,906.

2) The Statutory Resolution, *incorporating the above amendments*, that sets out the 2016/17 Council tax levels, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock.

The proposed amendment was put to the vote (the Mayor reminded the Council that under “The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014” Councils were required to hold recorded votes in relation to Council Tax decisions.

Consequently, a recorded vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAINED
Mark Ashwell		Parry Batth
Keith Baker		Bob Pitts
Chris Bowring		
Prue Bray		
UllaKarin Clark		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Mike Gore		
Guy Grandison		
Kate Haines		
Mike Haines		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Tim Holton		
Philip Houldsworth		
John Jarvis		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Dianne King		
Tom McCann		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Ian Pittock		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
Beth Rowland		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Rob Stanton		

Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		
Bob Wyatt		
Shahid Younis		

Following the recorded vote, the Mayor declared that the amendment had been carried.

Prue Bray, the Leader of the Opposition, then made her Budget statement on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group (attached at Appendix 2 to these Minutes).

Following her statement, Councillor Bray proposed that the substantive recommendation under Item 66.4, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/19, be amended as follows:

Replace the existing recommendation under 66.4 with the following:

Council is recommended to approve:

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/19, including the Revenue Budget submission for 2016/17 subject to the following adjustments:
 - (a) the introduction of Transitional Grant of £2.1m in 2016/17 and 2017/18 following the final Local Government Finance Settlement announcement;
 - (b) the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Capital Programme budgets for Car Park Entry/Exit Barriers be reduced to zero pending further review;
 - (c) the provisional precept figure for Arborfield, earley, Winnersh and Woodley to be amended to final figures;
 - (d) the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority precept to be included at £4,043,906;
 - (e) *£50,000 being taken from General Fund reserves as a Special Item and added to the Children's services budget for one year, to fund an investigation into the feasibility of building a collaborative arrangement with other local authorities, primarily but not exclusively in Berkshire and across the Thames Valley, to find new ways of commissioning and procuring children's residential care placements.*

- 2) The Statutory Resolution, incorporating the above amendments, that sets out the 2016/17 Council tax levels, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Beth Rowland.

71. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

At 8.40pm the meeting was adjourned to allow consideration of Councillor Bray's amendment.

72. RE-COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

At 8.44pm the meeting recommenced.

73. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN ASSOCIATED REPORTS (CONTINUED)

After debate, Councillor Bray's proposed amendment to the substantive recommendation under Item 66.4 was put to the vote. In accordance with the Regulations specified earlier in the meeting a recorded vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

For	Against	Abstained
Prue Bray	Mark Ashwell	Parry Batth

Lindsay Ferris	Keith Baker	Bob Pitts
Tom McCann	Chris Bowring	
Beth Rowland	David Chopping	
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	UllaKarin Clark	
	Mike Gore	
	Guy Grandison	
	Kate Haines	
	Mike Haines	
	Charlotte Haitham Taylor	
	Pauline Helliari-Symons	
	Tim Holton	
	Philip Houldsworth	
	John Jarvis	
	Norman Jorgensen	
	Pauline Jorgensen	
	John Kaiser	
	Dianne King	
	Abdul Loyes	
	Ken Miall	
	Philip Mirfin	
	Stuart Munro	
	Barrie Patman	
	Ian Pittock	
	Anthony Pollock	
	Malcolm Richards	
	Angus Ross	
	David Sleight	
	Chris Smith	
	Wayne Smith	
	Bill Soane	
	Rob Stanton	
	Alison Swaddle	
	Simon Weeks	
	Bob Wyatt	
	Shahid Younis	

Following the recorded vote the Mayor declared that the amendment had not been carried. The debate on the substantive items continued.

73.1 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2016/19

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 35 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Housing Revenue Account Budget be approved;
- 2) Council house dwelling rents be reduced by 1%, effective from 1 April 2016 in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015 (subject to confirmation of the statutory starting date);

- 3) garage rents be increased by 1.1%, effective from 1 April 2016 in line with Council fees and charges;
- 4) it be noted that a review of the Shared Equity rents in 2011 had determined that rents had been kept artificially low in previous years and not increased in line with the terms of the leases. Therefore rents for shared equity properties have been gradually increased above inflation for four years to bring the rents in line by 1 April 2016. The increase for 2016/17 and future years will be based on RPI and is estimated to be approximately 1% in 2016/17;
- 5) Tenant Service Charges are set in line with estimated costs;
- 6) the Housing Major Repairs (capital) programme for 2016/17 as set out in Appendix C be approved.

73.2 Capital Programme and Strategy 2016/19

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the Capital Programme and Strategy for 2016/19, as set out on Agenda pages 47 to 58, as amended, be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Capital Programme and Strategy for 2016/19 be approved, subject to the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Capital Programme budgets for Car Park Entry/Exit Barriers being reduced to zero pending further review.

73.3 Treasury Management Strategy 2016/19

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the recommendations as set out on Agenda page 59 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the following elements be approved:

- 1) the Capital Prudential Indicators for 2016/17 to 2018/19;
- 2) the Borrowing Strategy for 2016/17;
- 3) the Annual Investment Strategy for 2016/17;
- 4) the Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity for 2016/17;
- 5) the flexible use of Capital Receipts;
- 6) it be noted that a review of counterparties and the consideration of risk versus return is being reviewed and will be reported back to the Executive in year for consideration.

73.4 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/19

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/19, including the Revenue Budget

Submission for 2016/17 and the Statutory Resolution setting out the 2016/17 Council Tax levels, as amended, be approved.

In accordance with the Regulations specified earlier in the meeting, a recorded vote was taken on the proposed recommendations for Item 66.4 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/19 – Revenue Budget Submission 2016/17, as amended.

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAINED
Mark Ashwell	Prue Bray	Parry Batth
Keith Baker	Lindsay Ferris	Bob Pitts
Chris Bowring	Tom McCann	
David Chopping	Beth Rowland	
Michael Firmager	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
Mike Gore		
Guy Grandison		
Kate Haines		
Mike Haines		
Charlotte Haitham Taylor		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Tim Holton		
Philip Houldsworth		
John Jarvis		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
John Kaiser		
Dianne King		
Abdul Loyes		
Ken Miall		
Philip Mirfin		
Stuart Munro		
Barrie Patman		
Ian Pittock		
Anthony Pollock		
Malcolm Richards		
Angus Ross		
David Sleight		
Chris Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Rob Stanton		
Alison Swaddle		
Simon Weeks		
Bob Wyatt		
Shahid Younis		

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/19, including the Revenue Budget Submission for 2016/17 be approved;

2) the Statutory Resolution that sets out the 2016/17 Council Tax levels (Appendix A) as tabled at the meeting, be approved, and that it be noted that, at its meeting on 28th January 2016, the Special Council Executive Committee calculated the following amounts for the year 2016/17 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012:

a) 66,001.4 being the amount calculated by the Council (Item T) in accordance with Regulation 31B of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012) as its Council Tax base for the year;

b) Part of the Council's area:

Arborfield and Newland	1,260.0
Barkham	1,440.6
Charvil	1,399.6
Earley	11,704.0
Finchampstead	5,665.3
Remenham	317.5
Ruscombe	497.9
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,044.2
Shinfield	4,780.7
Sonning	806.9
Swallowfield	995.1
Twyford	2,961.5
Wargrave	2,085.0
Winnersh	3,801.3
Wokingham	14,294.6
Wokingham Without	3,107.1
Woodley	9,840.1

	66,001.4

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates;

3) the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2016/17 (excluding Parish Precepts) be £85,492,273 (including £1,623,991 in respect of the Adult Social Care Precept for 2016/17 which is based on a 2% increase on the 2015/16 Council Tax level);

4) the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2016/2017 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, amended by the Localism Act 2011 (noting, however, that the precepts shown below for the Parishes of Arborfield and Newland, Earley, Winnersh and Woodley are provisional and are subject to approval at the Parishes' Annual Precept meetings between February 10th and February 17th 2016):

- (a) £292,807,692 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils;
- (b) (£203,581,539) being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates

- (c) £89,226,153 for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act; being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R);
- (d) £1,351.88 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by 1(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the 'basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts);
- (e) £3,733,880 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the table below)

	2016/17			2015/16			Council Tax Change %
	TAX BASE	PARISH PRECEPT £	PARISH BAND D £	TAX BASE	PARISH PRECEPT £	PARISH BAND D £	
Arborfield and Newland	1,260.0	87,866	69.73	1,259.5	86,280	68.50	1.80
Barkham	1,440.6	42,342	29.39	1,440.1	38,342	26.62	10.40
Charvil	1,399.6	39,655	28.33	1,392.4	39,451	28.33	0.00
Earley	11,704.0	778,784	66.54	11,671.1	747,387	64.04	3.90
Finchampstead	5,665.3	123,848	21.86	5,653.7	122,410	21.65	0.97
Remenham	317.5	22,250	70.08	317.5	21,420	67.46	3.88
Ruscombe	497.9	10,266	20.62	495.6	9,766	19.71	4.62
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,044.2	25,035	23.98	1,039.6	22,500	21.64	10.81
Shinfield	4,780.7	316,950	66.30	4,621.2	277,919	60.14	10.24
Sonning	806.9	34,700	43.00	805.9	34,400	42.69	0.73
Swallowfield	995.1	19,108	19.20	957.0	18,540	19.37	(0.88)
Twyford	2,961.5	67,798	22.89	2,944.0	58,598	19.90	15.02
Wargrave	2,085.0	161,465	77.44	2,078.7	154,937	74.54	3.89
Winnersh	3,801.3	107,801	28.36	3,800.7	107,801	28.36	0.00
Wokingham	14,294.6	710,990	49.74	14,042.0	665,195	47.37	5.00
Wokingham Without	3,107.1	145,415	46.80	3,073.3	143,925	46.83	(0.06)
Woodley	9,840.1	1,039,607	105.65	9,564.9	1,010,532	105.65	0.00
Total / Average	66,001.4	3,733,880	56.57	65,157.2	3,559,403	54.63	3.55

- f) £1,295.31 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relates;

- 5) it be noted that for the year 2016/2017 the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley has issued a precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below;
- 6) the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the

amounts of Council Tax for 2016/2017 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL TAX 2016/2017

Valuation Bands								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Wokingham Borough Council	863.54	1,007.46	1,151.39	1,295.31	1,583.16	1,871.00	2,158.85	2,590.62
Thames Valley Police Authority	111.31	129.86	148.41	166.96	204.06	241.16	278.27	333.92
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	40.84	47.65	54.46	61.27	74.88	88.50	102.11	122.54

Aggregate of Council Tax Requirement for each Parish and the Borough for each part of the Council's area:-

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Arborfield & Newland	910.03	1,061.69	1,213.37	1,365.04	1,668.39	1,971.72	2,275.07	2,730.08
Barkham	883.13	1,030.32	1,177.51	1,324.70	1,619.08	1,913.45	2,207.83	2,649.40
Charvil	882.43	1,029.49	1,176.57	1,323.64	1,617.79	1,911.92	2,206.07	2,647.28
Earley	907.90	1,059.21	1,210.54	1,361.85	1,664.49	1,967.11	2,269.75	2,723.70
Finchampstead	878.11	1,024.46	1,170.82	1,317.17	1,609.88	1,902.58	2,195.28	2,634.34
Remenham	910.26	1,061.97	1,213.68	1,365.39	1,668.81	1,972.23	2,275.65	2,730.78
Ruscombe	877.29	1,023.50	1,169.72	1,315.93	1,608.36	1,900.78	2,193.22	2,631.86
St. Nicholas Hurst	879.53	1,026.11	1,172.71	1,319.29	1,612.47	1,905.64	2,198.82	2,638.58
Shinfield	907.74	1,059.03	1,210.32	1,361.61	1,664.19	1,966.77	2,269.35	2,723.22
Sonning	892.21	1,040.90	1,189.61	1,338.31	1,635.72	1,933.11	2,230.52	2,676.62
Swallowfield	876.34	1,022.39	1,168.46	1,314.51	1,606.63	1,898.73	2,190.85	2,629.02
Twyford	878.80	1,025.26	1,171.74	1,318.20	1,611.14	1,904.06	2,197.00	2,636.40
Wargrave	915.17	1,067.69	1,220.23	1,372.75	1,677.81	1,982.86	2,287.92	2,745.50
Winnersh	882.45	1,029.52	1,176.60	1,323.67	1,617.82	1,911.96	2,206.12	2,647.34
Wokingham Town	896.70	1,046.15	1,195.60	1,345.05	1,643.95	1,942.85	2,241.75	2,690.10
Wokingham Without	894.74	1,043.86	1,192.99	1,342.11	1,640.36	1,938.60	2,236.85	2,684.22
Woodley	933.97	1,089.63	1,245.30	1,400.96	1,712.29	2,023.61	2,334.93	2,801.92

Aggregate of Council Tax Requirements for each part of the Council's area:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Arborfield & Newland	1,062.18	1,239.20	1,416.24	1,593.27	1,947.33	2,301.38	2,655.45	3,186.54
Barkham	1,035.28	1,207.83	1,380.38	1,552.93	1,898.02	2,243.11	2,588.21	3,105.86
Charvil	1,034.58	1,207.00	1,379.44	1,551.87	1,896.73	2,241.58	2,586.45	3,103.74
Earley	1,060.05	1,236.72	1,413.41	1,590.08	1,943.43	2,296.77	2,650.13	3,180.16
Finchampstead	1,030.26	1,201.97	1,373.69	1,545.40	1,888.82	2,232.24	2,575.66	3,090.80
Remenham	1,062.41	1,239.48	1,416.55	1,593.62	1,947.75	2,301.89	2,656.03	3,187.24
Ruscombe	1,029.44	1,201.01	1,372.59	1,544.16	1,887.30	2,230.44	2,573.60	3,088.32
St. Nicholas Hurst	1,031.68	1,203.62	1,375.58	1,547.52	1,891.41	2,235.30	2,579.20	3,095.04
Shinfield	1,059.89	1,236.54	1,413.19	1,589.84	1,943.13	2,296.43	2,649.73	3,179.68
Sonning	1,044.36	1,218.41	1,392.48	1,566.54	1,914.66	2,262.77	2,610.90	3,133.08
Swallowfield	1,028.49	1,199.90	1,371.33	1,542.74	1,885.57	2,228.39	2,571.23	3,085.48
Twyford	1,030.95	1,202.77	1,374.61	1,546.43	1,890.08	2,233.72	2,577.38	3,092.86
Wargrave	1,067.32	1,245.20	1,423.10	1,600.98	1,956.75	2,312.52	2,668.30	3,201.96
Winnersh	1,034.60	1,207.03	1,379.47	1,551.90	1,896.76	2,241.62	2,586.50	3,103.80
Wokingham Town	1,048.85	1,223.66	1,398.47	1,573.28	1,922.89	2,272.51	2,622.13	3,146.56
Wokingham Without	1,046.89	1,221.37	1,395.86	1,570.34	1,919.30	2,268.26	2,617.23	3,140.68
Woodley	1,086.12	1,267.14	1,448.17	1,629.19	1,991.23	2,353.27	2,715.31	3,258.38

74. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2015-16

The Council considered the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2015/16 as set out on Agenda pages 109 to 140. The report had been considered by the Executive earlier and was recommended to the Council for approval.

It was proposed by the Councillor Anthony Pollock and seconded by the Leader of the Council that the recommendations of the Executive relating to the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2016/17 be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2015/16 be approved;
- 2) the actual 2015/16 Prudential Indicators within the report be noted.

75. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Council considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 141 to 154, relating to a request from Wokingham Town Council for a Community Governance Review. Wokingham Town Council had requested modification of the existing Town Council

boundary to encompass the whole of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location and an adjustment of the seats in Town Council Wards to reflect the population changes resulting from the new housing development.

Councillor Prue Bray commented that, as a result of new development, other parts of the Borough such as Arborfield, Barkham, Finchampstead and, possibly, Shinfield may also require reviews to take place in due course.

It was proposed by Councillor Pauline Jorgensen and seconded by the Leader of the Council that the proposed Community Governance Review be carried out.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) a Community Governance Review be initiated;
- 2) the proposed Terms of Reference for the review, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

76. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2016/17

The Council considered the proposed Timetable of Meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year as set out on Agenda page 155.

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Anthony Pollock that the 2016/17 Timetable of Meetings be approved.

Councillor Prue Bray stated that the Liberal Democrat Group supported an additional meeting of the Council to be held in January each year. Councillor Bray also suggested that, if possible, Council meetings should not be held in the week of school holidays.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Timetable of Meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year, as set out in the Agenda, be approved.

Councillor Keith Baker – Budget Speech

Setting this year's budget has been like sitting on a financial rollercoaster. In the end we had 3 different financial settlements which we had to work with – one bad, one even worse, and one slightly better but with much room for improvement. The officers and my fellow Executive Members have worked extremely hard on getting to this final budget. They have had to be extremely flexible as the financial landscape changed. I would like to personally thank them all for their supreme efforts.

It has been an interesting year where for the very first time we embarked on a resident engagement programme specifically on our financial position. This engagement consisted of a number of events across the borough where the Chief Financial Officer would first “paint the picture” of our financial situation. Afterwards Executive Members and Directors engaged in individual conversations with those who attended. It was extremely helpful and the feedback from those who attended was extremely positive. As it was the first time we had ever embarked on such an endeavour, it was inevitable that we wouldn't get everything right but we have already learnt many lessons from it which will be incorporated into next year's events.

As you know, out of 383 councils we are the lowest funded authority in the country and we will continue to be in that position right through to 2019/20, and probably beyond. In 2015/16 73% of our Core Spending came from the residents in the form of Council Tax payments. By 2019/20, which is the end of the 4 year settlement, 91% of our core spending will come from our residents Council Tax payments. In contrast the figures for Reading are 55% of Council Tax payments in 2015/16 increasing to 70% in 2019/20. In absolute terms, by 2019/20 Reading will receive £32M, whilst Wokingham Borough will get just £7M.

This council has always believed in “doing their bit” to achieve the Government's goal of a country living within its means, and we have always expected to be virtually self-funding sometime in the future. Unfortunately with the initial settlement almost all councils were surprised at the front loading of the government cuts within the 4 year settlement. For example, we had planned for a reduction in the Revenue Support Grant of a third but it has ended up being reduced by half and removed altogether in 2018/19.

I joined all the leaders of the Berkshire Authorities in a face to face meeting with the Minister to lobby for a change in that front loading. At the same time our 4 MP's made representations on our behalf. The most active of them, John Redwood, had several meetings with the Secretary of State putting across this timing issue. I would like to publicly thank John on behalf of our residents for all his efforts on this matter. The Government listened to our case and took on board our arguments. As a result, the Government recently announced the final settlement which did not change any of the grant reductions but did provide a one-off transitional payment for the next two years. This transitional payment provides a breathing space for this council to plan how they are going to cope with the planned reductions in the government grants which, remember, have not changed at all.

Whilst we welcome the transitional payment it is important to note that it is not there after the second year. Why is this important? Well our services have to be funded for every single year. So if you use this payment to directly fund services they will have to be replaced when this payment is removed. That means either more cuts or increased income or a mixture of both. That figure over these 4 years is £36 million. With the 4 year settlement in place we can start looking beyond the next year with some degree of certainty about what we need to do to balance the books.

Later on you will hear from my fellow Executives the details of our achievements over the past year on a tightened budget, as well as our future plans to ensure that our Borough remains one of the best places to live and work in the country. Over the last 5 years we have made savings of £31M and our budget for this year includes making additional savings of £10M. Those savings are primarily made up of a reduction in grant of £6.3M and a growth in Health & Wellbeing demand (mainly Adult Social Care) of £2.4M. Combined they are 86% of that £10M savings.

All achieved without any cuts to essential services for next year. This is a testament to the ongoing efficiency and careful financial management of the Council by a committed Conservative administration and committed officers.

But what of the capital investments? A total of £85m which will add to the £56m carried forward from this year making a total of £141m in 2016/17. These will be funded by developer contributions or by borrowings that will be more than repaid in future years. We all know about the investments in Wokingham Town Centre. These investments will provide much needed income through rents which will be part of the financial package required to balance future budgets and invest in other parts of the Borough. I note that the Liberal Democrats want to cut this investment so I am looking forward to their alternative budget. I wonder where in their alternative budget they say how they are going to replace the estimated £2.5M of annual income from regeneration of the town centre.

But we also continue to invest in town and villages across the borough. Here are just a few of those investments. Fosters in Woodley will provide much needed care facilities; A new community hub including a library in Twyford is progressing; Expansion of primary schools in Earley; New affordable housing in Woodley; A new play area in Earley which fully integrates children with special needs with mainstream children; new allotments in Earley; The regeneration of the North End of Woodley Town Centre; And of course all areas will benefit from borough wide activities such as road maintenance and street light replacement. It shows the ambition the Council has for regenerating the borough and our innovative ways of generating Capital funding.

Our companies continue to grow and mature. Optalis is the most advanced of them now beginning to win various contracts outside of the borough ranging from consultancy on how to set up such a company through to providing services. With our neighbouring councils suffering similar financial pressure, they are increasingly engaging in a dialogue with Optalis. They have also been delivering savings of £900K over the past 4 years. These companies were the brainchild of my predecessor, David Lee, who should be congratulated on having such a vision when all around him, especially our Opposition, were saying it could not work! Thank you David.

Whilst you will be hearing from each of the Executive Members on their areas I wanted to highlight a few key projects in Children Services. Every one of us are Corporate Parents to the Boroughs Children and without exception we take that role extremely seriously.

We are making an increasing Investment in our programme to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation. This is an area that I have worked closely on with Charlotte. The work that we and our partners have already completed was recognised in the recent Ofsted inspection. But more needs to be done. We must continue to be vigilant to the differing types of complex exploitation that is happening in our borough and around the country. One step is to invest in a Multi-agency safeguarding hub here in Wokingham which is a great step to sharing intelligence and fighting this abhorrent crime.

Members from Earley, Woodley and the South West know that there is an increasing demand for places in our primary schools. This need will be addressed by extensions to existing schools.

Some of you know I am a long standing Governor at Addington Special Needs School so I am extremely pleased that a new ASD provision is planned with its planning application now submitted. Bridges in Woodley is one of the very best facilities for children of 8 years and above with disabilities for Short Breaks. Last year they were again graded outstanding by Ofsted at Christmas. This is several years in a row. My thanks to all the staff for such an amazing achievement again!

When you read the newspapers or watch TV you often hear about councils cuts to things like Children Centres. Well we continue to fund our early help services including the targeted Youth service, parenting support, our children's centres and our early help hub. These are all leading to better outcomes for our families by making earlier interventions.

This is indeed an ambitious, bold and achievable budget. And none of it would have been possible if we hadn't kept our finances under control and the books balanced. We owe it to our residents to invest in our community and help them steer out of financial difficulties to a more prosperous and brighter future.

Each year it is getting harder and harder to keep the council tax low but we will continue to do this to the best of our ability. What we won't do is engage in a trade-off with our services for lower Council Tax for the sake of a cheap headline. Our residents deserve better than that. These are difficult times for everyone in the country but I have every confidence in my Executive, fellow Councillors and officers to put in the effort to get this council into a financial position we need to be in 2019/20.

Oh and did I tell you we are the lowest funded authority in the country. Thank you.

Councillor Prue Bray – Budget Speech

I would like to thank officers for their assistance with answering our questions in the past week, which is all the time we have had to prepare for this meeting. The Conservatives like to make it hard for us to scrutinise the budget properly. You will be glad to know that as usual we have risen to the challenge.

In May I will have been a Councillor for 16 years. This is the 16th year I have been through the council budget. I cannot remember ever in those 16 budgets celebrating Wokingham getting good financial support from the government. We have always had to rely heavily on what we can raise from Council Tax. However, never before has a government announced not just a cut to what government pays councils in grant but an intention to reverse the flow so that councils pay grant to the government instead in future.

Something else that is new this year is that this is my first budget meeting under a Conservative-only government. And yes, those two things – an onslaught on council funding and a Conservative-only government - are connected.

The Conservatives on this council cannot blame others for a 3.94% increase in Council Tax and a vice-like financial squeeze here in Wokingham. They have got exactly what they not only wanted, but what they actively went out and campaigned to get: a Conservative majority government which can do exactly as it likes unfettered by the Lib Dems. And it *is* doing exactly as it likes, and as the last majority Conservative government liked too: slashing and burning local government, privatising public services, damaging education, killing the NHS, punishing the poor and the vulnerable, and decimating social housing.

It is social housing, and the Housing Revenue Account, that I want to talk about next. I want to highlight three things the Conservative government is doing which are going to affect this council's finances badly.

First, the government has arbitrarily forced councils to reduce council house rents by 1%. Great if you are a tenant, not so great if you are a landlord. This change reduces the money available in the Housing Revenue Account for maintenance and future major projects, so it harms the poor, Anthony, by not allowing us to maintain their houses for them.

Second, the government is going to grab our money. Each year some council houses become temporarily empty as tenants change over. If the government decides such a house is "high value", as most of ours are likely to be, it will expect the council to sell it and give the government the money. If the council doesn't sell the house, it will still have to

give the money to the government. This is not in the Housing Revenue Account yet, as the Housing and Planning Bill is still going through Parliament.

Third, the government wants developers to build so-called “starter homes” for sale to satisfy the requirement for affordable housing, instead of housing association homes for rent or shared equity. This is a direct threat to the affordable housing commuted sums income anticipated to come to the council, worth £18.5 million in the next 3 years alone.

If the Bill becomes an Act without major changes, not only will next year’s Housing Revenue Account be appallingly squeezed but the Wokingham Housing Limited and affordable housing parts of the capital programme will have to be completely rewritten. One of them has been rewritten tonight by taking out £3m for a project on car park barriers which we are pleased to see the back of. £250k for looking at it is a reasonable figure and that is still there, but £3m for doing it. I don’t think so. I am very glad that we have just voted to remove it.

The other thing which I do wish *would* be rewritten is the regeneration of Wokingham town centre. I have spoken many times about this. This is a regeneration which is supposed to make a profit which can be spent on other areas, until Philip said tonight that it wasn’t, it was going to be spent on services. I think he said that in answer to a question. In the next 3 years there is no projected profit at all. All the regeneration will generate is a net extra debt of £46.789 million. I was slightly surprised, and, Keith, you may wish to tell me that I was wrong, but I think you just said that £2.5m was going to be made out of it. So, I am a bit confused, as there is nothing in the Medium term Financial Plan which says that.

Let’s move from capital to revenue. Adult social care is clearly an area of critical concern because of rising numbers of people needing help. The move to integrate the delivery of some care services with the NHS will help with the cost containment – but the council does need to get that integration moving more quickly than it is.

In a different sort of integration, the council has a number of services shared with other councils now, something which we have encouraged as a way of providing resilience and containing cost. There is still scope to do more in that direction – and to be more imaginative about it. And that brings me to my final point.

There are a relatively small number of children requiring residential care, but they have increasingly complex needs. One additional child can result in an additional cost of over £200,000. Last February the budget for children’s residential care was reduced, but the saving could not be achieved. The budget is overspent and money has had to be added back in.

The council has no option but to arrange residential placements for children who need them. With small numbers of such children, Wokingham is never going to be able to exert much influence on providers. We are not the only council in this position. So, in the same spirit in which we have in the past urged you to consider more shared services as a way of

promoting resilience and reducing costs, without reducing quality, we are proposing an amendment to the budget, as follows:

To amend the Medium Term Financial Plan to take £50,000 from General Fund reserves as a Special Item added to the Children's Services budget for one year, to fund an investigation into the feasibility of building a collaborative arrangement with other local authorities, primarily, but not exclusively, in Berkshire and across the Thames Valley, to find new ways of commissioning and procuring children's residential care placements.

Until last week you were expecting to have to take nearly £2 million out of reserves, but the transitional funding has plugged that gap with a small amount to spare. Let's use a tiny part of that unforeseen income to look to the future and see if we can set up something with other nearby councils to look at children's residential placements. Individually, councils in the Thames Valley do not have the breathing space to think about models of commissioning and delivery. We would be, to coin a phrase, better together. Among the things that could be looked at would be joint commissioning to get the best prices, and even setting up a jointly owned company to deliver residential care – drawing its inspiration from the Optalis model. It must be worth investing £50,000 now to try to achieve the prize of long term savings, resilience and quality of service. I urge you to vote for this amendment.