

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2016

Councillors Present: Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle (Chairman), Pamela Bale, Jeff Beck, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb (Vice-Chairman), Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Peta Stoddart-Crompton (Public Relations Officer), Andy Walker (Head of Finance) and Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles and Phil Rumens (Digital Services Manager)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Howard Bairstow, Councillor Jeremy Bartlett, Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Richard Crumly, Councillor Rob Denton-Powell and Councillor Gordon Lundie

PART I

92. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman informed Members that it was with regret that he had to announce that Sir Robert Anthony Bevis Durant (known as Tony Durant) former MP for Reading North and Reading West had passed away. Councillor Tony Linden described him as a conscientious man who had served his residents very well. Councillor Pamela Bale commented that she had very fond memories of Tony and his wife Audrey and stated that he was a kind and generous man. Councillors Mollie Lock and Alan Macro said he always conducted himself as a gentleman.

The Council observed a minutes' silence.

The Chairman reported that he and the Vice Chairman had attended 27 events since the last Council meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members that they had received an Amendments and Corrections sheet in respect of this meeting which covered a number of agenda items.

93. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2015 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Pamela Bale's attendance at the meeting being recorded.

The Minutes of the special meeting held on 21 January 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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94. **Declarations of Interest**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that in respect of Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2016/17) all Members, except Councillor Nick Goodes, had completed an Application for a Grant of a Dispensation in relation to “any beneficial interest” in land within the Authority’s area. The Monitoring Officer had granted the dispensation to allow all those Members that applied for a dispensation to speak and vote on these items.

Andy Day also reported that Councillor Lynne Doherty had an interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2016/17) by virtue of the fact that Councillor Doherty’s employer was a recipient of the Short Breaks Funding. Councillor Doherty had applied to the Governance and Ethics Committee for a dispensation to speak and vote on this item. The Committee decided that Councillor Doherty could speak and vote on the Phase 1 consultation responses as a whole, but could only speak on the short breaks for children and not vote on this issue should this situation occur.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer stated that Councillors Marcus Franks and Lee Dillon had an interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2016/17) by virtue of the fact that their employer, Sovereign Housing Association, received funding from the Council for its Neighbourhood Warden Scheme. Both Councillors had applied to the Governance and Ethics Committee for a dispensation to speak and vote on this item. The Committee decided that a dispensation should be granted but that the dispensation would permit Councillor Franks and Councillor Dillon to speak but not vote on this item.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer also informed Members that Councillor Mike Johnston had notified him that he had a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget) by virtue of the fact that his wife was employed, on a casual basis, by the Visitor Information Centre and he would be leaving the room during the course of discussing and voting on this matter.

Andy Day explained that Councillor Jeff Beck was a trustee of the Corn Exchange, Readibus and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. As he had a fiduciary duty to these trusts he determined, in respect of Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget), to leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and would not take part in the vote.

The Councillors set out below declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget).

Councillor	Outside Body	Other
Bale, Pamela	East Downlands Children’s Centre Advisory Board Governor of Pangbourne Primary School	Regular user of Pangbourne Library
Bryant, Paul	Greenham Common Trust Donnington Trust Harwell Restoration	
Clifford, Jeanette	Governor of St Bartholomew’s School A foundation Governor of the St Bartholomew’s Foundation	User of Newbury Library; User of Northcroft Leisure Centre; Attends events at The Watermill;

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Councillor	Outside Body	Other
	<p>A member of The Corn Exchange</p> <p>Newbury Town Council link Councillor to the West Berkshire Museum</p> <p>Trustee of Mabel Luke Charity – almshouses</p>	
Goff, Dave	Foundation Governor at St Bartholomew's School	
Jackson-Doerge, Carol	<p>Corn Exchange</p> <p>The Watermill Theatre</p> <p>Governor of St Marys Burghfield</p>	
Jaques, Marigold	West Berks Citizens Advice Bureau	
Jones, Rick	<p>WB Mencap – WBC representative</p> <p>West Berkshire Disability Alliance</p>	
Lock, Mollie	Burghfield Children's Centre - Member on the Board (no financial responsibilities)	<p>User of Mortimer Library.</p> <p>User of No 75 Bus service.</p> <p>Bus Passes.</p>
Macro, Alan		<p>Occasional user of Theale Library</p> <p>Member of Theale Parish Council. (Theale Parish Council utilises, and helps fund, the Neighbourhood Warden Service and CCTV Service)</p>
Podger, James	Governing Body at Mary Hare School	
Stansfeld, Anthony		Police and Crime Commissioner

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95. Petitions

Councillor James Podger presented a petition, on behalf of Ms Kate Lo, containing 2,454 signatures relating to the potential removal of funding for the Oasis Youth Club and Befriending schemes for young people with autism, through Short Breaks. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

Councillor Mollie Lock presented a petition, on behalf of Ms Katherine Whitehouse, containing 217 signatures relating to the potential closure of Burghfield Children's Centre. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

Councillor Alan Macro presented a petition containing 365 signatures relating to the potential closure of Theale Library. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

Councillor Lee Dillon presented a petition containing 102 signatures relating to the potential closure of Thatcham Library. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

96. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#). *(right click on link and 'Edit Hyperlink'. Insert URL to pdf on website in 'address' field)*

There were no public questions received in relation to items not included on the agenda. The following questions were submitted in relation to items on the agenda.

- a) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of the impact cuts would have upon the wider economy was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning Economic Development, Regeneration and Pensions .
- b) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of an Impact Needs Analysis was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning Economic Development, Regeneration and Pensions.
- c) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of alternative revenue streams was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- d) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of public/ private partnerships was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste and Customer Services.
- e) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of the future use of library buildings was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Car, Housing, Countryside, Community, Culture and Leisure Services.
- f) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of the future of library and children centres, stock and equipment was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Education, Property and Broadband .

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- g) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of postponing the expenditure on the budget was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing and Devolution.
- h) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of lobbying Central Government to increase the Council's settlement was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Leader of the Council .
- i) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of meeting statutory obligations in respect of libraries was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community, Culture and Leisure Services .
- j) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of a holistic approach to the transitional funding from Central Government was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Leader of the Council.
- k) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of Councillors obligations to all their constituents was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Leader of the Council.

97. Membership of Committees

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised of the following changes to the membership of Committees since the previous Council meeting:

Western Area Planning Committee

Councillor Anthony Stansfeld had been replaced by Councillor Adrian Edwards. Councillor James Cole was now a substitute on this Committee.

Licensing Committee

Councillor Adrian Edwards had been replaced by Councillor Clive Hooker.

98. Licensing Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Licensing Committee had not met.

99. Personnel Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Personnel Committee had not met.

100. Governance and Ethics Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 09 December 2015, 05 January 2016, 08 February 2016 (special and ordinary), 17 February 2016 and 22 February 2016.

101. District Planning Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the District Planning Committee had not met.

102. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had met on 05 January 2016 and 23 February 2016.

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103. Notices of Motion

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 13(a) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Alan Macro relating to forgoing the index link to the Councillor's Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in 2016/17 and reversing the increase to the Basic Allowance adopted in May 2015.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Alan Macro and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

That the Council:

“recognises the financial pressure that it is under as a result of significant reductions of the Council's Revenue Support Grant by the Government and therefore resolves to:

1. Forgo the index linked increase to the Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances due for 2016/17, saving £5,210
2. Reverse the £1,039 increase to the Councillors' Basic Allowance awarded in 2015, saving £54,028.”

Councillor James Fredrickson noted that the first part of the Motion (1% increase for Councillors) was already built into the 2016/17 budget savings proposals and so this part of the motion had already been resolved.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 13(b) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Anthony Chadley relating to lobbying Central Government for a Fair Deal in Regards to the Local Authority Funding.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Anthony Chadley and seconded by Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter:

That the Council:

“notes that the proposed Local Government Settlement was only announced in late December, giving the Council only 2 months to consider savings proposals, consult residents and review feedback;

and notes that whilst the £1.4million of transitional funding provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government will lessen the impact of the required savings, the Council still needs to find £17.5 million next year.

It is therefore proposed that this Council continues to lobby the Government for a fair deal in regards to local authority funding”

(Councillor Manohar Gopal left the meeting at 8.14pm and returned at 8.17pm)

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 13(c) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Graham Jones relating to local retention of Business Rates.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Laszlo Zverko:

That the Council:

“Welcomes the devolution agenda and fully supports the Chancellor's announcement that all business rates will be returned to local government.

West Berkshire currently generates £84m in business rates but only £17m is returned to West Berkshire Council to help fund local services and the essential infrastructure needed to keep us strong.

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With the complete removal of any remaining government funding without the return of our withheld rates income there will be further significant cuts in local services during the lifetime of this Council.

Local authorities and democracy would be strengthened by a direct link between the money raised in an area being spent in the same area.

This Council calls upon Her Majesty's Government to guarantee the return of business rates to West Berkshire and ask for the timeline to be reduced to 2018 thus giving local authorities a direct incentive to encourage local economic growth through improved services and infrastructure.

This Council therefore requests that the Chairman lobbies the relevant Minister in regard to ensuring that rates raised in West Berkshire will be returned and that this will be considered for implementation within the lifetime of this Parliament."

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

104. Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2016/17 (C2976)

(Councillor Tony Linden left the meeting at 8.17pm and returned at 8.24pm)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the Council's borrowing limits as set out by CIPFA's Prudential Code and which also set out the Annual Investment and Borrowing Strategy for 2016/17.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Laszlo Zverko:

That the Council:

"Adopts the 2016/17 Investment and Borrowing Strategy and formulates the Treasury Management Policy in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 and CIPFA's Prudential Code and Code of Practice for Treasury Management".

Councillor Croft in introducing the item explained that this was a technical report that the Council was required to produce annually. He noted that the Treasury Management Team was a cross party group.

(Councillors Graham Jones and Keith Chopping left the meeting at 8.19pm and returned at 8.20pm)

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that the Liberal Democrat Group supported the strategy and welcomed the addition of the extra twelve month borrowing capability.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

105. Capital Strategy and Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 (C2978)

(All Members, except Councillor Nick Goodes, had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) concerning the five year Capital Strategy for 2016 to 2021, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement and the Asset Management Plans for Property and Highways. The document also set out the funding framework for the Council's five year Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Jeanette Clifford:

That the Council:

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“approves the Capital Strategy and Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21”.

Councillor Croft noted that despite having difficult decisions to make in respect of the revenue budget the Council would continue to invest in the future of West Berkshire. The strategy set out that over the next five years the Council would be investing:

- £57m for new school places and improvements to existing buildings,
- £55m in the maintenance and improvement of the district’s highway network;
- £1.5m for the delivery of superfast broadband across the district;
- £11.5m in occupational health equipment, home adaptations and supported living for older people and people with disabilities and also supporting looked after children;
- £3.8m for the maintenance and improvements of parks, open spaces and sporting and cultural facilities.

(Councillors Graham Pask and Ian Morrin left the meeting at 8.20pm and returned at 8.21pm)

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that the Liberal Democrat Group were broadly supportive of the strategy. He noted that the Government funded new school places at £1100 per square metre. This level of funding did not reflect actual build costs in West Berkshire. He therefore requested that the Council lobby Central Government to attain a level appropriate for the area that was not based on a national formula. Councillor Dillon then proposed an amendment which sought to include an additional aim into the strategy. The amendment suggested using capital to generate longer term income for the Council and was designed to focus Members and Officers’ attention on income generation.

AMENDMENT: Proposed by Councillor Lee Dillon and seconded by Councillor Roger Croft:

That the Council:

“actively uses the Capital budgets to help generate income that can support the revenue budget of the Council through longer term investments”.

Councillor Croft stated that he was happy to second the amendment as it would help to focus efforts.

The Amendment was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

Discussion then returned to the Substantive Motion.

Councillor Garth Simpson stated that the highways element of the Capital Programme (£55m) totalled around 40% of the expenditure. Around £5m would be spent on improvements to the A339 in light of the Sandford and London Road Industrial Estate developments and £5m would be spent on the conversion of street lights to energy saving LED lights which would generate significant revenue savings. In addition 41% of the budget would be spent on maintaining and improving the highways asset and 15% would be spent on flood alleviation schemes.

(Councillor Laszlo Zverko left the meeting at 8.25pm and returned at 8.26pm)

Councillor Alan Macro reported that he was disappointed to note that in paragraph 4.5.5 of the report it stated that the Council would have to make available around £8m of funding to meet the demand for new school places over the next five years due to a shortfall in funding from the Department for Education.

Councillor Alan Law stated that, other than the Atomic Weapons Establishment, the Council was the largest investor in the district and invested around £30m annually on the economy.

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Councillor Jeanette Clifford stated that the strategy was good news and she was pleased that it had been so well received.

Councillor Croft reiterated that the strategy identified £140m of capital investment in West Berkshire over five years. The funding would be derived from the Council, Central Government, the Local Enterprise Partnership and developer contributions.

Prior to the vote being taken the Monitoring Officer announced that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/165) (2014 Regulations) came into effect on the 25 February 2014 and as a consequence the Council was required to record the names of Members voting for and against the budget proposals.

FOR the Substantive-Motion

Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Pamela Bale, Jeff Beck, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko.

The Substantive Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

106. Revenue Budget 2016/17 (C2979)

(All Members, except Councillor Nick Goodes, had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item).

(Councillor Lynne Doherty declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that Councillor Doherty's employer was a recipient of Short Breaks funding. Following the granting of a dispensation to speak and vote on this item, unless short breaks for children were specifically discussed, she determined to remain in the meeting and vote on the item).

(Councillors Marcus Franks and Lee Dillon declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that their employer, Sovereign Housing Association, received funding from the Council for its Neighbourhood Warden Scheme. Following the granting of a dispensation to speak but not vote on this item they determined to take part in the debate but not vote on this item).

(Councillor Mike Johnston declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that his wife was employed, on a casual basis, by the Visitor Information Centre. As his interest was personal and a disclosable pecuniary interest he determined to leave the meeting and took no part in the debate or voting on the matter).

(Councillor Jeff Beck declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that he was a trustee of the Corn Exchange, Readibus and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. However as he had a fiduciary duty to these trusts he determined to leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and did not take part in the vote).

(Councillors Pamela Bale, Paul Bryant, Jeanette Clifford, Dave Goff, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Rick Jones, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, James Podger and Anthony Stansfeld declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 for the reasons set out

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in the table in Agenda Item 4. As their interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillors Jeff Beck and Mike Johnston left the meeting at 8.29pm and did not return).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 16) concerning the 2016/17 revenue budget.

The Chairman clarified the rules of debate for this item which had been agreed by both Group Leaders prior to the meeting. Both Leaders would be permitted to speak for up to ten minutes and their presentations should include the submission of any amendments. All Portfolio and Shadow Portfolio Holders would be permitted to speak for up to five minutes on the motion and amendments with all other Members being allowed two and a half minutes to speak.

The Chairman pointed out that Members would have been lobbied on the revenue proposals and this was noted. It was also noted that a significant number of Members were also Parish or Town Councillors.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Graham Jones:

“That the Council:

- 1) Notes the responses received to each of the 47 public facing savings proposals in relation to Phase 1 of the public consultation exercise undertaken on the 2016/17 budget.
- 2) Considers the use of the 2016/17 transitional grant as a means of mitigating the impact of some of the Phase 1 proposals and where this is not used, the recommendations set out in the Overview and Recommendations template be approved.
- 3) Recommends that those public health grant funded services (marked as “to be progressed”) in the Overview and Recommendations template totalling £114,000 be progressed.
- 4) Approves the 2016/17 revenue budget requirement for Council Tax setting purposes of £82.28 million requiring a Council Tax increase of 1.99%.
- 5) Applies the 2% ring-fenced adult social care precept.
- 6) Approves the Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix H and the appropriate statutory notices be placed where required.
- 7) Approves the Special Expenses as set out in Appendix I.
- 8) Approves the Efficiency Strategy for Use of Capital Receipts as set out in Appendix O.
- 9) Authority be delegated to the Executive, on 24 March 2016, to adjust the Council’s budget plans, should the responses to Phase 2 of the public consultation require it to do so.
- 10) Permits the Executive, on 24 March 2016, to propose where the transitional grant funding of £1.39m be used.
- 11) Notes the following amounts for the year 2016/2017 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (by the Localism Act 2011):-
 - a) *62,626.13 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), as its council tax base for the year.*
 - b) *Part of the Council’s area as per Appendix M being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the*

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amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates.

- 12) Calculates that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2016/2017 (excluding Parish precepts) is £82,281,340.
- 13) Calculates the following amounts 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:-
 - a) *£292,700,038 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) *£206,549,768 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act.*
 - c) *£86,150,270 being the amount by which the aggregate at 13(a) above, exceeds the aggregate at 13(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) *£1375.63 being the amount at 13(c) above (Item R), all divided by 11 (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) *£3,868,930 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per Appendix M).*
 - f) *£1313.85 being the amount at 13(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 13(e) above by the amount at 11(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 relate.*
- 14) Notes that for the year 2016/2017 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley & the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Councils area as indicated in Appendix M.
- 15) In accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables in Appendix M as the amounts of Council Tax for 2016/2017 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings."

Councillor Croft in introducing the report noted that this was West Berkshire Council's most challenging budget ever as the principle source of government funding had been cut by the Government by 44% in 2016/17. This meant that the savings requirement for the Council had increased from £10.8 million to £18 million since December 2015. The authority however had a duty to set a balanced budget.

As a consequence Members were required to make difficult decisions as the Council was unable to continue to provide the existing levels of service. The Council and its residents would have to identify different models for delivering services including supporting Parish and Town Councils and community organisations to take on some of the responsibility for delivering services if they were valued by local communities.

Councillor Croft explained that the Council had deliberately used its reserves. They were currently at a level of around one month's revenue which could be a critical position if an emergency situation, such as flooding should occur.

Executive Members and Officers had been working hard to identify savings proposals which would still allow the authority to set a balanced budget. Councillor Croft thanked them and all the residents that had responded to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the public

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consultations. He reminded members of the public that the Phase 2 consultation would close on 7 March 2016. Councillor Croft acknowledged the impact some of these savings could have on residents' lives.

Members had lobbied Ministers on their proposed cut to the Revenue Support Grant and he thanked West Berkshire's three Members of Parliament for their support in lobbying the Secretary of State. As a result of this, the Council had secured transition funding of £1.4m for each of the next two years. This funding would be used to help others to develop new models of delivery. The Executive had agreed that all transitional funding would be used to support this work.

Councillor Croft stated that the budget comprised three strands. The first of these sought to increase revenue. This would be achieved by raising Council Tax by 1.99%. In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had granted the ability to raise an additional 2% precept for adult social care responsibilities which the authority would be taking up. This would result in a total increase of 3.99% in Council Tax.

The Leader acknowledged that increasing Council Tax would impact on all residents, especially the low paid, the vulnerable and those on fixed incomes. However, faced with the level of savings required this increase was unavoidable.

In addition the Executive was also recommending an increase to other fees and charges such as car parking fees. This increase in revenue proposals would generate approximately £5m.

The second strand of the budget was the internal efficiencies that the Council would be making whilst still meeting its statutory duties. Just over £5m of savings had been identified and regrettably this would result in over 100 jobs being lost in 2016/17. Other proposals included sharing more services with other local authorities, looking at different models of delivery, working with partners, including Parish and Town Councils, and working with the community and community organisations.

The third strand of the budget introduced changes to frontline services. The Council had a statutory duty to provide certain services and any savings would have to come from discretionary areas. These proposals would generate £8m of savings. Local organisations had already started to identify ways of reducing the impact of some of the cuts.

The transition grant would be used to help mitigate some of the effects of the savings the Council was being forced to make. As the grant would only be available for two years it would be used to fund those services which the residents said that they valued the most. Community groups would have to work together to transform those services ensuring that they would be sustainable without Council funding going forward.

Councillor Croft stated that before moving on to the detail of the transition funding, he would like to propose the first of two amendments. The first amendment proposed that the Phase 2 public facing savings proposals be determined by a special meeting of Council on 24 March 2016 and not the Executive as recommended in the report.

If approved the Executive would still meet on the 24 March 2016 and make appropriate recommendations to Council on the use of the remaining transition funding.

He also gave notice of his second amendment that proposed four service areas where the Executive recommended some of the £1.4m transition funding should be spent. As the Phase 2 consultation would close on 7 March 2016 it would be inappropriate to make any comment or decision on those proposals until the consultation closed and the results had been analysed.

Councillor Croft stated that it was with a heavy heart that he put forward the proposals.

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AMENDMENT 1: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Alan Macro:

“That recommendation (9) be replaced with the following:

‘That the Executive, on 24 March 2016, make appropriate recommendations to a special meeting of Council on 24 March 2016, to adjust the Council’s budget plans should the responses to Phase 2 of the public consultation require it to do so’.

The Amendment was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

AMENDMENT 2: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Graham Jones:

“That recommendation (2) be approved and adopted subject to Council agreeing to allocate transition funding, as set out below, to the following Phase 1 public consultation areas of service:

- *Short Breaks for Children - £170,000*
- *Two Saints floating support service and Step by Step Lodgings service - £100,000*
- *Empowering West Berkshire - £25,000*
- *Adult Social Care Learning Disability Clients - £100,000”*

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that this amendment was similar to one which the Liberal Democrats had tabled and subsequently changed which included a proposal to support the important Short Break service.

The Amendment was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

Discussion then returned to the substantive motion. Councillor Alan Macro stated that there was no doubt that the Council had been impacted negatively by the timing and severity of the cuts in the Revenue Support Grant. He stated that in addition to the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant the Government was also decreasing the Dedicated Schools Grant.

He was of the opinion that the Council needed to work with other Councils to achieve better deals in terms of procurement, seek to achieve economies of scale for large contracts and that all budgets should be subjected to a zero based budgeting approach. He also suggested that alternative service delivery options should be looked at. For example, he suggested that a commercial partner should be sought to help run Shaw House and that the authority should be seeking to share more back office functions and possibly accommodation with other authorities and charities. He also felt that more partnership work should be undertaken with town and parish councils.

(Councillor James Podger left the meeting at 8.45pm and returned at 8.47pm)

Councillor Macro commented that libraries were valued by residents and that every effort should be made to save these valued services. Councillor Macro welcomed the fact that all the transitional funding would be used and asked for a commitment that if the Council received any funding from the Care Act that it too would be used to reverse some of the proposed cuts.

AMENDMENT 3: Proposed by Councillor Alan Macro and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“That recommendation (2) be approved and adopted subject to Council agreeing to allocate transition funding, as set out below, to the following Phase 1 public consultation areas of service

£132,500 to be used to delay the implementation of the cuts to home-to-school transport until the start of the new school year. This is to allow the following:

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- *The works required to improve the walking routes to be completed*
- *Give parents time to change their family arrangements to allow them to accompany or drive their children to school*
- *Allow parents time to budget for the increase in farepayer fares*

£21,000 to delay implementation of the cut of the school crossing patrol service for one year to allow schools and communities to find other ways to fund this valued service.”

Councillor Macro reiterated his Group’s support for using £170k of the transitional funding to support the short breaks service.

Cuts to Home to School Transport would mean more children would have to be driven or accompanied to school which could prove to be very problematic for parents. His Group were therefore proposing to use £132,500 to delay the implementation of these cuts until the start of the new academic year. This would allow time for families to put arrangements in place to deal with the removal of these services. It would also allow time to make the routes safe.

Councillor Macro also informed Council that his Group were proposing to use £21k of the transition funding towards school crossing patrollers who were greatly valued by pupils and their parents. It was only a small amount of funding in comparison to the total budget.

Council Macro stated, that based on advice received, he had withdrawn the proposals relating to home to school transport originally set out in the tabled amendment.

Councillor Macro stated that if the transitional funding was used it would give residents the opportunity to adjust to the cuts.

Councillor Dominic Boeck stated if the budget was approved then discretionary home to school transport provided to some families would be removed. Some families would then be asked to pay more for seats on buses than they currently did. This proposal generated a large number of consultation responses with children’s safety being a common theme. The Council had listened carefully to parents and as a result some changes had already been made to some of the routes. Independent advice had been sought on the Mortimer to Willink route assessment and the independent advisor had supported the Council’s original assessment. Councillor Boeck also noted that Thames Valley Police had not declared any of the routes as being unsafe.

To assist parents of pupils using Mortimer to Willink, Bucklebury to Kennet and Aldermaston Wharf to Aldermaston Primary School routes they would be offered priority fare paying seats on buses at standard rates and payments could be made via eight separate payments spread across the year.

As parents would be asked to take more responsibility of their children to and from school it would not be reasonable to fund school crossing patrollers. Given the level of savings required in Phase 2 it would be better not to spend the money suggested in amendment 3 until the outcome of the consultation was known.

Councillor Hilary Cole stated that school crossing patrols were not a universal service and only benefitted pupils at certain schools. It would therefore not be unreasonable to ask those schools to fund the service or to seek sponsorship for it. It was unfair to ask other residents to subsidise these schools.

Councillor Graham Jones thanked Councillor Macro for removing the reference to home to school transport from his original amendment as its inclusion could have fettered Members discretion when they were considering the Phase 2 savings. He reiterated Councillor Boeck’s comment that if the transition funding was spent now there would not

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be the opportunity to spend it on the Phase 2 proposals and therefore he was unable to support the amendment.

Councillor Mollie Lock noted that the standard fare referred to by Councillor Boeck would cost parents around £640 per annum which was a significant increase on the £250 they were currently required to pay. She was also concerned that the earliest date on which the bus service could be stopped was the 18 April 2016 and Rights of Way Officers had confirmed that it would take 55 days (mid June) to upgrade the Mortimer to Willink route. Councillor Boeck confirmed that the standard rate bus seat would cost £684.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that the second amendment allowed some of the transition funding to be spent and therefore he felt that it was unfair to turn down the amendments set out in amendment 3. The Liberal Democrat amendment set out clearly how the transitional arrangements could be achieved to protect residents and were genuine attempts to transition services.

Councillor Macro responded to Councillor Cole's comments by stating that not all schools were adjacent to busy roads. He reminded Members that schools were also faced with budget problems given the reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Councillor Croft stated that around £400k of the transitional funding had been allocated and around £1m had deliberately been retained in order to fully consider the outcomes of the second consultation.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.17.3 it was requisitioned that the voting on Amendment 3 be recorded. The names of those Members voting for, against and abstaining were read to the Council as follows:

FOR the Amendment

Billy Drummond, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro

AGAINST the Amendment

Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Pamela Bale, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Ian Morrin, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

ABSTENTIONS

Paul Hewer, Tim Metcalfe, Graham Pask

Councillors Lee Dillon, Marcus Franks and Nick Goodes did not vote. Councillors Jeff Beck and Mike Johnston had left the meeting given that they had declared interests.

The Amended Motion was put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

Members then returned to the Substantive Motion. Councillor Alan Law stated that he had some empathy with residents' frustration at having services removed that had seemed to be in place forever. He outlined the changes that had had a significant impact on funding.

He noted that there had been changes to population demographics. The population was ageing and advances in medical technology were also prolonging people's lifespan often at very high costs for treatment and support, and there had been significant changes in expectations around safeguarding. As an illustration in 2001 the Council had spent £21.9m (31%) on social services and by 2016 this had risen to £56.3m (46%).

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Members were faced with difficult choices between, for example, caring for the most vulnerable residents versus keeping libraries open which were used widely by residents. He understood that residents would not agree with all the proposals in the budget but he hoped that they had gained some understanding of the backdrop and difficulties faced following the debate at the meeting.

Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that as the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People she had a duty to protect children who were at risk of abuse or neglect. She was however still able to support this budget. She had a statutory obligation to minimise the impact on this vulnerable group. In her opinion the budget delivered on key areas in her Portfolio.

(Councillor Rick Jones left at 9.14pm and returned at 9.16pm)

The Council's core frontline social care teams and the work they were doing to implement the Ofsted Improvement Plan had been protected. The Disabled Children's Team were able to continue their transition work with families with regard to education, health and care plans. The Family Resource Team could continue their targeted work with families in need. Support could continue to be offered to care leavers, children and young people at risk of substance misuse and the successful Turnaround Families Programme would continue. There was also funding still available for innovative projects such as the Health Academy.

Areas of disinvestment in this area included prevention and early intervention. Although she supported early help and universal provision Councillor Doherty appreciated that it was difficult to calculate the impact this support had. This area of work was also not the sole responsibility of the local authority and by working effectively with partners and communities she was sure that the impact of these savings could be mitigated against.

Councillor Doherty had attended the Save our Services meeting and she was pleased to see the willingness to look for solutions to allow some discretionary services to continue. The children that were supported within her service often did not have vociferous parents to champion their needs. The Council had listened to the views raised during Phase 1 and recognised, in particular, the importance of providing short breaks for parents of children with disabilities. She emphasised that it was never the intention to stop providing this service but there was a need to rationalise provision. To reach all residents the Council would have to look at alternative solutions by working with new and existing partners. She was pleased to support the budget, with the amendments, as it provided an effective, available and value for money Children's Service in West Berkshire.

Councillor Hilary Cole had never envisaged having to present savings like these to Council. She noted that many of the services in Adult Social Care were statutory. Councillor Cole commented that the authority had been let down by the Department of Health over funding for the Care Act.

The transformation programme, which would ensure services were delivered in a different way, and which was being implemented in Adult Social Care, would generate around £800k in savings. She too was pleased to see that £100k of the transition funding would be spent on the Two Saints floating support service and Step by Step lodging service and an additional £100k had been allocated to the Adult Social Care Disability Clients programme. This funding would allow the organisations and Officers' time to come up with new ways to deliver services to the most vulnerable in the community.

Within Culture and Countryside Phase 1 savings included closing the Visitor Information Centre and public conveniences in the Wharf area in Newbury. She was disappointed that neither the Newbury BID nor the Town Council had been able to commit to take

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these on. She was pleased that Kintbury residents had been able to come up with a proposal to take over the running of the Kintbury Jubilee Leisure Centre.

Councillor Hilary Cole thanked Officers for all the work they had undertaken and were still undertaking to plug the funding gap that had arisen since Christmas 2015. These proposals were still being consulted on and she accepted that none of these savings were palatable as they pertained to services that residents valued the most.

(Councillor Manohar Gopal left the meeting at 9.24pm and returned at 9.27pm)

Councillor Cole stated that she derived no pleasure in decreasing library provision down to one library. She had previously stated that she had no intention of closing the libraries but circumstances had changed so dramatically that the decision had had to be revisited. She was well aware of the effect these decisions would have on the residents of the district and these decisions had not been taken lightly. Councillor Cole commented that there had been a lot of soul searching about these proposals. Meetings with various organisations to consider ways of mitigating the impact were ongoing.

Councillor Cole paid tribute to the Officers for the selfless way they had faced these difficult proposals.

Councillor Garth Simpson advised that the reductions to the highways budget affected maintenance budgets and operational transport budgets. Although it was not a popular option it had been necessary to increase car parking charges across the district. This income would be used to protect front line services. The LED replacement street lighting programme had also generated significant revenue savings (circa £1m) which would also be used to protect some of the frontline services. He commended the difficult budget to Members.

Councillor James Fredrickson stated that following the December 2015 announcement the Executive had met and agreed to a three phased approach to the budget. The first would be to fight for transitional funding, the second would be to consult on how any funding awarded could be used (even if the consultation period had to be reduced to three weeks) and thirdly that all the transition funding awarded would be used to assist frontline services.

In terms of the consultation process the vast majority of the services the Council provided were statutory and there were therefore not that many options available in terms of discretionary spending. The budget had to be set against a backdrop of changing demographics and an ageing population. The Council still, however, had a legal duty to set a balanced budget. The ramifications of not doing so were severe and could result in the authority being declared bankrupt or being taken over by another authority for statutory services. There were no easy alternatives for the Council. He assured Councillor Macro that as Portfolio Holder for Human Resources he had gone through their budgets line by line.

Councillor Fredrickson commented that this had been a very painful process for Officers and he thanked them for their professionalism, care and dedication in putting together the savings proposals at great speed whilst striving to mitigate the impact the savings would have.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that in continuing to provide care for the most vulnerable residents it had become necessary to remove some of the discretionary services the Council provided or to deliver them in a different way. The Council would continue to provide services it was legally required to provide.

He was aware that the services provided by Children's Centres were important and highly regarded by young families. These services would still be provided albeit in a

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different way. The district would be divided into three family and wellbeing areas. The Council would rationalise the number of buildings it used to provide these services and would also strive to make use of existing community buildings.

Councillor Boeck commented that there would be further proposals in Phase 2 of the savings proposals and he urged all residents affected to respond and to try and identify new ways of delivering services.

Councillor Marcus Franks commented that this was a difficult process which was exacerbated by the short timescales imposed on the Council. None of the decisions would be taken lightly. Members needed to make a balanced decision between services provided for the district's most vulnerable residents and those enjoyed by the wider population.

The transitional funding was the result of a lot of hard work on behalf of the local Members of Parliament and he thanked them for that. He urged residents to continue to take part in the Phase 2 consultation and to come forward with community led solutions. Discussions were also ongoing with neighbouring authorities about cross border charging for waste recycling services. He supported the balanced budget in challenging times.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that he was disappointed not to be able to vote but that if he was able to do so he would be voting against the proposals. He was concerned about the scale of the savings proposals and the impact they would have on residents. He was disappointed that the Liberal Democrat amendment had been lost as it would have allowed the Council and communities time to come up with solutions in the areas identified in the amendment. He felt that despite the size of the cuts the Council should have been in a position to do better.

He was of the opinion that the Council lacked innovation in terms of remodelling services and income generation. He noted that other authorities had set up trading companies, sold services, invested in property, set up joint ventures, were selling energy and expertise etc because they had foreseen the difficult financial future for local councils.

He would be asking the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to set up a task group to look into income generation initiatives.

Councillor Graham Jones stated that the Council was and had, for some considerable time, been looking at income generation, rationalising back office functions and zero based budgeting. The issues being experienced by West Berkshire Council were not unique and were replicated across the country.

Councillor Jones stated that it was with regret that the Council would not be able to continue to provide all the services it previously had. The Council and its community would have to find new ways of delivering services whether that be by creating trusts, empowering town and parish councils or by Members working with their communities to find alternative solutions.

Councillor Emma Webster requested that in accordance with paragraph 4.9.12 (v) of the Constitution the meeting be permitted to go on until 10.30pm if required. The Council voted in favour of this proposal.

Councillor Roger Croft noted that this budget also included the Council's revised fees and charges for the forthcoming financial year. Councillor Croft stated that local government had to change and at a much faster rate. Members, alongside the district's MPs, would continue to lobby Central Government for better funding and the retention of business rates. He commended the budget to Members subject to the inclusion of the agreed amendments.

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Prior to the vote being taken the Monitoring Officer announced that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/165) (2014 Regulations) came into effect on the 25 February 2014 and as a consequence the Council was required to record the names of Members voting for and against the budget proposals.

FOR the Substantive-Motion

Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Pamela Bale, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

AGAINST the Substantive-Motion

Billy Drummond and Alan Macro

ABSTAINED

Mollie Lock

Councillors Lee Dillon, Marcus Franks and Nick Goodes did not vote. Councillors Jeff Beck and Mike Johnston had left the meeting given that they had declared interests.

107. Statutory Pay Policy 2016 (C2980)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 17) concerning publication of the Statutory Pay Policy Statement which would be effective from the 1st April 2016.

(Councillors Mollie Lock left the meeting at 9.51 and returned at 9.52pm)

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor James Fredrickson and seconded by Councillor Marcus Franks:

That the Council:

“approve the policy for publication in accordance with s38 of the Localism Act 2011”.

Councillor Fredrickson explained that the policy had to divulge the remuneration of the Council’s Chief Officers, lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and those who were not chief officers.

Councillor Franks commented that he was pleased to see that fair wage burden would be borne by the employer and not the state.

Councillor Fredrickson reminded Members that the Council had a statutory duty to publish the policy.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

(Councillor Clive Hooker left the meeting at 9.52pm and returned at 9.54pm)

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108. Amendments to the Constitution - Scheme of Delegation (C2981)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 18) concerning amendment to the Council's Scheme of Delegation (Part 3 of the Constitution) in light of legislative changes and current practice.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Quentin Webb:

That the Council:

“agrees the proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation”.

Councillor Croft explained that the Scheme set out responsibilities that were delegated to Committees as well as specific Officers. The Council was required to review the Scheme annually.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

109. 2016/17 West Berkshire Council Timetable of Public Meetings (C2926)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 19) concerning the timetable of public meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Alan Macro:

That the Council:

“approves the timetable of public meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year”.

Councillor Croft in introducing the item noted that this report was usually presented to Members in December each year but as there had been a change of leadership in November 2015 it had been agreed that this decision would be delayed until March 2016.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

110. Members' Questions

There were no Member questions submitted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.55 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature