

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 19 MAY 2016

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

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Mac Heath (Head of Children and Family Services), David Holling (Head of Legal Services), Andy Walker (Head of Finance), Robert Alexander (Conservative Group Executive), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Anthony Chadley, Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Nick Goodes, Councillor Manohar Gopal, Councillor Alan Law and Councillor Anthony Stansfeld

Councillor Absent: Councillor Rob Denton-Powell

PART I

1. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman stated that West Berkshire Council was saddened to learn of the death of former district councillor David Rendel. Mr Rendel had served as a district councillor for 16 years representing the wards of St Johns, Craven, Thatcham North and Thatcham Central. He was also the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Newbury constituency for 12 years.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that David had worked tirelessly as both a District Councillor and as an MP. He had left a lasting legacy for the residents of West Berkshire including his work on the Newbury Bypass, West Berkshire Community Hospital, the Newbury Cinema and had helped save Greenham Common for the residents of the District. Councillor Macro commented that David believed in social justice. He believed that as he had been afforded a good start in life others should have the opportunities that he had benefitted from too. He was a gentlemen, always courteous, had great integrity and boundless energy.

Councillor Roger Croft stated that, on behalf of the Council, he would like to send condolences to David's family and friends. He noted that David was a true public servant who spent a great deal of his life representing local people in Parliament and on the district council. He commented that David was a well-liked and respected man and someone who made his mark on the Council. Councillor Peter Argyle noted that he had written to David's family to express the Council's condolences.

Councillor Mollie Lock stated that David was both a friend and colleague who had passed away at a tragically young age. He had the ability to get people to listen to him but also always listened to the views of others. She sent her best wishes to David's wife Sue and their two sons.

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Councillor Adrian Edwards commented that this was a sad time. Although he was not always in agreement with David he always respected him for his great debating skills and enormous energy. Councillor Edwards stated that David was a people's man and he had never heard him utter a bad word against anyone. He also commented that David's wife Sue was always a great supporter of her husband and that his passing would be a great loss to the district and to his family.

Councillor Gordon Lundie stated that David had many great qualities; he always treated people with courtesy and respect, had a very forensic mind, he was a committed parliamentarian and local councillor and he did a lot to help local residents. Councillor Lundie summated that David was a gentleman, an intellect and a man of great integrity.

Councillor Graham Pask commented that David's loyalty to the people of West Berkshire was exemplary and the respect he commanded was clearly evident.

The Chairman asked the Council to observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect for David Rendel.

The Chairman then reported that he had attended 147 events over the past year, his Vice-Chairman had attended 38 events and he also thanked former Chairmen Councillors Jeff Beck and Adrian Edwards for attending three events on his behalf.

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman, Councillor Quentin Webb, for his support over the 2015/16 Municipal Year. He noted that Councillor Webb had acted with honour and dignity throughout the year.

2. Presentations

The Chairman presented a cheque of £4,454.39 to Janet Caruzzo of Helen and Douglas House, his chosen charity for his year in office.

The Chairman then presented Councillor Paul Bryant with an award for 20 years of service and Councillor Pamela Bale for 10 years of service. He thanked Councillors Bryant and Bale for the outstanding service they had provided to the residents of the District.

The Chairman thanked Jude Thomas and Jo Watt for all the support they had afforded him during his year in Office. He stated that they always went far beyond what was expected of them and in so doing made his year very easy.

Councillor Argyle then thanked his wife Margaret for the wonderful support that she had given him during his year in Office.

3. Election of the Chairman for the Municipal Year 2016/17 (C2993)

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Graham Jones that Councillor Quentin Webb be elected Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2016/17. There were no further nominations.

Councillor Croft in proposing Councillor Webb for the role of Chairman noted that Councillor Webb was a faithful servant of the residents of Bucklebury and had also been appointed as Vice-Chairman for the 2015/16 Municipal Year, a role he had fulfilled with great dignity. Through his many roles he had made a great contribution to the residents of West Berkshire and he was therefore honoured to propose him for the role of Chairman.

Councillor Graham Jones commented that Councillor Webb was a man of the people and worked well with the community, both of which would be great assets for this role.

Councillor Croft thanked the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Peter Argyle for his exceptional year in Office and for all his hard work during that year.

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RESOLVED that Councillor Quentin Webb be elected as Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2016/17.

(Councillor Quentin Webb in the Chair)

The new Chairman read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. Councillor Webb thanked the Council for electing him and Councillors Croft and Jones for their kind words. He stated that it was an honour and a privilege and that he would seek to represent the Council with honesty, integrity, governance and ethics.

Councillor Webb reported that his chosen charity for 2016/17 was Thames Valley Air Ambulance. He was also pleased to announce that Councillor Marigold Jaques had agreed to be the Chairman's Lady.

Councillor Webb thanked the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Peter Argyle, for working tirelessly to represent the Council in his term of Office. He had upheld the very highest standards of professional behaviour while always exhibiting a friendly demeanour.

Councillor Webb thanked Councillor Argyle for the consideration, consultation and friendship he had shown him throughout the year. He stated that it had been a pleasure to act as Councillor Argyle's Vice-Chairman.

He also thanked Mrs Margaret Argyle for the support she had afforded to Councillor Argyle during his year in office.

4. Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2016/17 (C2994)

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2016/17. In response to this request Councillor Jeanette Clifford was nominated by Councillor Adrian Edwards and the nomination was seconded by Councillor Keith Chopping. There were no further nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Edwards stated that Councillor Clifford had been a resident of Newbury for 17 years. She had fulfilled a number of leadership roles in her private capacity and more laterally as a Councillor and he had no doubt that she had the attributes needed to fulfil the role of Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Chopping commented that Councillor Clifford was a very accomplished lady and that her Masters Degree in Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management would serve her well in the role of Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED that Councillor Jeanette Clifford be appointed Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2016/17.

The Vice-Chairman read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. Councillor Clifford thanked the Council for electing her. She noted that this was a huge honour and she would support Councillor Webb to the best of her ability.

Councillor Clifford thanked Officers for the advice that they had already provided to her in preparation for this meeting and she thanked Councillors Edwards and Chopping for their kind words in nominating her. Councillor Clifford thanked Councillors Peter Argyle and Quentin Webb for their year in Office and commented that they had been fantastic ambassadors for the Council.

Councillor Webb, on behalf of the Council, thanked the outgoing Chairman's lady, Mrs Margaret Argyle, for the work she had undertaken during the previous Municipal Year. He noted that Councillor Argyle had been proud to have her at his side and he was very grateful for her support over the past year. Councillor Webb also thanked her for the friendship and courtesy she had extended to him.

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5. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 01 March 2016 and the special meeting on the 24th March 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

7. Governance and Ethics Committee Annual Report 2015/16 (C3034)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 8) which set out the Governance and Ethics Committee Annual Report.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Quentin Webb and seconded by Councillor Rick Jones:

That the Council:

- “1. notes the content of the report.
2. agrees that the report be circulated to all Parish/Town Councils in the District for information.”

Councillor Quentin Webb in introducing the report noted that the Monitoring Officer had presented it to the previous Governance and Ethics Committee. The report outlined the main changes and composition of the merged Standards Committee and Governance and Audit Committee to form the Governance and Ethics Committee and Advisory Panel.

The purpose of the Governance and Ethics Committee was to provide effective challenge, assurance of the governance framework, internal control, receiving the Annual Audit Letter and signing off the Council’s final accounts. It was also charged with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by both District, Parish and Town Councillors.

Councillor Webb drew Members’ attention to the budget pressure associated with external investigations of complaints.

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

8. Appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2016/17 Municipal Year (C2995)

Councillor Roger Croft announced the appointment of Members to the Executive for 2016/17 as follows:

Leader of the Council with responsibility for Strategy and Performance	Roger Croft
Deputy Leader with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing	Graham Jones
Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure	Dominic Boeck
Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation	Anthony Chadley
Portfolio Holder for Adults, Care and Culture	Hilary Cole
Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People	Lynne Doherty
Portfolio Holder for Communities & Public Protection	Marcus Franks

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Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs	James Fredrickson
Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning	Alan Law
Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning	Garth Simpson

9. **Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2016/17 Municipal Year (C2996)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the appointment and allocation of seats on Committees and associated bodies for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

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

That the Council:

1. “notes that under Paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice has been received that the Members set out in paragraph 1.1 of Appendix A to this report are to be regarded as Members of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively;
2. agrees to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in paragraph 2.2 (Table A);
3. agrees to the allocation of seats to the Political Groups in accordance with section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 as set out in paragraph 3.4 of Appendix A (Table B);
4. agrees that the number of substitutes on Committees and Commissions be as set out in paragraph 4.1 of Appendix A (Table C);
5. agrees that in respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee’s area who are not appointed to the Committee. Where substitutes attend the District Planning Meeting they need to be drawn from the same Area Planning meeting as the Member they are substituting for;
6. approves the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix B and in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups;
7. in accordance with Regulation 4, Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, and the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2008, agrees the Council’s Policy Framework for 2016/17 be as set out in paragraph 6.1 of Appendix A and that any appropriate amendments be made to the Council’s Constitution (Paragraph 2.5.2) should this be necessary;
8. in accordance with Regulation 5, Schedule 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, approves that all other plans, policies and strategies requiring approval and not included in the approved Policy Framework be delegated to the Council’s Executive;
9. agrees that Paragraph 2.6.5 of Article 6, setting out the Executive Portfolios, be amended to reflect any changes made by the Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting;
10. agrees that the appointment of two non voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance and Ethics Committee;

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11. agrees that the appointment of two Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance and Ethics Committee's Advisory Panel;
12. agrees to re-appoint three Independent Persons, namely Lindsey Appleton, James Rees and Mike Wall should they be willing to continue to fulfil this role;
13. agrees the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in paragraph 9.1;
14. agrees the membership of the three Scrutiny Select Committees as set out in paragraph 2.2 (Table A) of Appendix A;
15. agrees that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the appointments to Committees;
16. agrees the revised timetable of meetings for 2016/17, attached at Appendix C to the report."

Councillor Roger Croft welcomed the introduction of the Select Committees and stated that the appointments of his Group represented an attempt to reflect the geographical spread of Conservative Members across the District.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that his Group were largely supportive of the proposals set out in the report. Their only reservation was that the Select Committees would only meet twice each year which would make it difficult to maintain continuity. He also would have liked to see the meetings aligned to the performance monitoring cycle.

Councillor Roger Croft accepted the comments made by Councillor Macro in relation to the frequency of meetings. There were however issues surrounding resources to support the meetings. He would however write to Councillor Macro to set out the Scrutiny Framework that he was working towards. The Select Committees would be put in place for a year as a trial period. During that time he would work with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and Councillor Macro to see how the authority could do more work in this area. He committed to working closely with Councillor Macro to look into how more meetings could be held.

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

10. **Adjournment of the Meeting**

RESOLVED that the meeting of Council be adjourned to enable the various Committees to determine their Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.03pm.

11. **Recommencement of the Meeting**

The meeting was reconvened at 8.14pm.

12. **West Berkshire Council Strategy: Refresh 2015 - 2019 (C3055)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 13) which set out the refreshed Council Strategy 2015-2019 for consideration and approval by the Council. The refreshed document also articulated the progress that had been made and introduced new or updated projects to support the delivery of the Council's priorities for improvements.

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

That the Council:

"approves the updated Council Strategy covering the period 2015 to 2019".

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Councillor Roger Croft noted that the four year strategy had been approved by the Council in May 2015 following a public consultation exercise. The Council's aims and priorities had not changed. The refresh set out the progress that had been made and clarified new and amended projects. The refresh also reflected on the challenging financial position the Council found itself in.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that he was disappointed to see that the strategy did not focus more on income generation and shared services. He would have liked to see a more radical approach to these areas in the refreshed strategy. Councillor James Fredrickson noted that the Council already adopted a shared approach to working in a large number of areas including Environment Health, Trading Standards, Legal Services, Democratic Services (contract with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service), Health and Wellbeing Board, the Emotional Health Academy, Berkshire Leaders, Public Health and many more.

Councillor Emma Webster stated that she looked forward to receiving suggestions from Members of both political groups about income generation and savings proposals at future Resource Select Committee meetings.

Councillor Graham Jones accepted that the financial challenge was immeasurably harder than it had ever been for the Council. The Council would have to revisit everything it did and provided in order to maximise what it could deliver using limited resources. He accepted that there was more work to be done but that the right perspective would need to be adopted.

(Councillor Clive Hooker left the meeting at 8.19pm and returned at 8.21pm)

Councillor Roger Croft noted that he and the Chief Executive had met with the leaders of Berkshire and other neighbouring authorities to see if there were further opportunities for combined and shared services. This information had not been included in the strategy as discussions were still at an early stage and as yet there was no progress to report.

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

13. **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): 2017/18 to 2019/20 (C2977)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

(Councillor Anthony Pick left the meeting at 8.20pm and returned at 8.22pm)

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

That the Council:

“approves and adopts the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20.”

Councillor Roger Croft explained that this was a rolling three year strategy which was built to ensure that the financial resources, both revenue and capital, were available to deliver the Council Strategy. The MTFS should be read in conjunction with the Revenue Budget 2016/17, the Capital Strategy 2016 to 2021 and Investment and Borrowing Strategy reports.

The aim of the MTFS was to ensure that the Council allocated its available resources focussing on those determined as most critical in supporting its priorities and statutory responsibilities. The Strategy sought to determine the level of service the Council would realistically be able to provide. A further aim was to ensure that capital investment was affordable and that the Council has sufficient levels of reserves.

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Councillor Croft noted that there was a £22m revenue shortfall over the next three years. The shortfall could be met in four ways: generating more internal savings (work on this area was ongoing), increasing Council Tax, developing alternative income streams and making further savings in frontline services.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that the financial outlook was severe and the law of diminishing returns needed to be factored into any strategies. It already appeared as if some of the services within the Council were over stretched. He requested that the District Council continued to implore the three local MPs to continue to lobby Central Government for the Better Care Funding that had been promised to the Council. Councillor Macro also requested that the Council engaged more proactively with Town and Parish Councils to work more effectively together.

Councillor James Fredrickson stated that the Council was reluctant to make internal savings but that this was preferable to making cuts to frontline services. Councillor Fredrickson commended Officers for their ongoing diligence in respect of the work that was being undertaken to secure funding from the Better Care Fund.

Councillor Roger Croft commented that he too was disappointed that no resolution had been reached as yet in respect of the Better Care Fund. He undertook to keep working with communities to transform services over the next three years. He conceded that although setting the budget for the next three years would not be easy he commended the strategy to Members and asked them to support it.

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

14. **“Getting to Good”: A model for Improving Service Delivery and Building Sustainable Service Development within Children's Social Care Frontline Teams (C3116)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) which sought to inform Members of the progress of the Children and Family Service since the Ofsted Inspection of March 2015. The report also set out the framework to build ‘good’ and sustainable frontline Children’s Social Care Service.

(Councillors James Podger and Laszlo Zverko left the meeting at 8.28pm and returned at 8.30pm)

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty and seconded by Councillor Gordon Lundie:

That the Council:

- “1. agrees the infrastructure for the Children’s Social Care frontline services and to the establishment of a Looked After Children’s Team and to build capacity for a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
2. notes the workload pressures and the preferred approach to building a strong Children’s Social Care Service.”

Councillor Doherty noted that following the Ofsted inspection in 2015 the Council had adopted a development and improvement plan to address the issues identified by the inspection and to deliver the agreed priority of securing a ‘good’ rating for Children’s Services in the future. The Minister of State for Children and Families had commented that good progress was being made with the Plan.

Councillor Doherty thanked the Social Care Team who had worked tirelessly to deliver the plan whilst still dealing with the day to day challenges of their roles. The report set out

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recommended changes to the structure within the team in order to provide sufficient resources and a sustainable approach to address the challenges the team were facing.

(Councillor Emma Webster left the meeting at 9.30pm and returned at 8.31pm)

Councillor Alan Macro supported the approach being taken although he had concerns around recruitment difficulties.

Councillor Lundie welcomed the report and the approach that was being adopted. He commented that he did not think that Ofsted's assessment that the service was inadequate was fair. He thanked Councillor Doherty and Officers for the work that they had done to respond to the Ofsted report and the ongoing activity to get the assessment back to 'good'.

Councillor Doherty noted that 15 new members of staff had been recruited since May 2015 and retention of staff had improved. She therefore asked Members to support the approach as set out in the report.

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

15. **Corporate Parenting Panel (C3103)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 16) concerning the proposed changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel which would provide a robust framework that would uphold the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to carrying out its responsibilities towards children and young people in care including care leavers.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty and seconded by Councillor Graham Pask:

That the Council:

"agrees to amend the Corporate Parenting Panel's governance including new membership and new terms of reference as set out in Appendix "B" to the report."

Councillor Doherty stated that all Members were Corporate Parents and therefore they were all required to contribute to the wellbeing of the District's Looked After Children (LAC) as if they were their own children. Approaches to Corporate Parenting varied across the country.

Ofsted had identified that the current approach was not robust and this report sought to make changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel in order to ensure that the LACs voices were heard. The proposals set out in the report were in line with best practice.

Councillor Mollie Lock supported the approach and stated that she hoped the new approach would be successful.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that part of the role of the Panel was to scrutinise activity in this area and he therefore queried whether it was appropriate for the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People to Chair the Panel.

Councillor Graham Pask stated that this was a duty that all Councillors should take seriously and they should treat the Looked After Children as if they were their own children. This approach would strengthen the remit of the Panel.

Councillor Doherty noted that the paper had been put together after extensive research. She commented that there was a mixed picture when it came to who should chair the Panel. She, however, had no concerns about her ability to hold her own service to account.

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

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16. Licensing Committee

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

17. Personnel Committee

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

18. Governance and Ethics Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Audit Committee had met on 4 March 2016 (special) and 25 April 2016.

19. District Planning Committee

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

20. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had met on 05 April 2016.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 8.40pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature