

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2015

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Hilary Cole, Roger Croft, Lynne Doherty, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Graham Jones, Alan Law and Garth Simpson

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), David Holling (Head of Legal Services), Rod Mercer (Chief Accountant (Operations)), Robert O'Reilly (Head of Human Resources), Andy Walker (Head of Finance), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Robert Alexander (Policy Officer), Stephen Chard (Policy Officer), Councillor Mollie Lock and Councillor Alan Macro

PART I

42. Minutes

Councillor Roger Croft opened the meeting by wishing all present and people across West Berkshire a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He added that Christmas could be a difficult time for some, in particular children with serious medical conditions and their families. The Chairman's charity for 2015/16, Helen and Douglas House, provided hospice care for terminally ill children, young adults and their families, and it was in aid of this charity that Councillor Croft, other Members and Officers were wearing Christmas jumpers. Councillor Croft urged support of this excellent charity.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

43. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Councillor Roger Croft announced that the Portfolio of Councillor Lynne Doherty had been expanded to 'Children's Services and Brilliant West Berkshire'.

(Councillor Marcus Franks joined the meeting at 5.06pm).

44. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public question and answer session is available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

(a) **Question submitted by Mr John Gardner to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Emergency Planning**

A question standing in the name of Mr John Gardner on the subject of the junction mitigation for managing traffic resulting from development in Sandford was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Emergency Planning.

(b) **Question submitted by Mr Peter Hudson to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Property, Broadband**

A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Hudson in relation to the proposed budget cut to remove the Mortimer to Willink school bus and the proposed walk to school route was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Education, Property and Broadband.

45. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

EXECUTIVE - 17 DECEMBER 2015 - MINUTES

46. **Council Performance Report 2015/16: Q2 (Key Accountable Measures and Activities) (EX2962)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning the performance of the Council against the Key Accountable Measures contained in the 2015/16 Council Performance Framework.

Councillor Roger Croft explained that performance was assessed as being on track to achieve the expected end of year levels. No measures were identified as RAG rated 'red' and for the ones judged 'amber' (behind schedule but still expected to achieve the end of year targets) plans had been put in place at service level without requests for additional actions to be taken at strategic level and without the need to revise the initially agreed targets. Where the results at Quarter Two were assessed as 'amber', exception reports had been provided to give reassurance in terms of corrective actions already put in place by the service.

Of the 27 reported measures, outturns were available for 21. Those not reported were comprised of 4 which were reported annually only and 2 which were unavailable for the publication of the report. 13 measures were reported as 'green' and the remaining 8 reported as 'amber'. As already stated, none of the measures were reporting 'red' at Quarter Two.

In terms of Measures of Volume, Councillor Croft highlighted an 18% increase in the number of children in need compared to Quarter Two 2014/15, an increased number of properties (including affordable homes) and a reducing number of Jobseekers Allowance claimants.

Councillor Croft also explained that examination results for the 2014/15 academic year would be known during Quarter Three of 2015/16.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that recruitment difficulties were being experienced in a number of different areas. This included Development Control Officers and Children's Services Social Workers meaning workforce stability remained a challenge in these and other areas. Councillor Macro queried the efforts being made to resolve these difficulties.

Councillor James Fredrickson explained that a number of measures were being considered. However, West Berkshire Council was one of many local authorities seeking to employ, in some cases, a reducing number of skilled workers to some posts. This was alongside a difficult financial situation.

In terms of recruitment of Children's Services Social Workers, this had already been given a particular focus and Councillor Lynne Doherty explained that the situation had improved since Quarter Two and the number of agency workers had reduced. Measures which had assisted this problem, which was a national issue, included the creation of a Social Work Academy, attendance at national recruitment events and the launch of a new micro site for Social Workers.

Returning to recruitment in Development Control, Councillor Macro highlighted a concern with salary levels being low when compared to those paid in the private sector. Councillor Fredrickson acknowledged that this was a concern which was difficult to manage in the current financial climate. However, he felt there was potentially scope to adjust salaries if this became necessary and if budget permitted.

RESOLVED that:

EXECUTIVE - 17 DECEMBER 2015 - MINUTES

- (1) The Executive note progress against the Key Accountable Measures including the fact that there are no measures reported as 'red' as well as celebrating achievements.
- (2) Those areas reporting as 'amber' be reviewed to ensure that appropriate action is in place.
- (3) There are no proposed changes to targets or plans requested by Services and detailed as part of the Exception Reports.

Reason for the decision: This framework compiles and monitors progress in relation to the objectives laid out in the Council Strategy and on key activities and areas of risk from the Council's individual service delivery plans.

In doing so, it expresses the purpose and ambition of the Council and by extension the Council's main focus of activities and key measures of success against which we can assess ourselves and publicly report progress.

Other options considered: n/a

47. **Financial Performance Report 2015/16 - Quarter Two (EX3020)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the financial performance for Quarter Two of the 2015/16 financial year.

Councillor Roger Croft explained that at Quarter Two, the forecast revenue position was an overspend of £0.5m, which was a decrease of £0.4m from Quarter One. This was mainly as a result of the amount directed from reserves (£0.6m) to support the Ofsted Improvement Plan.

The Communities Directorate was forecasting an overspend of £0.9m at Quarter Two, which was a decrease of £0.1m from Quarter One. The overspend was primarily the result of a £0.7m pressure within Children's and Family Services and a forecast overspend within Education of £0.3m. The Directorate was looking to mitigate this forecast overspend position further and was reviewing all spending plans to see what could be delivered in year.

The Environment Directorate was forecasting an underspend of £373k compared to a £7k underspend at Quarter One. This was primarily due to additional income from parking and development control.

The Resources Directorate was forecasting an overspend of £49k, which was an increased overspend of £59k from the £10k underspend in Quarter One. The major change from Quarter One was the lower income forecast within Legal Services.

Councillor Alan Macro referred to the risks identified within the report, which included risks within Adult Social Care. He was aware that the Adult Social Care Risk Fund had reduced to £220k and queried whether this was a cause for concern when considering the risks highlighted. In response, Councillor Hilary Cole advised that Adult Social Care managed its budget very well and she did not feel there was a need to utilise the Adult Social Care Risk Fund at the present time.

RESOLVED that the latest financial position of the Council be noted.

Reason for the decision: To ensure that Members are fully aware of the latest financial position of the Council.

Other options considered: n/a

48. **Members' Question(s)**

There were no Member questions submitted.

EXECUTIVE - 17 DECEMBER 2015 - MINUTES

49. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers.

50. Staffing Implications associated with savings put forward to deliver the 2016/17 Revenue Budget: Approval to Pay Redundancy Payments (EX3036)

(Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)

(Paragraph 2 – information identifying an individual)

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 10) which sought approval to make the redundancy payments associated with savings to deliver the 2016/17 revenue budget.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

Reason for the decision: as set out in the exempt report.

Other options considered: as set out in the exempt report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 5.27pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature