

**EXECUTIVE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**  
**THURSDAY, 30 MARCH 2017**

**Councillors Present:** Anthony Chadley, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Marcus Franks and James Fredrickson

**Also Present:** Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Steve Broughton (Head of Culture & Environmental Protection), Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Mollie Lock, Gabrielle Mancini (Group Executive - Conservatives) and Councillor Quentin Webb

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Dominic Boeck, Councillor Graham Jones and Councillor Rick Jones

**PART I**

**117. Minutes**

Councillor Hilary Cole introduced the meeting by explaining, with extreme sorrow, that Councillor Roger Croft had died on Friday 24 March 2017 from heart failure. This followed the serious accident that Councillor Croft was involved in whilst travelling in France on 9 February 2017 in which his wife, Mrs Zelda Croft, had died.

Councillor Cole reflected that Roger would be much missed as both a good friend and a respected colleague, and she gave thanks for the many messages and cards of condolence that had been received.

Finally, Councillor Cole commented that Roger's vision for West Berkshire as Leader would not be lost and his good work would continue.

A one minute silence was then observed.

Councillor Lee Dillon added his reflections on his work with Councillor Croft on both Thatcham Town Council and West Berkshire Council. He recalled that Roger's election to the Town Council helped to inspire him to develop as a Councillor.

Councillor Dillon also commented that while he and Roger did not always agree on matters relating to the work of both councils, they very often did. In particular, Councillor Dillon highlighted work on flood alleviation schemes in Thatcham as an area on which they shared a common interest and worked towards a shared goal.

Councillor Dillon advised that he met with Roger in a social capacity in January 2017 when they discussed West Berkshire Council issues and ways to progress areas of work where there was an agreed approach between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups. He very much hoped that this was an approach which could be continued.

Councillor Dillon concluded that Roger would also be sadly missed from the Liberal Democrat side of the Chamber.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2017 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Acting Deputy Leader.

**118. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

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### 119. **Public Questions**

There were no public questions submitted.

### 120. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

### 121. **Council Performance Report 2016/17: Q3 (Key Accountable Measures and Activities) (EX3111)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning the Quarter Three outturns for the Key Accountable Measures which monitored performance against the 2016/17 Council Performance Framework. This report served to provide assurance to Members that the objectives set out in the Council Strategy and other areas of significance were being managed effectively. The report also presented, by exception, those measures/milestones that were predicted to be 'amber' (behind schedule) or 'red' (not achievable) and provided information on any remedial action taken and its impact. Finally, the report recommended a change to a measure of volume.

Councillor James Fredrickson introduced the item and drew Members' attention to the single page performance scorecard that had been produced to front the report. The purpose of this was to aid transparency of the Council's performance, in particular with residents, with the scorecard providing at a quick glance an assessment of performance against each Council Strategy priority, progress against Core Business and Corporate Programme activity, and performance of key Corporate Health measures.

Councillor Fredrickson added that the introduction of the scorecard would be publicised.

Councillor Marcus Franks highlighted ongoing activity which sought to help achieve the Council Strategy priority to help communities to help themselves. A new multi agency community resilience team would be commencing from 1 April 2017 in partnership with colleagues from Thames Valley Police; a Prospectus containing a list of services that Parish and Town Councils could take on would be published via a portal on 3 April 2017; and a Community Solutions Fund had been put in place in conjunction with Greenham Common Trust.

Councillor Franks also explained that the Emotional Health Academy had proved to be very successful with a 43% reduction in referrals to the Tier 3 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) being achieved as a result of the Academy's work.

Councillor Lynne Doherty took the opportunity to thank Officers for their efforts in consistently performing well throughout the year against the Core Business measure of 'Protecting our children'.

Councillor Lee Dillon welcomed the new scorecard approach. In terms of the detail of the report, he noted that data was not available for some measures at the time the agenda was published. Councillor Dillon felt this was an area to improve upon. In particular, he referred to the Council Strategy priority to enable the completion of more affordable housing, data for which was unavailable for Q3 and was reporting as 'red'. Councillor Dillon felt that it would be preferable to provide the most recent position in reports, with a caveat to explain that this was subject to an update.

Councillor Hilary Cole agreed with the need for the most up to date data to be provided and this would continue to be strived for moving forward.

She shared concerns around affordable housing performance and advised that the authority was looking to purchase accommodation to provide affordable housing. However, the development of affordable housing was very much in the hands of

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developers who had concerns over the viability of developments with affordable housing included. Councillor Cole then advised of a recent planning appeal decision for a site in North Newbury where permission had been granted by the Planning Inspectorate. This was a positive outcome from a housing perspective.

Councillor Dillon was also concerned at the 'red' Customer Services measures on the time taken to make a full decision on new benefit claims and the time taken to make a decision on changes in a benefit claimants circumstances. This was concerning as delays could have a serious impact on residents. He noted from the exception reports that staff retention was a factor and queried what was being done to improve this.

Nick Carter explained that performance in this area, while off target, was very close to the national average. He also explained that staffing changes had been made. Historically, the processing of benefit claims had been undertaken by an external consultant, but this arrangement had been replaced by an in-house model in March 2016 in order to reduce staffing costs. Time had since been taken to train staff to an appropriate level and this had impacted on performance, but the trained staffing complement had reached the required level. It was therefore anticipated that performance would be on target in 2017/18.

Councillor Fredrickson shared Councillor Dillon's concern with regard to the impact of delays in determining benefit claims on residents. However, he felt it was important that the Council should not be dependent on an external agency resource and it was his expectation that performance levels would begin to be met by the now fully trained in-house resource.

Councillor Dillon was also concerned at the 'Red' measures within the Education Service, particularly those in relation to disadvantaged pupils. This cohort of pupils needed to be an area of focus.

Councillor Doherty shared this concern and assured Members that the education of disadvantaged pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, would continue to be a matter of particular focus, with work ongoing with School Improvement Officers and Headteachers. She also pointed out that some schools exceeded performance targets for these pupils.

Councillor Dillon requested performance data on a school by school basis and Councillor Doherty agreed this would be provided via a written response.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) Progress against the Council Strategy priorities for improvement be noted.
- (2) Those areas reporting as 'amber' or 'red' had been reviewed to ensure that appropriate action was in place.
- (3) The following measure of volume:
  - No. of transactions through WBC website for 'most requested tasks' would be replaced with
  - Number of individual sessions (customer contacts) through our website.

**Other options considered:** none.

## **122. Members' Questions**

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

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**(a) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People submitted by Councillor Mollie Lock**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Mollie Lock in relation to eligibility for free home to school transport for children who attended a school within their catchment area that was not their nearest school was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People.

**(b) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon regarding how many fraudulent benefit claims the Council had identified in the last year and the number of successful prosecutions was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs.

**(c) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon asking how the Council would spend the additional Adult Social Care funding from the Chancellors recent budget was answered by the Acting Deputy Leader.

**123. 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.

**124. Staffing implications associated with savings put forward to deliver the 2017/18 Revenue Budget: approval to pay redundancy payments (Strand 4) (EX3196)**

*(Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)*

*(Paragraph 2 – information identifying an individual)*

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 9) which sought approval to make the “Strand Four” redundancy payments set out in this report associated with savings to deliver the 2017/18 Revenue Budget.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

**Reason for the decision:** as outlined in the exempt report.

**Other options considered:** as outlined in the exempt report.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 6.25pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....