

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

TUESDAY, 3 JULY 2018

Councillors Present: Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle (Vice-Chairman), Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Jeff Beck, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Jeff Brooks, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Jason Collis, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Billy Drummond, Sheila Ellison, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge (Chairman), Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Tony Linden, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Tandra Forster (Head of Adult Social Care), Peta Stoddart-Crompton (Public Relations Officer) and Richard Turner (Property Service Manager), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Gabrielle Mancini (Group Executive - Conservatives) and Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles (Honorary Alderman)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: John Ashworth, Councillor Keith Chopping, Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Lynne Doherty, Councillor Adrian Edwards, Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Manohar Gopal, Councillor Alan Law, Councillor Mollie Lock, Honorary Alderman Royce Longton, Councillor Gordon Lundie and Councillor Graham Pask

Councillor Absent: Councillor Paul Hewer

PART I

19. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that she, the Vice Chairman and former Chairmen had attended 30 events since the last Council meeting. Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge made specific mention of the staff Annual Recognition Event and encouraged all Members to attend future events.

The Chairman stated that she would like, on behalf of the Council, to thank the Emergency Team, Public Health and the Council's Partners for all the work they had been doing throughout this prolonged hot spell.

20. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2018 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Councillors Tony Linden and Jeanette Clifford commented that they had received hospitality from the Back Heathrow Group. This was recorded on the gifts and hospitality register and did not constitute an interest.

Councillor Emma Webster stated that she had been lobbied on this matter in her role as a member of the Fire Authority.

22. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the meeting.

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23. Public Questions

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

- (a) A question standing in the name of Mr Stephen Masters on the subject of whether the Council would delay the rise in allowances and expenses to minimise and offset the impact of lower revenues as a result of the delayed implementation of the 'Bin Tax' was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- (b) A question standing in the name of Mr Stephen Masters querying the level of impact the Council expected the delayed implementation of the green waste 'Bin Tax' to have on its revenue projections was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Waste.
- (c) A question standing in the name of Mr David Marsh on the subject of whether the Council's contract with Veolia allowed residents of West Berkshire to dispose of garden waste in their black bins, as advised by the Portfolio Holder at the Executive meeting on 14 June 2018, was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Waste.
- (d) A question standing in the name of Mr David Marsh asking what financial impact did the Portfolio Holder expect as a result of her advice to West Berkshire residents to dispose of garden waste in their black bins free of charge was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Waste.

24. Membership of Committees

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Hilary Cole:

That the Council:

"amends its appointment to the Fire Authority as follows: Councillor Jeff Brooks to replace Councillor Carol Jackson - Doerge."

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

25. Licensing Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Licensing Committee had met on 8 May 2018 and 25 June 2018.

26. Personnel Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Personnel Committee had met on 8 May 2018.

27. Governance and Ethics Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 8 May 2018.

28. District Planning Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the District Planning Committee had met on 8 May 2018.

29. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had met on 8 May 2018.

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30. Joint Public Protection Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Joint Public Protection Committee had met on 12 June 2018.

31. Property Investment Additional Funding (C3572)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) proposing that the current capital budget for the acquisition of commercial property of £50m, approved as an addendum to the Council's Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2017/18, be extended by an additional £50m to offer a total capital budget of £100m.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Anthony Chadley and seconded by Councillor James Fredrickson:

That the Council resolves:

- (1) "to approve the additional £50m to the Property Investment Strategy (set out in appendix B) as an addendum to the Council's Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2018/2019 for the purposes of acquiring additional property assets;
- (2) to approve the recommended limits for external debt to include this additional £50m investment for 2018/19 and the following two financial years as shown below in comparison with the agreed level for 2017/18:

New Recommended Limits for External Debt		
	Authorised Limit £m	Operational Boundary £m
2017/18 Approved	226	216
2018/19 Proposed	283	273
2019/20 Proposed	289	279
2019/20 Proposed	293	283

- (3) to delegate to the Head of Legal Services in consultation with and having received agreement from the Property Investment Board to purchase investment property in accordance with the above Strategy up to a maximum of £15m per transaction; and
- (4) to delegate to the Head of Legal Services in consultation with and having received agreement from the Property Investment Board to dispose of property in accordance with the above Strategy up to a maximum of £15m per transaction."

Councillor Anthony Chadley acknowledged that the proposal was asking the Council to commit a significant amount of money to this scheme. However, the additional £50m expenditure, if approved, would generate an additional £1m of income by 2022. He noted that just over a year ago the Council had first agreed the Property Investment Strategy, The Council had now invested a substantial proportion of the initial £50m of funding.

Risks to the Council were reduced by strict adherence to the Property Investment Strategy which reduced risk through the acquisition of a balanced portfolio. Both Members and Officers on the Property Investment Board were acutely aware that they were spending significant sums of money and any potential purchases were scrutinised throughout the process which was set out on page 39 of the paperwork. It was important to note that a significant number of properties had already been rejected by both Officers and the Property Investment Board.

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Councillor Anthony Stansfeld noted that Property Investment Strategy, under the sector weighting, permitted up to 40% of the fund to be invested in retail and he questioned the wisdom of this.

Councillor Quentin Webb noted that there was a typographical error on page 20 of the document where it stated in the Equalities Impact Assessment that the proposal was to increase capital borrowing by £5m instead of £50m.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that he was broadly supportive of the proposal but that he too had concerns about investing in the retail sector given the current market trends.

Councillor Emma Webster responded by saying that each potential investment was considered on its own merits and that the Council had procured specialists to provide advice on potential purchases.

Councillor Jeff Brooks countered that one should treat advice from experts with due care. He felt that the Strategy should be kept under careful review and that potential purchases in the retail sector should be carefully considered. He felt that the Council should not be wedded to spending 40% of the fund in the retail sector.

Councillor James Fredrickson stated that the Council would continue to carefully consider advice from the Council's advisors on each potential purchase. All potential purchases were also subjected to due diligence. He stated that the Strategy proposed a maximum of 40% of the fund being spent in the retail sector. This was a cap not a target.

Councillor Fredrickson stated that increasing the fund from £50m to £100m would provide an opportunity to generate additional income to support the Council's budget. This would help the Council to continue to support its most vulnerable residents. The first tranche of the project had been successful and based on that success the Council was now looking to expand the project.

Councillor Chadley stated that he would like to reassure the Council that all purchases were carefully considered. Retail was a broad sector and there were successful retailers that could be invested in. He reiterated that the 40% was the maximum that would be invested in this sector. He also reassured Councillor Brooks that the Property Investment Strategy was constantly being monitored and was subject to annual review by full Council.

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

32. Notices of Motion

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 15a refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Jeanette Clifford relating to western rail access to Heathrow and the Third Runway.

The Chairman informed the Council that the Motion would be debated at the meeting.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeanette Clifford and seconded by Councillor James Fredrickson

"This Council believes that West Berkshire is almost perfectly positioned relative to Heathrow Airport, one of the world's premier international airports, carrying 78 million

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passengers to 204 destinations in 85 countries and two thirds of the UK's air cargo. West Berkshire is close enough to benefit, distant enough to be spared inconvenience.

Furthermore, this Council asserts that the benefits of this relative proximity to Heathrow will be enhanced by proposed investment in two major infrastructure projects: rail access to Heathrow and the third Heathrow runway. As the time approaches for final decisions to be made about these projects, the Council seeks a clear expression of support from across this Chamber.

This Council has consistently supported a **Rail Link** from the Great Western Main Line to Heathrow Airport because it will bring significant benefits for the residents, businesses, economy and environment of West Berkshire. It backs Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and the Stakeholder Steering Group, co-chaired by Newbury MP Richard Benyon, in championing the link, crucial to Thames Valley Berkshire's growth ambitions.

This Council notes that because of the Link:

- Travel to Heathrow Airport from West Berkshire will be easier and quicker, with direct trains from Reading Station taking only 26 minutes.
- People will choose public transport over road, eliminating CO2 emissions to the equivalent of 30 million road miles a year and reducing congestion on the M4 and other major roads as well as at Paddington Station.
- The UK economy will be boosted by £2 billion with 42,000 new jobs, including apprenticeships, which will benefit our District.

The case for better rail connectivity to Heathrow is strong, whether the airport has two runways or three. However, this council has also consistently supported a **third runway at Heathrow**. West Berkshire businesses will benefit from even better connectivity to markets around the world, West Berkshire residents from new travel opportunities.

This Council invites all Members to record their support in a letter to West Berkshire MPs, Network Rail, the Western Rail Access to Heathrow Stakeholder Steering Group and Heathrow Airport for these two projects that will keep West Berkshire open for business and a make it an even greater place to live, work and learn."

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

33. **Members' Questions**

No Member questions were submitted.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 7.57 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature