

Note: These Minutes have been amended. Please see Minutes of 3 September 2020 for amendments.

# **EXECUTIVE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**

### **THURSDAY, 16 JULY 2020**

**Councillors Present:** Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Lynne Doherty, Ross Mackinnon, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Executive Director - Place), Robert Bradfield (Service Manager - Commissioning), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Andy Sharp (Executive Director (People)), Shiraz Sheikh (Legal Services Manager), Councillor Adrian Abbs, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Carolyn Culver, Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor David Marsh, Councillor Steve Masters, Councillor Erik Pattenden and Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Hilary Cole

#### **PART I**

##### **1. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2020 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

##### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

##### **3. 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) **Question submitted by Mr Neville Booth to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Mr Neville Booth on the subject of the cycle lane on the A4 would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(b) **Question submitted by Ms Paula Saunderson to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care**

A question standing in the name of Ms Paula Saunderson on the subject of transfers of care made from NHS Hospitals to West Berkshire settings between 1<sup>st</sup> March and end of April 2020 without being tested as negative for Covid-19 would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.

(c) **Question submitted by Ms Paula Saunderson to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care**

A question standing in the name of Ms Paula Saunderson on the subject of overturning of transfer of care procedures of the Joint Care Provider Service would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.

(d) **Question submitted by Mr Peter Carline to the Leader of the Council**

A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Carline on the subject of Brexit preparedness would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.

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(e) **Question submitted by Mr Peter Carline to the Leader of the Council**

A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Carline on the subject of Council advice issued to residents on the subject of Brexit would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.

(f) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of a discrepancy in the social housing for rent data would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(g) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of the number of homes for social rent that had been added since 2015 would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(h) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of meeting the social housing needs of West Berkshire residents would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(i) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of the removal of limits on investment in social housing would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(j) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of numbers of additional homes for social rent over the next 5 years would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(k) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of the publication of the new planning strategy would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(l) **Question submitted by Mr Graham Storey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Graham Storey on the subject of operating without a planning strategy would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(m) **Question submitted by Mr John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Mr John Gotelee on the subject of the percentage of the urban runoff not attenuated on the new development sites of the Travelodge on London Road and the Premier Inn on Park Way would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

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(n) **Question submitted by Mr John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Environment**

A question standing in the name of Mr John Gotelee on the subject of the additional capacity requirements for foul sewage infrastructure arising from the London Road Industrial Estate redevelopment would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

(o) **Question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing**

A question standing in the name of Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of the removal of football facilities in Newbury would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing.

(p) **Question submitted by Ms Miriam Lee to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development**

A question standing in the name of Ms Miriam Lee on the subject of what local climate change mitigation projects the Council would fund would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

(q) **Question submitted by Ms Miriam Lee to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development**

A question standing in the name of Ms Miriam Lee on the subject of specific funding for the climate emergency would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

(r) **Question submitted by Mr Alan Pearce to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development**

A question standing in the name of Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of whether any significant infrastructure problems were causing delays in redeveloping the London Road Industrial Estate would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

(s) **Question submitted by Mr Alan Pearce to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of whether the Council had considered using the former football ground at Faraday Road as an overflow balancing pond to overcome any problems regarding sustainable drainage when redeveloping the London Road Industrial Estate would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(t) **Question submitted by Mr Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Mr Simon Pike on the subject of guidance or standards for implementation of cycling infrastructure on West Berkshire Council's road network would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(u) **Question submitted by Dr Chris Foster to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Dr Chris Foster on the subject of the traffic impact on the A339 arising from the Manydown development in Basingstoke, in addition to other forthcoming developments, would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

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(v) **Question submitted by Mr Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Mr Simon Pike on the subject of the impact of the Mandatory Cycle Lane in Thatcham on the passage of emergency vehicles would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(w) **Question submitted by Ms Jane Gulliver to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance**

A question standing in the name of Ms Jane Gulliver on the subject of making available legally binding contracts it had made to build any housing, including affordable housing, would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance.

#### 4. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

#### 5. **Post Consultation Environment Strategy (EX3831)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) which provided feedback to the Executive following the recent consultation on the Environment Strategy and set out a revised Strategy for the Executive to discuss and if appropriate agree.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter introduced the report which set out the consultation and engagement process which had been undertaken in relation to the draft Environment Strategy and the changes which had been made to the Strategy as a result of the feedback received. The consultation exercise had been more extensive and far reaching than had previously been undertaken for Council strategies and this reflected the high level of public interest in the subject matter. A key element of the consultation had been an on-line survey together with direct written responses, a series of public engagement events with schools and members of the green communities and drop-in sessions for members of the public. A summary of the feedback received from those specific elements could be found in Appendices C to F.

The Environment Strategy was a broad document which set out the high level framework. The key objective it addressed was that which was set a little over a year ago in the Declaration of the Climate Emergency – the prime objective of which was the achievement of carbon neutrality within West Berkshire by 2030. This was an extremely challenging but doable target and would only be met by a combination of effective leadership, actions and communications by this Council together with engagement and active choices by residents of the district. It would be necessary to build on this in order to achieve the targets set out in the Strategy.

Page 31 of the agenda set out the high level themes to be taken forward within the Strategy/Delivery Plan or through other areas of the Council's work. Some of the themes had been strengthened or improved as a result of the consultation such as agriculture and farming; increasing the use of electric vehicles; lobbying of government in terms of new building standards and again communications will be key. There were two themes that it was not proposed to take forward – bringing forward the 2030 target and the formation of a citizen assembly.

Councillor Ardagh-Walter confirmed that over the next few years there would be projects which would be delivered to fulfil the achievement of the Strategy but it was recognised that this would be challenging.

Councillor Lynne Doherty asked if the expansive consultation had been useful and why and whether there had been any advantages or disadvantages to this method of consultation. Councillor Ardagh-Walter responded that the disadvantages included the

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fact that it had been a more demanding and time consuming exercise for Officers than would normally have been the case and therefore there had been a higher investment in terms of time, gathering information and consulting with people and a larger range of data and information had fed into that. However, it was felt that the investment in time had been paid back by the resulting improvement in quality. It had helped the Council to edge towards a more open style of leadership going forward and although this approach would not be appropriate in all cases the same spirit could be used more widely in the future.

Councillor Richard Somner echoed the comments made by Councillor Ardagh-Walter. It was worth recognising the huge amount of work undertaken by Officers, the engagement of residents and Members of all parties to develop this Strategy and this continued to add to the forward motion that the Council had been asked to provide. It was recognised that there was still a way to go but the Council now had a strong platform to push forward and Councillor Somner was therefore happy to second the report.

Councillor Adrian Abbs advised that he was a Member of the Environment Advisory Group and his party had been supporting the development of the Strategy so that there was a cross-party objective. However, he felt that there were still a few things that the Council could do better and be more ambitious on. He referred to page 40 of the report and in particular reference point 18 and noted that one of the things it was proposed not to take forward was the citizen assembly which would have involved members of the public. It was surprising to see it marked down as being a drain on the Council's resources. Page 67 talked about the ease of reading the document with 51% finding it more difficult to read than easier. He felt that the Council needed to try harder to make sure the contents of these sort of documents could be absorbed by the public and that the onus was on the Council to make documents as easy as possible to read. Councillor Abbs noted that on page 118 of the agenda it stated that the Council would work with partners and encourage residents and businesses to produce 20MW of renewable energy in the district. He was extremely pleased that the Strategy was actually committing to producing this quantity of generation. He was also of the opinion that the ambition should be zero emission vehicles but the Strategy stated that existing internal combustion engine vehicles on the Council's fleet should be replaced with Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs). It was necessary to press on these areas and apply some forward thinking.

Councillor Ardagh-Walter responded to the points raised by Councillor Abbs. On the subject of the citizen assembly he advised that there would be ongoing continued listening to and engagement by residents. Whilst he was not in favour of a formalised decision making body of citizens as such he was very much in favour of wider engagement and he was certain that new structures could be set up for ways of continuing that ongoing dialogue. He was very keen on continuing that thorough open debate and dialogue with residents. In relation to the simplification of the document he agreed that this could be an issue but the subject was very big and broad and touched on many aspects of life. He would like to see going forward a smaller and simplified version which would potentially be aimed at schools etc. which would be in a format which was easier to read. In relation to zero emissions that would be good but as with many technological issues things could change quite quickly in the future.

Councillor Steve Masters referred to the governance around the Strategy and the annual reporting in relation to the plan of action. There was a need to focus on that. Councillor Masters did contend that it was necessary to engage on a more regular basis with the public as they had got behind the Strategy and therefore it was essential to continue to work with that energy. The governance section was broad and it was important to include

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more detail around that as soon as possible. It would be useful to have a timetable as to when the plan would be formulated as it was essential that it moved forward at pace.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter agreed the Strategy touched on governance at a very high level and in future regular reporting would take place through the Delivery Plan which it was anticipated would be published by September. That would enable the Council to see and track progress and tune targets against various projects within the Strategy. He agreed that it would be necessary to focus more around engagement and the Delivery Plan would be important in taking this forward. In terms of the timetable he agreed that time was of the essence but he added that progress had been made with the pilot phase of solar roll out, work around Active Travel on the back of Covid recovery and the carbon audit of the Council's own operations was also under way.

Councillor Carolyne Culver congratulated Members and Officers in respect of the drafting of the report and also the launch of the Community Investment Bond earlier that day. She asked if the Executive would be lobbying Government on changes to the planning regulations to ensure that they would not bring in any regulations which would undermine the Environment Strategy. She also asked how farmers would be involved in helping to deliver the Strategy as West Berkshire was such a rural and cultural district. Councillor Culver also made reference to the nature recovery network and leaving grass verges unmown more often and she felt that more could be done in this area as the Wildlife Trust had been doing some work on nature recovery networks and it would be useful if the Council could talk to them in more detail as it worked with them a lot already. She suggested that discussions should be had with the Wildlife Trust to strengthen that section. In respect of governance she felt that it would be a good idea to set up a Working Group as there were so many people across the district who would like to get involved with this and would undertake a lot of the work on behalf of the Council. She queried when the KPI's on the delivery of the Environment Strategy would be available for the public.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter confirmed that in relation to lobbying and planning everyone wanted supportive regulations and pressure on green issues such as more home insulation and hopefully the Council would be successful in lobbying the Government for investment in a green direction. He noted that West Berkshire was fortunate as it had two local MP's – Laura Farris and Aloc Sharma – who had strong and powerful voices and would be able to get this message across to the Government on the Council's behalf. In respect of farmers Councillor Ardagh-Walter confirmed that he had reached out and had already been approached by a few farmers who were keen to get involved. He was keen to learn more about the nature recovery network and any further advice and input would be welcomed. He stressed that the Strategy could only touch on some of these areas and it would be necessary to build on them. He was glad to see that other organisations would be willing to assist the Council with the administrative work and it would be useful to delegate out the assembly of ideas which could be built upon. He confirmed that the public KPI's would be included in the Delivery Plan and hopefully this would be in the public domain by September.

**RESOLVED** that the amended Environment Strategy, as set out in Appendix G be agreed.

**Reason for the decision:** To adopt an Environment Strategy.

**Other options considered:** It was acknowledged that there were a number of ways in which the consultation responses could have been interpreted and used to influence a final version of the strategy. This report outlined the approach and process that was chosen to develop a series of recommendations for amendments to the strategy and

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elements to be taken forward in the Delivery Plan based on the content of the consultation.

### 6. **Parking Provision for Electric Vehicles (EX3931)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) which set out a response to a Motion submitted to Full Council at the 3 March 2020 meeting by Councillor Carlyne Culver. The Motion invited the Council to “designate all current and future electric vehicle charging points that are provided by West Berkshire Council as ‘EV only’ parking spaces.”

The report highlighted the associated issues and made recommendations as to whether the Motion should be implemented.

Councillor Richard Somner in introducing the report gave thanks to Councillor Culver for submitting the Motion and for attending the Transport Advisory Group (TAG) held in April 2020 to discuss the matter. It was recognised that the need for electric vehicle charging points would become more relevant over time with the number of electric vehicles on the road increasing.

However, the implementation of the Motion was unfortunately not straight forward as detailed within the report.

Councillor Somner felt that the proposed recommendations struck the right balance between encouraging people to switch to electric vehicles and making provision for those that had already or intended to purchase an electric vehicle, alongside retaining car parking spaces for those residents who were not ready or able to make this switch. Councillor Somner raised the importance of looking at ways to enable more residents who wished to participate in using or procuring an electric vehicle, and relevant parties would be engaged with to help address that where possible.

Councillor Somner went on to explain that the location of existing charging points was under review.

Councillor Somner concluded his introduction by advising that a trial would be run on a test site and he looked forward to working with officers and Ward Members as part of that process.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter supported the report and its recommendations. The use of electric vehicles was expected to increase quite significantly in the years to come and it was important to encourage residents to purchase electric vehicles and for the benefits of so doing to be promoted. However, he agreed that this needed to be balanced with the need to be considerate to residents who still needed standard on-street parking. Councillor Ardagh-Walter therefore felt the transitional approach described in the report to be wholly appropriate.

Councillor Somner added that the current affordability of electric vehicles was a factor to be mindful of.

Councillor Adrian Abbs was supportive of the aims of the Motion as there was a need for accessible charging points for vehicles. He was disappointed with the recommendation to not take the Motion forward at this time and felt that the Council should be taking a bolder approach beyond a single test site. Councillor Abbs felt that charging points should be reserved, particularly during the evenings, to encourage people to make use of them and give them an incentive to make the change to an electric vehicle. Councillor Abbs raised a concern that the wrong type of charging points had been installed.

Councillor Somner clarified that the points raised in the Motion had been discussed on many occasions. Consideration had been given as to whether the Motion could be fully

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and successfully implemented. The points made in the Motion were being taken on board, but it was important to introduce electric vehicle charging points in a controlled manner.

In terms of awareness raising of parking space availability for electric vehicles, Councillor Somner advised that information was available via the Council website.

Councillor Somner stated that he was happy to hold a discussion offline on the charging point equipment with Councillor Abbs.

Councillor Culver gave thanks for the report and the work undertaken, and for the invitation to attend the TAG to discuss the Motion. A particular point discussed at TAG was the potential to move some charging points to quieter roads. Argyle Street and a road adjoining Craven Road were given as examples. Councillor Culver felt it would be useful to re-examine locations.

Councillor Somner confirmed that the process of reviewing the location of charging points had begun. It was his understanding that it was relatively straight forward to relocate charging points. He would keep Members informed of progress.

Councillor Culver next queried the consultation process for Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and whether this would involve parish and town councils.

Councillor Somner's expectation was that the consultation process would be detailed and would include residents, Ward Members and parish/town councils. He would however seek clarification on this point outside of the meeting and would advise on that separately.

Councillor Somner took the opportunity to add that he was proud of the Council's reaction on receiving Government funding to implement charging points. As explained, minor fine tuning would follow.

Councillor Culver restated her thanks to officers for their work on this report and agreed it was appropriate for officers to form a view on the Motion. However, from a procedural viewpoint, she felt it would have preferable to hold a wider Council debate on a Council Motion.

In response to this point, Councillor Lynne Doherty clarified that as the Council operated under the Executive/Cabinet Model, the governance rules were clear that this report was right to be presented to the Executive rather than Council.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (a) the Motion to designate all current and future electric vehicle charging points as 'EV only' parking spaces not be taken forward at this time in respect of on-street locations.
- (b) an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) be implemented at a trial site where an on-street chargepoint has been more frequently used. The exact terms of the restriction be discussed informally with Members prior to making the Order including the implications of the proposed order in terms of the appearance, size and number of additional signs that are required. The success, or otherwise of this ETRO to inform future decision as to when, where and how to roll out EV-only parking bays more widely.
- (c) unless local circumstances dictate otherwise, all chargepoints in public car parks operated by West Berkshire Council to have their own designated and enforceable parking bay.

**Reason for the decision:** To provide a response to the Motion.

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### Other options considered:

- The Motion could be implemented in its entirety, but in view of the practical considerations detailed in this report, this is not recommended.
- The Motion could be rejected completely, but in view of the need to continue to encourage electric vehicle ownership and the likely rise in the numbers of electric vehicles in the District, there will come a point where some form of designated on-highway parking is required. This would also be at odds with the current approach to chargepoints in public car parks.

### 7. **2019/20 Performance Report: Quarter Four (EX3716)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 8) which provided assurance that the core business and Council priorities for improvement measures (Council Strategy 2019-2023) were being managed effectively. The report also highlighted successes and where performance had fallen below the expected level it set out the remedial action being taken and the impact of that action.

Councillor Joanne Stewart confirmed that the report provided assurance that the core business of the Council was performing to target or above. Where this was not the case then the exception reports set out the remedial action it was proposed to put in place. This was a Quarter Four report which did overlap with the start of the Covid pandemic and this had had an impact on services particularly Adult Social Care, Children and Family Services and Education. It was good to see that strong performance had been maintained within the Council's core business activities in all but two areas. It was noted that crime cases appeared to be fairly static but domestic violence cases where police intervention was required was showing an upward trend and this was something that would need to be monitored particularly in relation to Covid. There had been a drop in the number of volunteers in the District's libraries but the community had come together to support local residents and that was something that the Council needed to tap into and encourage them to continue with that work.

Councillor Graham Bridgman referred to the indicator around the % of WBC provider services inspected by Care Quality Commission (CQC) and rated as good or better in the area of 'safe' which was reporting as 'red'. Six services had been looked at by CQC, four of which were care homes. Two of those care homes achieved an overall rating of 'Requires Improvement' and a consultant had been commissioned to work with one of those homes to review environment and practice and around specific areas of activity in order to improve the rating for 2020. Some of the inspection work had been stopped due to Covid but telephone management was in place for all those services. All six of the services referred to above had been rated by CQC as being of 'no concern' and were all open for business. Councillor Bridgman would be happy when inspections could resume again.

Councillor Dominic Boeck referred to the indicator in relation to the percentage of repeat referrals to Children's Services within 12 months of a previous referral. This was proving to be a stubborn measure to reduce and it was noted that the issue was that some recording practices had led to incorrect counting e.g. Early Response cases were being counted in the re-referral rates. This had now been addressed and indeed the number of re-referrals had dropped as a result of the Covid pandemic. Internal Audit had commissioned an external audit to ensure that there were no underlying issues but it was recognised that this was a difficult balancing act. He also mentioned the % of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at Foundation Stage (EYFS). This had been the subject of a Strategy Board discussion in March 2020 but actions arising from that had not been implemented as the focus had been on the impact of schools closing. The attainment gap would almost certainly

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increase as a result of Covid as disadvantaged families would be those that would be affected most. A strategy would be required to catch up on time lost and it would be necessary to work with schools to put a plan in place. All schools would have effective remote learning in place by September 2020.

Councillor Lee Dillon queried whether there was a national standard of reporting referrals. Both of the above measures referred to by Councillor Boeck had been in relation to young people. The gap between the free school meals pupils and all other pupils had been known about for many years and there were pockets of deprivation in the West Berkshire district. It was also clear that this cohort would be even further behind after lockdown and his group would like to work with the Executive and through effective lobbying to improve and have funds to enable these children to catch up. It was all about life chances and the future of this group of children was in our hands. He asked what the Council was doing to encourage more apprenticeships across the organisation.

Councillor Dominic Boeck thanked Councillor Dillon for his offer of support in lobbying the Government which was most appreciated. Councillor Dillon was right about young people about to embark on their working lives and he confirmed that work was ongoing with West Berkshire Training Consortium in terms of increasing the number of apprenticeships.

Councillor Lee Dillon noted that lockdown commenced on 23 March 2020 and that this report was in relation to Quarter Four (up to the end of March 2020). He therefore felt that the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown would not have impacted the Council's performance or some of the influencer measures at this stage. For example, the number of empty business rated properties had already started to decrease in Quarter Three of 2019/20 and in respect of the percentage of carriage repairs some of that would be down to high levels of rainfall and the need to repair roads as a result.

Councillor Alan Macro was surprised that the issue around care homes had not been specifically covered in paragraph 4.5. He referred to paragraph 5.7 in relation to the number of people receiving a long term service from Adult Social Care which was increasing in Quarter Four and he asked if this would create a budget pressure. Councillor Graham Bridgman responded that in relation to care homes the issue with Birchwood had been longstanding and he was confident in the measures put in place to address any issues. In respect of paragraph 5.7 numbers had been modelled and therefore part would not result in a budget pressure. Some of the numbers looked to be up and down and he had asked Officers to clarify as there had been fluctuations in Quarters Two and Three and it was necessary to understand the reasons for that. Some flex in the numbers was anticipated but that would need to be tested.

Councillor Erik Pattenden referred to pages 170, 174 and 175 of the agenda noted that the dates in the tables did not seem to be correct and he asked if that could be amended. He welcomed the efforts of the Education team to address attainment issues but as could be seen from page 170 the Council had been in the bottom of the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile in previous years and he therefore felt that this was an area which needed more effort and focus. He noted that this was a strategic objective but improvements were not being seen. Councillor Dominic Boeck agreed that this was a difficult challenge and that was the reason why it had been included as a strategic objective. It would be necessary to put in place actions to reduce the gap and that gap would be harder to bridge going forward. Councillor Lynne Doherty responded that there was no silver bullet here and was not necessarily an Education issue but one of equality and this needed to be addressed through the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was also an objective in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Schools were trying really hard and there were so many good outcomes in West Berkshire which became more pronounced when there were

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inequalities. This was the reason why the measure had been retained in order that the Executive could be challenged on it.

Councillor Jeff Brooks agreed that Covid would have an impact on Quarters One and Two of this year and indeed going forward. However, this had been used as an excuse for poor or delayed performance in a number of areas throughout the report which was not acceptable. He noted that sickness absence levels had been slightly higher than in the previous year and was worse than other local authorities. He felt that this had an impact on morale and was therefore something that needed consideration. Councillor Joanne Stewart took on board the comments raised by Councillor Brooks. She had had a discussion about Covid being quoted as a reason for delay and was working with the programme lead in respect of the cause of drift. Covid had been an issue in some cases when Officers had not been able to visit people at their home when the virus was emerging.

Councillor Richard Somner referred to Councillor Dillon's comment in relation to the percentage of carriage repairs completed. He agreed that there had been periods of extensive rainfall where flooding had occurred but that was not an issue every year. There was now a focus on trying to improve/address drainage which it was hoped would impact on managing the deterioration of the roads.

### **RESOLVED that:**

1. Progress and achievements be noted;
2. The appropriateness of any remedial actions taken to improve performance be approved, in particular for:
  - % of WBC provider services inspected by Care Quality Commission (CQC) and rated as good or better
  - % of repeat referrals to Children's Services within 12 months of a previous referral
  - Attainment results for Free School Meals (FSM) cohorts.

**Reason for the decision:** To ensure that the Council was meeting the expectations set out in the Council Strategy and to address areas where performance was falling below the expected standards.

**Other options considered:** None.

## **8. West Berkshire Recovery Strategy (EX3937)**

The Executive considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which provided the framework for the Council's overarching recovery in respect of Covid-19 and its impact on the district. The Recovery Strategy highlighted the key areas of focus for the Council, and set out actions that had already been taken and areas that would be explored further once considered with partners and the community.

Councillor Lynne Doherty introduced the report. It was recognised that the vast majority of West Berkshire residents had been either directly or indirectly impacted by Covid-19.

The impacts that had been and continued to felt had been regularly discussed and included health, impacts on businesses and employment opportunities, inequality impacts on particular groups, and on children and young people.

The Recovery Strategy outlined areas of focus and actions to be taken to support residents.

By way of context, Councillor Doherty explained that there was a focus on recovery at both national and regional levels. The West Berkshire Recovery Strategy therefore had a clear local focus on actions to be taken in West Berkshire to meet the District's needs.

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The response to Covid-19 continued alongside recovery and therefore the impacts were not fully known. Evidence continued to be gathered from the response to help inform the recovery and identify where support was needed. Despite this, the Council wanted to get the Recovery Strategy in place as soon as possible.

It was however acknowledged that the Strategy's Action Plan was not completed. It would need to be developed via further partner engagement and with the involvement of communities. It was important to have this external engagement. Next steps were also listed in paragraph 7.2 of the Recovery Strategy.

Three core areas were identified for initial focus: health, education and the economy. All of which were fundamental in making West Berkshire a great place in which to live.

Core principles had been agreed as part of these areas to help guide recovery work. The principles included recognition of the fact that pre-Covid, there were a range of good outcomes already being achieved in West Berkshire and it was the intention to return to that position. It was also the case that the positive changes made during the response to Covid would be kept and built upon.

Councillor Graham Bridgman took the opportunity to congratulate all those involved in the response to Covid-19 and recovery work. In particular, he praised the work of the Community Support Hub which he felt to be a fantastic success. The involvement of volunteers had been a strong element of work to date and the help of volunteers would continue to be needed for the ongoing recovery work. He congratulated and thanked voluntary organisations for their work. Finally, Councillor Bridgman thanked West Berkshire Council staff for their significant efforts towards the response and recovery work, and their efforts to continue conducting business as usual.

Councillor Adrian Abbs referred to the requirement to wear masks in shops and offices. He queried whether the Council would make masks/other equipment available to residents where there was a need to help with the recovery process.

Councillor Doherty stated that the Council had followed Government and Public Health England guidance throughout this process and would continue to do so. The requirement to wear masks in shops from 24 July 2020 was being promoted by the Council and residents would be encouraged to adhere to that.

Turning to the provision of and access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the Council had worked very closely with Greenham Trust on PPE. The Trust in turn had been working with charities across the area to ensure equipment and support was available when needed.

Councillor Lee Dillon agreed with the three strategic objectives that had been highlighted. The Strategy gave a detailed narrative of events to date, but he felt it needed to be expanded to become a Strategy on which to move forward. Key would be the detail provided in delivery plans and these would need to be shared for comment.

It was important to consider what the Council could do to support businesses/the economy, including ways to build up confidence among residents to help the hospitality sector.

Councillor Doherty made clear the Council's aim to be proactive and explained that many actions had already been taken. An example within education was to help disadvantaged young people gain access to laptops.

She reiterated that delivery plans were not completed and would need to be progressed with partner input. It was important to ensure, in liaison with residents and partners, that any initiatives to be introduced would be welcomed by communities, sustainable and in line with local need.

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Councillor Doherty specifically highlighted a very positive economic development session held with the Economic Development Company. Approximately 110 businesses participated in this which gave them the opportunity to outline the issues they faced and the support they needed.

Councillor Carolyne Culver added her congratulations to community volunteers, Council officers and those involved with the Hub.

Councillor Culver referred to the recent community survey and raised the need to ensure that all those relevant could respond. She acknowledged the complexities in achieving this but advised that some local co-ordinators had been missed. Councillor Culver would forward their contact details to the Hub.

She had already fed back to officers the concern that the Covid information leaflet had not reached all West Berkshire residents, with some streets missing from the circulation. She felt this was an area where Ward Members could assist by involving volunteers in future deliveries. Councillor Doherty was aware from feedback received that improvements were needed in this area. Therefore it was the intention for Royal Mail to make future deliveries with information to be circulated in relation to local outbreak plans.

Councillor Culver then queried whether 8 Bells Community Strength would be involved in recovery work. The group did much good work with isolated individuals and could usefully link with the Hub. Councillor Doherty was aware that 8 Bells was represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board through the voluntary sector and so they would be engaged with the Hub.

Councillor Culver's final question was whether the full pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street would continue. Councillor Doherty advised that this point was discussed at the Economic Development Board held earlier that day and was an area to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. An analysis would be conducted at an appropriate stage before a decision was made.

Councillor Alan Macro highlighted the reference made in the Strategy to a potential regional testing centre in either West Berkshire or Reading. It was confirmed that a regional centre had been established at Newbury Showground. However, Councillor Macro highlighted the concern that this location could not be accessed by public transport and queried if an additional location could be found as it was important to ensure that residents with symptoms could be tested and tested quickly.

Councillor Doherty explained that the Showground operated on a drive through basis only. However, there were also mobile testing units, largely located in urban areas, as well as a testing facility at the Community Hospital. Residents would be kept informed on access to testing sites.

Councillor Richard Somner made the point that people with symptoms of Covid should not be utilising public transport. Councillor Doherty added that home testing kits were available for residents unable to access a testing facility.

**RESOLVED** that the Recovery Strategy be approved.

**Reason for the decision:** To set out a response to the recent Covid pandemic

**Other options considered:**

The Council could have waited to produce a recovery strategy. This would have the advantage of having much cleaner and clearer data on which to base decisions; however, this has been discounted as the Council has a fundamental role in the place of West Berkshire to ensure an effective recovery for the quality of life of our residents.

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Different themes and emphasis could be placed on the key areas within the strategy. These will be open to debate, but the eight areas provided have been considered through internal consultation across the Council as well as key themes from the LRF.

### 9. **2019/20 Revenue Financial Performance: Provisional Outturn (EX3798)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets. This report was the provisional outturn position for 2019/20.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon stated that the provisional revenue outturn position was an underspend of £1.46m which was 1.2% of the Council's 2019/20 approved net revenue budget of £1.25m. The outturn report measured how closely the Council achieved the approved revenue budget, however, this year the Council had found itself in an unusual position of reporting a significant underspend which would therefore have a positive impact on reserves in 2020/21. This was a good thing as the current financial year would likely be very challenging. The main driver for the underspend was in the People Directorate with a £1.3m underspend in Adult Social Care. The Place Directorate had income pressures in development control and car parking and the Resource Directorate overspend was largely related to under achievement of investment income.

Councillor Lynne Doherty noted that the Corporate Peer Review had made particular reference to the Council's record of sound financial management.

Councillor Graham Bridgman referred to the underspend of £1.3m in Adult Social Care and the fact that he would have preferred it if the budget had come in on the nail. However, additional funding had been put into this area in March 2019. Elements of the underspend included an increase in the number of deaths in the client base pre-Covid, the ability to find care home beds at competitive prices and over achievement of income. The long term service client numbers were also a challenge. He applauded Adult Social Care on the procurement of packages where good deals had been achieved. The Approved Supplier List in domiciliary care had reduced the number of suppliers and had consequently achieved a saving but this had not been to the detriment of the client as packages had not deteriorated. There had been some success in getting CCG funding for some of the packages and there had also been some good work undertaken in reablement which meant that clients spent less time in the system. Adult Social Care spend equated to 38% of the Council's budget but the service was not complacent and further work would be undertaken on the model going forward to ensure that it was as accurate as it could be.

Councillor Jeff Brooks raised concerns that a £1.46m underspend equated to a 1.5% Council Tax increase and therefore the Council had taken people's money unnecessarily. He recognised that Portfolio Holders had a difficult job and it would be particularly difficult to model for this year due to the Covid pandemic as it would not be able to rely on accurate trend figures.

Councillor Erik Pattenden asked if the £179k underspend in Child Care Lawyers due to vacant posts had impacted on the service. Councillor Mackinnon responded that the underspend was due to the fact that there had been a decrease in the number of cases and therefore there had been less demand on the service.

**RESOLVED that** the provisional outturn position of £1.46m under spend be noted.

**Reason for the decision:** To ensure that the Council delivered strong performance management of its budgets.

**Other options considered:** Earmarked reserves could be created from the under spend in particular to help with the response to the Covid-19 impact on West Berkshire.

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### 10. 2019/20 Capital Financial Performance Report - Outturn (EX3802)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning the provisional capital outturn for the Council in respect of financial year 2019/20.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon explained that the total capital expenditure incurred in 2019/20 was £39.5m against the revised budget of £91.9m (an underspend of £52.4m). The main contributing factors to the underspend were:

- The £35m Commercial Property Budget had not been utilised during 2019/20. This followed the Government announcement that Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates could no longer be accessed to fund assets used primarily to generate yield, and a decision to suspend future commercial property acquisitions had been made. On this basis it was not proposed to slip the unutilised budget into 2020/21.
- The three Directorates had a combined underspend of £17m. The People Directorate underspend (£4.6m) predominantly related to delays to education and school projects. The Place Directorate underspend (£9.7m) was largely a result of delayed transport projects and delays to the implementation of Solar Photovoltaics. Much of the Resources Directorate underspend of £3m was attributable to delays in the Superfast Broadband project.

Delayed Directorate projects had been re-profiled into the 2020/21 financial year.

The report's second recommendation was for the Executive to agree a new £909k capital budget funded from Council borrowing to be included within the current approved 2020/21 capital programme to enable the delivery of the Care Director upgrade following recent developments with that software.

Councillor Mackinnon took the opportunity to highlight that the Community Bond had today been launched and £165k had been raised in the first day. The Bond could reach a maximum of £1m.

Councillor Erik Pattenden referred to the delayed Education projects and queried the impact of these delays on school children. It was disappointing that projects had not progressed as planned.

Councillor Dominic Boeck responded by firstly clarifying that the delay to the Eastern Area Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) did not impact on the availability of school places.

The delay to the Highwood Copse project was where the largest impact on school places was felt. Councillor Boeck stated that it was very disappointing that places were not available to pupils as had been planned. However, this was beyond the Council's control.

Councillor Boeck was able to add that the Council had again performed well in school allocations with all parents/pupils being offered a place at a school of their choice.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

1. The capital provisional outturn position and the level of budget to be carried forward to 2020/21 be noted.
2. A new £909k capital budget funded from Council borrowing would be included within the current approved 2020/21 capital programme to enable the delivery of the Care Director upgrade.

**Reason for the decision:** To ensure sound financial management of the Council's Capital Programme.

**Other options considered:** None

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### 11. **Future Arrangements for the provision of Public Health across West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading (EX3900)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 12) which set out options and recommendations concerning the future management of Public Health across Berkshire West.

Councillor Howard Woollaston stated that the set up in Berkshire had shifted from the original vision which had relied on a collective responsibility between local authorities. The system had become unbalanced and it had been difficult to recruit to public health leadership positions. With the development of Integrated Care Systems demands on public health were increasing and the Director post was particularly stretched, covering 6 local authorities, 2 CCGs and 2 ICSs. Imbalances in the System had arisen as authorities had invested in different programmes and staffing structures.

In 2019 the Berkshire Chief Executives requested a review. They considered the effectiveness of the current model, the changing context and opportunities for public health, current costs, and alternate models. They recommended dissolving the current arrangement and moving to two hub and spoke arrangements across three borough geographies which was unique across the whole of the UK. By doing this arrangement it would improve the health of the population and reduce inequalities to improve outcomes for residents and reduce demand for services. There was a financial implication of £75k-£100k per annum which would be met from the 2020/21 increase in the ring fenced Public Health Grant.

Councillor Graham Bridgman noted that at the Locality Integration Board there was a clear desire to build and improve the relationship and this arrangement should be encouraged in order to promote the health agenda in Berkshire West.

Councillor Alan Macro understood the reasons for recommending this and although the budget was ring-fenced this would create pressures elsewhere. However, it would provide a better service for the residents of West Berkshire and on that basis he was happy to support it.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

- the current arrangement between the six unitary authorities across Berkshire be dissolved and a shared arrangement between West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council (Berkshire West) be set up.
- a shared Director of Public Health (DPH) role for Berkshire West be created to lead the public health system, working closely with the local authorities and in partnership with the Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership. A shared Hub Team providing health intelligence, health protection and commissioning support to public health teams in each local authority be created.
- the establishment of these functions be delegated to the Chief Executive.

**Reason for the decision:** Although the current arrangements for Public Health have served West Berkshire well, in recent years the underlying structure has become unsustainable.

**Other options considered:** 6.1 A range of other options have been considered by the six Chief Executives and other partners. These include variations based around enhancing the current position, to creating a single Public Health Team within each Unitary Authority, each with its own DPH. At the end of the day there needs to be a balance between cost and effectiveness. Some Public Health functions are better delivered at scale and creating a local function would undoubtedly bring with it higher costs and concerns around resilience. A shared function over the larger geography

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reduces cost and improves resilience but in the Berkshire setting has created significant concerns around effectiveness. The option set out here is a compromise between all of these and one which currently has the support of all partners. It also provides an alignment with the Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership.

### 12. **Members' Questions**

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

(a) **Question submitted by Councillor Carlyne Culver to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of the impact of the government's proposal that 'a wider range of commercial buildings would be allowed to change to residential use without the need for a planning application' would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(b) **Question submitted by Councillor Carlyne Culver to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of ensuring that redeveloped redundant buildings were of an appropriate scale and design for their setting would receive a written response from Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(c) **Question submitted by Councillor Carlyne Culver to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of whether changes to regulations would impact on Members' ability to call in planning applications would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(d) **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Leader of the Council**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of holding hybrid meetings that enabled participation of members of the public was answered by the Leader of the Council.

(e) **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of the delay to implementing a planning committee's decision would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(f) **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Portfolio Holder for Environment**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of the decrease uptake of green bins was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

(g) **Question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of support given to children provided with laptops during the Covid crisis was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.

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(h) **Question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of schools in deficit was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.

(i) **Question submitted by Councillor Billy Drummond to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Billy Drummond on the subject of lobbying the government to cover the cost of parking for the first two hour period for the next 6 months was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

(j) **Question submitted by Councillor Jeff Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Jeff Brooks on the subject of support for developers with their CIL submissions would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

(k) **Question submitted by Councillor Jeff Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Jeff Brooks on the subject of fast tracking his motion on the speed limit along the A4/Benham Hill in Thatcham was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(l) **Question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro to the Portfolio Holder for Environment**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of combatting littering and fly tipping was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

(m) **Question submitted by Councillor Phil Barnett to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Phil Barnett on the subject of redirecting traffic once the road was completed between Hector's Way and Hambridge Road in Newbury was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

### 13. **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 Paragraph 3 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.

Councillor Lee Dillon raised a point of order and stated that the decision on this report should have been made in Part I, regardless of the need to consider some elements as Part II. Councillor Lynne Doherty acknowledged the point that had been raised by Councillor Dillon but could not recall where that conversation had got to, it would however be a consideration for future Part II reports. She determined that this particular decision would be taken in Part II.

### 14. **Emergency Duty Service (EX3942)**

*(Paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial/business affairs of a particular person)*

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda item 15) concerning a new shared service agreement for the continuing provision of a hosted Emergency Duty Service

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(EDS) between the six Berkshire unitary authorities with Bracknell Forest Council as a lead/host authority.

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

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

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

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.45pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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