

# DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

## EXECUTIVE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2015

**Councillors Present:** Keith Chopping, Hilary Cole, Roger Croft, Marcus Franks, Alan Law, Gordon Lundie, Irene Neill, Graham Pask and Garth Simpson

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Team Leader - Solicitor), Keith Ulyatt (Public Relations Manager), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Stephen Chard (Policy Officer), Councillor Roger Hunneman, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor Gwen Mason and Councillor Quentin Webb

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Pamela Bale

#### PART I

##### 78. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2015 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

##### 79. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Marcus Franks declared an interest in Agenda Item 7, but reported that, as his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

##### 80. Public Questions

There were no public questions submitted.

##### 81. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

##### 82. Council Performance Report 2014/15: Q3 (Key Accountable Measures and Activities) (EX2779)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) which presented the basket of key accountable measures and activities for 2014/15, which reported quarter three outturns against the measures and activities contained in the 2014/15 Council Performance Framework, and which reported by exception those measures/activities not achieved/expected to be achieved and the remedial action taken/its impact.

Councillor Roger Croft introduced the report by explaining that its purpose was for the Executive to ensure that the objectives laid out in the Council Strategy were being delivered, that areas of importance were performing, and that areas not performing as anticipated were flagged up at an early stage with adequate remedial action being put in place.

Councillor Croft continued by noting that the education measures reflected the attainment results for exams taken in the summer of 2014 as these had now been confirmed.

Turning to the contextual and volume measures, Councillor Croft highlighted that:

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- Unemployment in West Berkshire continued to fall from already low levels, both in young people and overall.
- The average house price had increased by 8%.

Both these points reflected the strength of the local economy. Continuing the subject of the economy, Councillor Croft explained that a new digital method of recording footfall had been introduced for Newbury Town Centre which showed the weekly average rather than a daily average.

Councillor Croft then explained that outturns were available for 45 of the reported measures. Of these 45, 36 were reported as 'green', 7 reported as 'amber' and 2 reported as 'red'. The red measure which related to the flood alleviation scheme in Purley, already reported red at quarter 2, was assessed as such as the target for completing the scheme was August and it was completed in September.

Councillor Alan Law commented that this was an excellent report which particularly demonstrated the improving West Berkshire economy with reduced unemployment, increasing footfall etc.

Councillor Roger Hunneman suggested that it would be useful for the report to include benchmarking data to compare West Berkshire's performance against its statistical neighbours and against national trends. Councillor Gordon Lundie agreed it would be useful for this data in order to aid comparisons. Councillor Croft added that work had commenced to consider ways to enhance performance reporting and felt that the suggestion for additional benchmarking data could also be considered as part of the scrutiny input into the Council's measures and activities.

Councillor Hunneman then asked for comment on the worsening situation in relation to the target to bring 80 empty homes back into use by 31 March 2015. 48 had been achieved by quarter three for this measure which was reported as 'amber'. In response, Councillor Croft explained that the very good performance achieved in 2013/14 had been difficult to replicate to date in the current financial year.

Councillor Hunneman then queried the reasons behind the reducing number of discretionary housing payments awarded. Councillor Croft stated that this was a demand led activity and, in response to Councillor Hunneman's supplementary question on whether active steps were taken to advise residents of these payments, he confirmed that many such steps were taken for this scheme which had been in place for two years.

Councillor Hunneman's next question was in relation to the falling number of people starting an apprenticeship in a West Berkshire business. Councillor Law advised that he too had queried this with Officers and explained that the number shown per quarter were net additions. In addition, there was an expectation that numbers would be higher in the first two quarters of the financial year due to applications from school leavers.

Councillor Hunneman's final question was whether more up to date health data could be obtained than 2012/13. Councillor Marcus Franks explained that this data was provided by Public Health England and he took the opportunity to point out that for three of these four health measures, West Berkshire was significantly better than the national average. Councillor Franks went on to explain that separate and more up to date data was provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Councillor Lundie added that endeavours would be made to provide more up to date statistics in the performance report in this area.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that the number of live applicants on the Common Housing Register had increased by 33% from the position reported a year ago. He also noted that this situation could have been improved if affordable homes had been made available as

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part of the Parkway development. In response, Councillor Croft first commented that the Council continued to actively pursue having affordable homes on the Parkway site. In terms of the increased number on the Common Housing Register, Councillor Croft explained that new qualifying criteria had been introduced in quarter one and this had resulted in many people re-registering. Councillor Lundie added that further detail would be provided in response to this point, post further investigation taking place.

### **RESOLVED that:**

1. Progress against the key accountable measures and activities be noted.
2. Those areas reporting as 'red' or 'amber' be reviewed to ensure that appropriate corrective or remedial action was put in place.

### **Reason for the decision:**

1. This framework complies 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.
2. 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 the Council can assess itself and publicly report progress.

**Other options considered:** n/a.

### **83. Response to the Scrutiny Review into the Reasons for the Apparent Prevalence of Homelessness amongst Young Families in West Berkshire (EX2947)**

*(Councillor Marcus Franks declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7 by virtue of the fact that he worked for a registered housing provider. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).*

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) which proposed the Executive's response to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) following its review into the reasons for the apparent prevalence of homelessness amongst young families in West Berkshire.

By way of background, Councillor Roger Croft advised the Executive that in November 2012, the OSMC agreed to undertake a scrutiny review into homelessness in West Berkshire and this was conducted in 2013. A year later, the OSMC decided to conduct a separate review, specifically into the issue of young families being made homeless by a lack of accommodation support from their extended family and friends. Eight recommendations were made by the scrutiny task group, which were then endorsed by the OSMC in the summer of 2014.

The recommendations and the proposed responses were set out in the report and Councillor Croft asked the Executive to approve the responses.

Councillor Alan Macro noted the comment made in the scrutiny report that no research had been identified that looked into the reasons why homelessness occurred. He questioned whether the Council could request that this research be commissioned via appropriate bodies. Councillor Croft responded with the view that research was available and referred to reports provided to the Council's Homelessness Forum from Shelter (housing and homelessness charity). Councillor Gordon Lundie also questioned the accuracy of the comment made in the scrutiny report and felt this should be reviewed. Councillor Macro felt that further clarity would be useful on this point.

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Councillor Quentin Webb, Chairman of the scrutiny task group for this review, advised that this view was reached based on the information readily available for the scrutiny work.

Councillor Macro then expressed disappointment with the response to the recommendations to review the information made available within West Berkshire’s secondary schools and academies. The response stated that this could not be implemented due to limited resources, but Councillor Macro queried whether at the very least schools could be signposted to information already available. Councillor Webb stated the scrutiny review did identify that information leaflets were available in schools.

Councillor Croft gave the view that information provided to schools in relation to housing was an area of strength with registered housing providers already liaising with schools. Councillor Marcus Franks reinforced this point by adding that information on housing options was provided to schools. Councillor Lundie noted these points, but felt that further signposting mechanisms should be explored in order to advise young people as much as possible.

Councillor Macro then turned to the response to the recommendation for Public Health to develop the role of health visitors to help identify young families at risk of homelessness. He noted that health visitors would not be commissioned by the Council until October 2015, but he felt that preparations should be made for appropriate training in this area in readiness for that time. Councillor Franks agreed that training could be offered in October and the view in relation to preparedness would be taken on board.

Councillor Gwen Mason referred to the seventh recommendation which related to securing more supported accommodation placements for young families, but raised concern that there was an issue of damp in the accommodation at Bramlings. She queried whether this impacted on the potential use of Bramlings. Councillor Keith Chopping responded by referring to a comment in the Council Performance Report where it was stated that the problem of damp was being addressed. In addition, it was believed that the issue only related to one unit.

Councillor Croft explained to Members that the number of families affected by homelessness in the last year (16), compared almost equally to the national average.

**RESOLVED that** the proposed response to the recommendations be endorsed by the Executive.

**Reason for the decision:** To provide a response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

**Other options considered:** None.

**84. Members' Questions**

There were no Member questions submitted.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 5.25pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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