

# DRAFT

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

## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2016

**Councillors Present:** Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle (Chairman), Pamela Bale, Jeff Beck, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb (Vice-Chairman), Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Peta Stoddart-Crompton (Public Relations Officer), Andy Walker (Head of Finance) and Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles and Phil Rumens (Digital Services Manager)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Howard Bairstow, Councillor Jeremy Bartlett, Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Richard Crumly, Councillor Rob Denton-Powell and Councillor Gordon Lundie

#### PART I

##### 94. Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that in respect of Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2016/17) all Members, except Councillor Nick Goodes, had completed an Application for a Grant of a Dispensation in relation to "any beneficial interest" in land within the Authority's area. The Monitoring Officer had granted the dispensation to allow all those Members that applied for a dispensation to speak and vote on these items.

Andy Day also reported that Councillor Lynne Doherty had an interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2016/17) by virtue of the fact that Councillor Doherty's employer was a recipient of the Short Breaks Funding. Councillor Doherty had applied to the Governance and Ethics Committee for a dispensation to speak and vote on this item. The Committee decided that Councillor Doherty could speak and vote on the Phase 1 consultation responses as a whole, but could only speak on the short breaks for children and not vote on this issue should this situation occur.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer stated that Councillors Marcus Franks and Lee Dillon had an interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2016/17) by virtue of the fact that their employer, Sovereign Housing Association, received funding from the Council for its Neighbourhood Warden Scheme. Both Councillors had applied to the Governance and Ethics Committee for a dispensation to speak and vote on this item. The Committee decided that a dispensation should be granted but that the dispensation would permit Councillor Franks and Councillor Dillon to speak but not vote on this item.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer also informed Members that Councillor Mike Johnston had notified him that he had a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue

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Budget) by virtue of the fact that his wife was employed, on a casual basis, by the Visitor Information Centre and he would be leaving the room during the course of discussing and voting on this matter.

Andy Day explained that Councillor Jeff Beck was a trustee of the Corn Exchange, Readibus and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. As he had a fiduciary duty to these trusts he determined, in respect of Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget), to leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and would not take part in the vote.

The Councillors set out below declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget).

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Outside Body</b>	<b>Other</b>
Bale, Pamela	East Downlands Children's Centre Advisory Board  Governor of Pangbourne Primary School	Regular user of Pangbourne Library
Bryant, Paul	Greenham Common Trust  Donnington Trust  Harwell Restoration	
Clifford, Jeanette	Governor of St Bartholomew's School  A foundation Governor of the St Bartholomew's Foundation  A member of The Corn Exchange  Newbury Town Council link Councillor to the West Berkshire Museum  Trustee of Mabel Luke Charity – almshouses	User of Newbury Library; User of Northcroft Leisure Centre;  Attends events at The Watermill;
Goff, Dave	Foundation Governor at St Bartholomew's School	
Jackson-Doerge, Carol	Corn Exchange  The Watermill Theatre  Governor of St Marys Burghfield	
Jaques, Marigold	West Berks Citizens Advice Bureau	
Jones, Rick	WB Mencap – WBC representative	

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Councillor	Outside Body	Other
	West Berkshire Disability Alliance	
Lock, Mollie	Burghfield Children's Centre - Member on the Board (no financial responsibilities)	User of Mortimer Library. User of No 75 Bus service. Bus Passes.
Macro, Alan		Occasional user of Theale Library  Member of Theale Parish Council. (Theale Parish Council utilises, and helps fund, the Neighbourhood Warden Service and CCTV Service)
Podger, James	Governing Body at Mary Hare School	
Stansfeld, Anthony		Police and Crime Commissioner

### 106. Revenue Budget 2016/17 (C2979)

*(All Members, except Councillor Nick Goodes, had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item).*

*(Councillor Lynne Doherty declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that Councillor Doherty's employer was a recipient of Short Breaks funding. Following the granting of a dispensation to speak and vote on this item, unless short breaks for children were specifically discussed, she determined to remain in the meeting and vote on the item).*

*(Councillors Marcus Franks and Lee Dillon declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that their employer, Sovereign Housing Association, received funding from the Council for its Neighbourhood Warden Scheme. Following the granting of a dispensation to speak but not vote on this item they determined to take part in the debate but not vote on this item).*

*(Councillor Mike Johnston declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that his wife was employed, on a casual basis, by the Visitor Information Centre. As his interest was personal and a disclosable pecuniary interest he determined to leave the meeting and took no part in the debate or voting on the matter).*

*(Councillor Jeff Beck declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that he was a trustee of the Corn Exchange, Readibus and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. However as he had a fiduciary duty to these trusts he determined to leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and did not take part in the vote).*

*(Councillors Pamela Bale, Paul Bryant, Jeanette Clifford, Dave Goff, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Rick Jones, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, James Podger and*

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*Anthony Stansfeld declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 for the reasons set out in the table in Agenda Item 4. As their interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).*

*(Councillors Jeff Beck and Mike Johnston left the meeting at 8.29pm and did not return).*

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 16) concerning the 2016/17 revenue budget.

The Chairman clarified the rules of debate for this item which had been agreed by both Group Leaders prior to the meeting. Both Leaders would be permitted to speak for up to ten minutes and their presentations should include the submission of any amendments. All Portfolio and Shadow Portfolio Holders would be permitted to speak for up to five minutes on the motion and amendments with all other Members being allowed two and a half minutes to speak.

The Chairman pointed out that Members would have been lobbied on the revenue proposals and this was noted. It was also noted that a significant number of Members were also Parish or Town Councillors.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Graham Jones:

“That the Council:

- 1) Notes the responses received to each of the 47 public facing savings proposals in relation to Phase 1 of the public consultation exercise undertaken on the 2016/17 budget.
- 2) Considers the use of the 2016/17 transitional grant as a means of mitigating the impact of some of the Phase 1 proposals and where this is not used, the recommendations set out in the Overview and Recommendations template be approved.
- 3) Recommends that those public health grant funded services (marked as “to be progressed”) in the Overview and Recommendations template totalling £114,000 be progressed.
- 4) Approves the 2016/17 revenue budget requirement for Council Tax setting purposes of £82.28 million requiring a Council Tax increase of 1.99%.
- 5) Applies the 2% ring-fenced adult social care precept.
- 6) Approves the Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix H and the appropriate statutory notices be placed where required.
- 7) Approves the Special Expenses as set out in Appendix I.
- 8) Approves the Efficiency Strategy for Use of Capital Receipts as set out in Appendix O.
- 9) Authority be delegated to the Executive, on 24 March 2016, to adjust the Council’s budget plans, should the responses to Phase 2 of the public consultation require it to do so.
- 10) Permits the Executive, on 24 March 2016, to propose where the transitional grant funding of £1.39m be used.
- 11) Notes the following amounts for the year 2016/2017 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (by the Localism Act 2011):-
  - a) *62,626.13 being the amount calculated by the Council, (Item T) in accordance with regulation 31B of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), as its council tax base for the year.*

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- b) Part of the Council's area as per Appendix M being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates.*
- 12) Calculates that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2016/2017 (excluding Parish precepts) is £82,281,340.
- 13) Calculates the following amounts for the year 2016/2017 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, amended by the Localism Act 2011:-
- a) £292,700,038 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2)(a) to (f) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.*
- b) £206,549,768 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act.*
- c) £86,150,270 being the amount by which the aggregate at 13(a) above, exceeds the aggregate at 13(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R).*
- d) £1375.63 being the amount at 13(c) above (Item R), all divided by 11 (a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the 'basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).*
- e) £3,868,930 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per Appendix M).*
- f) £1313.85 being the amount at 13(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 13(e) above by the amount at 11(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relate.*
- 14) Notes that for the year 2016/2017 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley & the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Councils area as indicated in Appendix M.
- 15) In accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables in Appendix M as the amounts of Council Tax for 2016/2017 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings."

Councillor Croft in introducing the report noted that this was West Berkshire Council's most challenging budget ever as the principle source of government funding had been cut by the Government by 44% in 2016/17. This meant that the savings requirement for the Council had increased from £10.8 million to £18 million since December 2015. The authority however had a duty to set a balanced budget.

As a consequence Members were required to make difficult decisions as the Council was unable to continue to provide the existing levels of service. The Council and its residents would have to identify different models for delivering services including supporting Parish and Town Councils and community organisations to take on some of the responsibility for delivering services if they were valued by local communities.

Councillor Croft explained that the Council had deliberately used its reserves. They were currently at a level of around one month's revenue which could be a critical position if an emergency situation, such as flooding should occur.

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Executive Members and Officers had been working hard to identify savings proposals which would still allow the authority to set a balanced budget. Councillor Croft thanked them and all the residents that had responded to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the public consultations. He reminded members of the public that the Phase 2 consultation would close on 7 March 2016. Councillor Croft acknowledged the impact some of these savings could have on residents' lives.

Members had lobbied Ministers on their proposed cut to the Revenue Support Grant and he thanked West Berkshire's three Members of Parliament for their support in lobbying the Secretary of State. As a result of this, the Council had secured transition funding of £1.4m for each of the next two years. This funding would be used to help others to develop new models of delivery. The Executive had agreed that all transitional funding would be used to support this work.

Councillor Croft stated that the budget comprised three strands. The first of these sought to increase revenue. This would be achieved by raising Council Tax by 1.99%. In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had granted the ability to raise an additional 2% precept for adult social care responsibilities which the authority would be taking up. This would result in a total increase of 3.99% in Council Tax.

The Leader acknowledged that increasing Council Tax would impact on all residents, especially the low paid, the vulnerable and those on fixed incomes. However, faced with the level of savings required this increase was unavoidable.

In addition the Executive was also recommending an increase to other fees and charges such as car parking fees. This increase in revenue proposals would generate approximately £5m.

The second strand of the budget was the internal efficiencies that the Council would be making whilst still meeting its statutory duties. Just over £5m of savings had been identified and regrettably this would result in over 100 jobs being lost in 2016/17. Other proposals included sharing more services with other local authorities, looking at different models of delivery, working with partners, including Parish and Town Councils, and working with the community and community organisations.

The third strand of the budget introduced changes to frontline services. The Council had a statutory duty to provide certain services and any savings would have to come from discretionary areas. These proposals would generate £8m of savings. Local organisations had already started to identify ways of reducing the impact of some of the cuts.

The transition grant would be used to help mitigate some of the effects of the savings the Council was being forced to make. As the grant would only be available for two years it would be used to fund those services which the residents said that they valued the most. Community groups would have to work together to transform those services ensuring that they would be sustainable without Council funding going forward.

Councillor Croft stated that before moving on to the detail of the transition funding, he would like to propose the first of two amendments. The first amendment proposed that the Phase 2 public facing savings proposals be determined by a special meeting of Council on 24 March 2016 and not the Executive as recommended in the report.

If approved the Executive would still meet on the 24 March 2016 and make appropriate recommendations to Council on the use of the remaining transition funding.

He also gave notice of his second amendment that proposed four service areas where the Executive recommended some of the £1.4m transition funding should be spent. As the Phase 2 consultation would close on 7 March 2016 it would be inappropriate to make

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any comment or decision on those proposals until the consultation closed and the results had been analysed.

Councillor Croft stated that it was with a heavy heart that he put forward the proposals.

**AMENDMENT 1:** Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Alan Macro:

“That recommendation (9) be replaced with the following:

‘That the Executive, on 24 March 2016, make appropriate recommendations to a special meeting of Council on 24 March 2016, to adjust the Council’s budget plans should the responses to Phase 2 of the public consultation require it to do so’.

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

**AMENDMENT 2:** Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Graham Jones:

*“That recommendation (2) be approved and adopted subject to Council agreeing to allocate transition funding, as set out below, to the following Phase 1 public consultation areas of service:*

- *Short Breaks for Children - £170,000*
- *Two Saints floating support service and Step by Step Lodgings service - £100,000*
- *Empowering West Berkshire - £25,000*
- *Adult Social Care Learning Disability Clients - £100,000”*

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that this amendment was similar to one which the Liberal Democrats had tabled and subsequently changed which included a proposal to support the important Short Break service.

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

Discussion then returned to the substantive motion. Councillor Alan Macro stated that there was no doubt that the Council had been impacted negatively by the timing and severity of the cuts in the Revenue Support Grant. He stated that in addition to the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant the Government was also decreasing the Dedicated Schools Grant.

He was of the opinion that the Council needed to work with other Councils to achieve better deals in terms of procurement, seek to achieve economies of scale for large contracts and that all budgets should be subjected to a zero based budgeting approach. He also suggested that alternative service delivery options should be looked at. For example, he suggested that a commercial partner should be sought to help run Shaw House and that the authority should be seeking to share more back office functions and possibly accommodation with other authorities and charities. He also felt that more partnership work should be undertaken with town and parish councils.

*(Councillor James Podger left the meeting at 8.45pm and returned at 8.47pm)*

Councillor Macro commented that libraries were valued by residents and that every effort should be made to save these valued services. Councillor Macro welcomed the fact that all the transitional funding would be used and asked for a commitment that if the Council received any funding from the Care Act that it too would be used to reverse some of the proposed cuts.

**AMENDMENT 3:** Proposed by Councillor Alan Macro and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

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*“That recommendation (2) be approved and adopted subject to Council agreeing to allocate transition funding, as set out below, to the following Phase 1 public consultation areas of service*

*£132,500 to be used to delay the implementation of the cuts to home-to-school transport until the start of the new school year. This is to allow the following:*

- The works required to improve the walking routes to be completed*
- Give parents time to change their family arrangements to allow them to accompany or drive their children to school*
- Allow parents time to budget for the increase in farepayer fares*

*£21,000 to delay implementation of the cut of the school crossing patrol service for one year to allow schools and communities to find other ways to fund this valued service.”*

Councillor Macro reiterated his Group’s support for using £170k of the transitional funding to support the short breaks service.

Cuts to Home to School Transport would mean more children would have to be driven or accompanied to school which could prove to be very problematic for parents. His Group were therefore proposing to use £132,500 to delay the implementation of these cuts until the start of the new academic year. This would allow time for families to put arrangements in place to deal with the removal of these services. It would also allow time to make the routes safe.

Councillor Macro also informed Council that his Group were proposing to use £21k of the transition funding towards school crossing patrollers who were greatly valued by pupils and their parents. It was only a small amount of funding in comparison to the total budget.

Council Macro stated, that based on advice received, he had withdrawn the proposals relating to home to school transport originally set out in the tabled amendment.

Councillor Macro stated that if the transitional funding was used it would give residents the opportunity to adjust to the cuts.

Councillor Dominic Boeck stated if the budget was approved then discretionary home to school transport provided to some families would be removed. Some families would then be asked to pay more for seats on buses than they currently did. This proposal generated a large number of consultation responses with children’s safety being a common theme. The Council had listened carefully to parents and as a result some changes had already been made to some of the routes. Independent advice had been sought on the Mortimer to Willink route assessment and the independent advisor had supported the Council’s original assessment. Councillor Boeck also noted that Thames Valley Police had not declared any of the routes as being unsafe.

To assist parents of pupils using Mortimer to Willink, Bucklebury to Kennet and Aldermaston Wharf to Aldermaston Primary School routes they would be offered priority fare paying seats on buses at standard rates and payments could be made via eight separate payments spread across the year.

As parents would be asked to take more responsibility of their children to and from school it would not be reasonable to fund school crossing patrollers. Given the level of savings required in Phase 2 it would be better not to spend the money suggested in amendment 3 until the outcome of the consultation was known.

Councillor Hilary Cole stated that school crossing patrols were not a universal service and only benefitted pupils at certain schools. It would therefore not be unreasonable to

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ask those schools to fund the service or to seek sponsorship for it. It was unfair to ask other residents to subsidise these schools.

Councillor Graham Jones thanked Councillor Macro for removing the reference to home to school transport from his original amendment as its inclusion could have fettered Members discretion when they were considering the Phase 2 savings. He reiterated Councillor Boeck's comment that if the transition funding was spent now there would not be the opportunity to spend it on the Phase 2 proposals and therefore he was unable to support the amendment.

Councillor Mollie Lock noted that the standard fare referred to by Councillor Boeck would cost parents around £640 per annum which was a significant increase on the £250 they were currently required to pay. She was also concerned that the earliest date on which the bus service could be stopped was the 18 April 2016 and Rights of Way Officers had confirmed that it would take 55 days (mid June) to upgrade the Mortimer to Willink route. Councillor Boeck confirmed that the standard rate bus seat would cost £684.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that the second amendment allowed some of the transition funding to be spent and therefore he felt that it was unfair to turn down the amendments set out in amendment 3. The Liberal Democrat amendment set out clearly how the transitional arrangements could be achieved to protect residents and were genuine attempts to transition services.

Councillor Macro responded to Councillor Cole's comments by stating that not all schools were adjacent to busy roads. He reminded Members that schools were also faced with budget problems given the reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Councillor Croft stated that around £400k of the transitional funding had been allocated and around £1m had deliberately been retained in order to fully consider the outcomes of the second consultation.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.17.3 it was requisitioned that the voting on Amendment 3 be recorded. The names of those Members voting for, against and abstaining were read to the Council as follows:

### **FOR the Amendment**

Billy Drummond, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro

### **AGAINST the Amendment**

Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Pamela Bale, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Ian Morrin, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

### **ABSTENTIONS**

Paul Hewer, Tim Metcalfe, Graham Pask

Councillors Lee Dillon, Marcus Franks and Nick Goodes did not vote. Councillors Jeff Beck and Mike Johnston had left the meeting given that they had declared interests.

The Amended Motion was put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

Members then returned to the Substantive Motion. Councillor Alan Law stated that he had some empathy with residents' frustration at having services removed that had

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seemed to be in place forever. He outlined the changes that had had a significant impact on funding.

He noted that there had been changes to population demographics. The population was ageing and advances in medical technology were also prolonging people's lifespan often at very high costs for treatment and support, and there had been significant changes in expectations around safeguarding. As an illustration in 2001 the Council had spent £21.9m (31%) on social services and by 2016 this had risen to £56.3m (46%).

Members were faced with difficult choices between, for example, caring for the most vulnerable residents versus keeping libraries open which were used widely by residents. He understood that residents would not agree with all the proposals in the budget but he hoped that they had gained some understanding of the backdrop and difficulties faced following the debate at the meeting.

Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that as the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People she had a duty to protect children who were at risk of abuse or neglect. She was however still able to support this budget. She had a statutory obligation to minimise the impact on this vulnerable group. In her opinion the budget delivered on key areas in her Portfolio.

*(Councillor Rick Jones left at 9.14pm and returned at 9.16pm)*

The Council's core frontline social care teams and the work they were doing to implement the Ofsted Improvement Plan had been protected. The Disabled Children's Team were able to continue their transition work with families with regard to education, health and care plans. The Family Resource Team could continue their targeted work with families in need. Support could continue to be offered to care leavers, children and young people at risk of substance misuse and the successful Turnaround Families Programme would continue. There was also funding still available for innovative projects such as the Health Academy.

Areas of disinvestment in this area included prevention and early intervention. Although she supported early help and universal provision Councillor Doherty appreciated that it was difficult to calculate the impact this support had. This area of work was also not the sole responsibility of the local authority and by working effectively with partners and communities she was sure that the impact of these savings could be mitigated against.

Councillor Doherty had attended the Save our Services meeting and she was pleased to see the willingness to look for solutions to allow some discretionary services to continue. The children that were supported within her service often did not have vociferous parents to champion their needs. The Council had listened to the views raised during Phase 1 and recognised, in particular, the importance of providing short breaks for parents of children with disabilities. She emphasised that it was never the intention to stop providing this service but there was a need to rationalise provision. To reach all residents the Council would have to look at alternative solutions by working with new and existing partners. She was pleased to support the budget, with the amendments, as it provided an effective, available and value for money Children's Service in West Berkshire.

Councillor Hilary Cole had never envisaged having to present savings like these to Council. She noted that many of the services in Adult Social Care were statutory. Councillor Cole commented that the authority had been let down by the Department of Health over funding for the Care Act.

The transformation programme, which would ensure services were delivered in a different way, and which was being implemented in Adult Social Care, would generate around £800k in savings. She too was pleased to see that £100k of the transition funding would be spent on the Two Saints floating support service and Step by Step lodging

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service and an additional £100k had been allocated to the Adult Social Care Disability Clients programme. This funding would allow the organisations and Officers' time to come up with new ways to deliver services to the most vulnerable in the community.

Within Culture and Countryside Phase 1 savings included closing the Visitor Information Centre and public conveniences in the Wharf area in Newbury. She was disappointed that neither the Newbury BID nor the Town Council had been able to commit to take these on. She was pleased that Kintbury residents had been able to come up with a proposal to take over the running of the Kintbury Jubilee Leisure Centre.

Councillor Hilary Cole thanked Officers for all the work they had undertaken and were still undertaking to plug the funding gap that had arisen since Christmas 2015. These proposals were still being consulted on and she accepted that none of these savings were palatable as they pertained to services that residents valued the most.

*(Councillor Manohar Gopal left the meeting at 9.24pm and returned at 9.27pm)*

Councillor Cole stated that she derived no pleasure in decreasing library provision down to one library. She had previously stated that she had no intention of closing the libraries but circumstances had changed so dramatically that the decision had had to be revisited. She was well aware of the effect these decisions would have on the residents of the district and these decisions had not been taken lightly. Councillor Cole commented that there had been a lot of soul searching about these proposals. Meetings with various organisations to consider ways of mitigating the impact were ongoing.

Councillor Cole paid tribute to the Officers for the selfless way they had faced these difficult proposals.

Councillor Garth Simpson advised that the reductions to the highways budget affected maintenance budgets and operational transport budgets. Although it was not a popular option it had been necessary to increase car parking charges across the district. This income would be used to protect front line services. The LED replacement street lighting programme had also generated significant revenue savings (circa £1m) which would also be used to protect some of the frontline services. He commended the difficult budget to Members.

Councillor James Fredrickson stated that following the December 2015 announcement the Executive had met and agreed to a three phased approach to the budget. The first would be to fight for transitional funding, the second would be to consult on how any funding awarded could be used (even if the consultation period had to be reduced to three weeks) and thirdly that all the transition funding awarded would be used to assist frontline services.

In terms of the consultation process the vast majority of the services the Council provided were statutory and there were therefore not that many options available in terms of discretionary spending. The budget had to be set against a backdrop of changing demographics and an ageing population. The Council still, however, had a legal duty to set a balanced budget. The ramifications of not doing so were severe and could result in the authority being declared bankrupt or being taken over by another authority for statutory services. There were no easy alternatives for the Council. He assured Councillor Macro that as Portfolio Holder for Human Resources he had gone through their budgets line by line.

Councillor Fredrickson commented that this had been a very painful process for Officers and he thanked them for their professionalism, care and dedication in putting together the savings proposals at great speed whilst striving to mitigate the impact the savings would have.

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Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that in continuing to provide care for the most vulnerable residents it had become necessary to remove some of the discretionary services the Council provided or to deliver them in a different way. The Council would continue to provide services it was legally required to provide.

He was aware that the services provided by Children's Centres were important and highly regarded by young families. These services would still be provided albeit in a different way. The district would be divided into three family and wellbeing areas. The Council would rationalise the number of buildings it used to provide these services and would also strive to make use of existing community buildings.

Councillor Boeck commented that there would be further proposals in Phase 2 of the savings proposals and he urged all residents affected to respond and to try and identify new ways of delivering services.

Councillor Marcus Franks commented that this was a difficult process which was exacerbated by the short timescales imposed on the Council. None of the decisions would be taken lightly. Members needed to make a balanced decision between services provided for the district's most vulnerable residents and those enjoyed by the wider population.

The transitional funding was the result of a lot of hard work on behalf of the local Members of Parliament and he thanked them for that. He urged residents to continue to take part in the Phase 2 consultation and to come forward with community led solutions. Discussions were also ongoing with neighbouring authorities about cross border charging for waste recycling services. He supported the balanced budget in challenging times.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that he was disappointed not to be able to vote but that if he was able to do so he would be voting against the proposals. He was concerned about the scale of the savings proposals and the impact they would have on residents. He was disappointed that the Liberal Democrat amendment had been lost as it would have allowed the Council and communities time to come up with solutions in the areas identified in the amendment. He felt that despite the size of the cuts the Council should have been in a position to do better.

He was of the opinion that the Council lacked innovation in terms of remodelling services and income generation. He noted that other authorities had set up trading companies, sold services, invested in property, set up joint ventures, were selling energy and expertise etc because they had foreseen the difficult financial future for local councils.

He would be asking the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to set up a task group to look into income generation initiatives.

Councillor Graham Jones stated that the Council was and had, for some considerable time, been looking at income generation, rationalising back office functions and zero based budgeting. The issues being experienced by West Berkshire Council were not unique and were replicated across the country.

Councillor Jones stated that it was with regret that the Council would not be able to continue to provide all the services it previously had. The Council and its community would have to find new ways of delivering services whether that be by creating trusts, empowering town and parish councils or by Members working with their communities to find alternative solutions.

Councillor Emma Webster requested that in accordance with paragraph 4.9.12 (v) of the Constitution the meeting be permitted to go on until 10.30pm if required. The Council voted in favour of this proposal.

## COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

Councillor Roger Croft noted that this budget also included the Council's revised fees and charges for the forthcoming financial year. Councillor Croft stated that local government had to change and at a much faster rate. Members, alongside the district's MPs, would continue to lobby Central Government for better funding and the retention of business rates. He commended the budget to Members subject to the inclusion of the agreed amendments.

Prior to the vote being taken the Monitoring Officer announced that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/165) (2014 Regulations) came into effect on the 25 February 2014 and as a consequence the Council was required to record the names of Members voting for and against the budget proposals.

### **FOR the Substantive-Motion**

Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Pamela Bale, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Roger Croft, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

### **AGAINST the Substantive-Motion**

Billy Drummond and Alan Macro

### **ABSTAINED**

Mollie Lock

Councillors Lee Dillon, Marcus Franks and Nick Goodes did not vote. Councillors Jeff Beck and Mike Johnston had left the meeting given that they had declared interests.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 9.55pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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