

# DRAFT

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

## EXECUTIVE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2020

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

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Executive Director - Place), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Paul Coe (Service Director, Adult Social Care), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Shiraz Sheikh (Legal Services Manager), Councillor Adrian Abbs, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Carlyne Culver, Councillor Owen Jeffery, Councillor Rick Jones, Councillor Steve Masters, Councillor Erik Pattenden, Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Martha Vickers and Councillor Tony Vickers

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Tess Ethelston (Conservative Group Executive) and Andy Sharp (Executive Director – People)

#### PART I

##### 55. Minutes

Councillor Lynne Doherty opened the meeting. She highlighted that this would be the last Executive meeting that John Ashworth, the Executive Director for Place, would attend before his retirement at the end of the calendar year. Councillor Doherty took the opportunity to formally thank John for his years of service to West Berkshire Council. His calm and considered approach was highly valued and he would be much missed.

Councillor Jeff Brooks gave his support to those comments and added best wishes for John for the future.

Councillor Doherty also took the opportunity to wish attendees a Merry Christmas and a safe festive season.

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19 November 2020 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

##### 56. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

##### 57. 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) The question submitted by Mr Ian Hall on the subject of the cleanliness of streams would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.
- (b) The question submitted by Mr Graham Storey on the subject of the conversion of some of West Berkshire's unsold 'affordable houses for sale' to 'homes for social rent' was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (c) The question submitted by Mr John Gotelee on the subject of surface water run off at the A339 junction was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (d) The question submitted by Mr William Wood on the subject of the broadcasting of public meetings was answered by the Leader of the Council.

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- (e) The question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of making the current football ground available for the next three years for men's, youth and ladies organised football was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (f) The question submitted by Mr Paul Morgan on the subject of a breakdown of all anticipated costs associated with the replacement football ground was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (g) The question submitted by Mrs Karen Swaffield on the subject of removal of comments from the YouTube video of the Council meeting on 3 December was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- (h) The question submitted by Mr Lee McDougall on the subject of what legal advice the Council acted on to change the football pitch at Faraday Road to a recreational open space was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (i) The question submitted by Mr Lee McDougall on the subject of what the legal advice was to change the football pitch at Faraday Road to a recreational open space was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (j) The question submitted by Mr Darren King on the subject of whether the Council meeting on 3 December 2020 would encourage members of the public from diverse backgrounds to get involved in local politics was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- (k) The question submitted by Mr Jason Braidwood on the subject of the forecasted public use of the proposed recreational space at Faraday Road was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (l) The question submitted by Mr Jason Braidwood on the subject of the source of the supporting data to reach the public use forecasts for the Faraday Road recreational space was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (m) The question submitted by Mr John Stewart on the subject of a contingency plan for the replacement football ground in Newbury would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

### 58. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

### 59. London Road Development Options (EX3978)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning the objectives of development on the London Road Industrial Estate and requested funding to help achieve the objectives through successful development of the site. The project remained a priority as part of the Council Strategy and the report sought to provide a way forward to enable development on the site, in a phased approach, following consideration of the Development Brief, and the consultation on this, as well as the Council's objectives for the site as a whole.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon in introducing the report stated that whilst there would be a holistic overall vision for the regenerated estate the Council was proposing a phased approach to development of the site on a plot by client basis rather than a comprehensive approach which would mean that the use of compulsory purchase orders would be far less likely and there would be a lower risk to the Council.

Paragraph 5.14 stated that the development of the site was economic development led, where high quality regenerations was of equal importance to financial returns and that a

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mixed use should include housing. Two budgetary recommendations had also been included – an in-year one-off budget of £45k to provide funding for feasibility studies and negotiations with the stakeholders and then over the next three years a revenue budget of £100k to provide for consultancy support during the project development where the Council did not have the internal resources available. Councillor Mackinnon pointed out that the Council had not ruled out the option of a Local Development Order either.

Councillor Howard Woollaston seconded the report and stated that the London Road Industrial Estate was the prime regeneration site for Newbury. The report quite rightly proposed a phased developed over the next ten years to allow the Council to pick the most appropriate joint venture partners to be selected for the different elements of this 25 acre site. The main driver was going to be economic development on this site which was already designated for employment purposes. This was likely to be facilitated by residential development which would include significant affordable housing on the southern end of the site. The revenue derived from this would act as a catalyst for the infrastructure works which would allow for commercial development on the larger northern end of the site to enable employment opportunities for local residents. The Council would work in partnership with existing occupiers of the site to relocate them over the medium term.

Councillor Jeff Brooks expressed his concerns about the project management element. It was noted that the Task Group had looked at the previous development proposal for the site and project management was found to be wanting. He noted in paragraph 5.13 that there would be a dedicated lead Project Officer but in his opinion this would just be a glorified Quantity Surveyor who would check what was being spent and what was slipping. That would not actually manage the project. The Executive Director (Resources) was the project sponsor which would not be a dedicated role and also a Member lead which could also not be a dedicated role. He therefore had severe concerns about the robustness of the Council's project management capability and he asked for some reassurance and confidence that the Lead Officer would be capable of undertaking the role. Councillor Mackinnon responded that he had full confidence in the Lead Officer who would be responsible for the day to day management of the project.

Councillor Tony Vickers stated that the Liberal Democrats were very concerned about the lack of clarity over the relationship between the planning side of taking this project forward and the landowner's responsibility. He noted that the production of a supplementary planning document would take place in the next 6 to 24 months and he asked if further clarity could be provided about the necessary division of responsibility as it was about time that there was some clear planning policy around this. Councillor Ross Mackinnon confirmed that his portfolio would oversee the project from a landowner's point of view. The report stated that the Council would be preparing the supplementary planning document over the coming months but Councillor Vickers was asking for things that had not yet happened. Councillor Hilary Cole referred to the Local Plan review and in particular paragraph 7.6 of SP20 which stated that the London Road Industrial Estate was an edge of centre designated employment area which had scope for comprehensive regeneration within the plan period to maximise the potential of the site and office development might be appropriate in that context. There was additional supporting text in DC31 Designated Employment Areas (paragraph 12.7) which stated that in addition the London Road Industrial Estate had scope for comprehensive regeneration within the plan period to maximise the potential of the site. Some mixed use development might be appropriate in the context, such that no net loss of employment floorspace resulted from that development. As a Member on the Planning Advisory Group, Councillor Vickers should be fully aware that the Council had to operate as a local planning authority and as a landowner and those divisions were quite clear and definite. The Local Plan review was

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out for consultation and once the responses to the consultation had been analysed the consultation document would be taken to the Planning Advisory Group to formulate those policies. Councillor Vickers stated that the Project Manager was line managed by the Economic Development Officer who reported to the Head of Planning and Development which in itself seemed to imply that there was a problem. Councillor Ross Mackinnon reiterated that the line management arrangements were what they were but he had full confidence that the Officers would be able to handle those duties responsibly.

Councillor Erik Pattenden noted that Councillor Mackinnon spent a great deal of time answering questions in relation to the fate of the football provision in London Road and he wondered if it was felt that the report could have potentially done more to pacify those concerns and address the needs of the people asking these questions on a regular basis. Councillor Mackinnon responded that he was always happy to answer questions from members of the public. An announcement would be made very shortly in relation to the re-provision of a football facility and therefore the development of the industrial estate and the provision of football in the district would then follow separate paths.

Councillor Adrian Abbs raised concerns about the impact of Covid and the uncertainty as to what the future would hold. Councillor Mackinnon had said that the Council were already committed to spending a further £345k on this project but Councillor Abbs felt that the Council should be thinking of taking a pause to re-evaluate the situation. If the London Road Industrial Estate was a valuable asset to the Council now then it would continue to be a valuable asset. When the Council started on this project it would disrupt the businesses that were currently on the site and the football provision had already been disrupted. He queried where the community value of this development would be. Councillor Mackinnon did not accept that this was a headlong charge as he had just mentioned that there would be a three year budget during which time decisions would need to be made in relation to the precise mix of office accommodation and housing.

### **RESOLVED that:**

#### **1. The Executive resolved to approve the following:**

- (a) a phased approach option to the development of the site within an overall vision for the development as a whole.
  - (b) the objectives of the development as per paragraph 5.14.
  - (c) commissioning a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to help better align development proposals with Planning Policy, to set out estate wide design criteria and infrastructure requirements and for the cost of this work to be found out of annual funding requested in this report.
  - (d) a one-off budget of £45,000 to provide funding for feasibility services in the 2020-21 financial year including, as appropriate, negotiations with estate stakeholders with commercial interests.
  - (e) the renaming of the London Road Industrial Estate working in consultation with the public.
2. That the Executive recommended, for inclusion on the budget papers, a revenue budget of £100,000 per annum over the next three years to provide for consultancy support during the project development where the Council did not have internal resources to provide the specific project resources.

### **Other options considered:**

- (1) The Council could continue with a 'do nothing' option of leaving the site as it was and managing leasehold arrangements as they came towards expiry. This had been discounted as it did not support the Council Strategy objectives and the infrastructure on the site would continue to deteriorate.

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- (2) Redevelopment could be delivered by a 'comprehensive approach' as set out in the report. The comprehensive approach required the Council to acquire all interests on the estate to create one large redevelopment site. This would require an enormous upfront financial outlay, either via borrowings or in partnership, and where the potential enhanced financial rewards were marginal compared to a phased redevelopment. Similarly the comprehensive approach was not only more challenging to deliver but where the risks to the Council were greatly increased. For these reasons the comprehensive approach to redevelopment had been discounted.
- (3) The Council had the option to put the site on the market and seek a sale and capital receipt. This had been discounted at present as it would be unlikely to achieve the Council Strategy objectives, and the current market was very uncertain for potential investors in the site.

### 60. **Approval to adopt a revised Housing Allocations Policy (EX3902)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the adoption and implementation of the Housing Allocations Policy.

Councillor Hilary Cole presented the report. She explained that the revised Policy provided the framework that would be used to make decisions on the allocation of social and affordable homes in West Berkshire.

Allocations would be based on a more easily understood banding system than the previous points based system.

The Policy outlined both the nationally set eligibility rules for the Common Housing Register and the rules that could be set at a local level. For example, the Common Housing Register would be closed to non-West Berkshire residents.

The Policy explained the bidding process for available homes and the process for assessing applications against housing need. Reasons were provided to explain why an application would be deferred or refused. Applicants were able to request a review of such a decision.

Councillor Cole was pleased to report that additional priority would be given to key workers and to members of the Armed Forces.

She thanked officers for their thorough work in reviewing the Policy and proposed its adoption. This was seconded by Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter.

Councillor Carolyn Culver understood from data provided in November 2020 that there were 861 people who qualified for social housing at that time. She queried how many people would qualify for each category of the new banding system.

Councillor Cole explained that there were currently 816 people on the Common Housing Register who would qualify under the new Policy. She was however unable to confirm numbers on a band by band basis. She agreed to provide this in writing.

Councillor Culver then queried how the banding threshold figures of £44k and £60k were arrived at. Councillor Cole believed that these figures had been identified following research undertaken by officers. She would ask officers to confirm on this point.

Councillor Tony Vickers added his thanks to officers for their work. The revised Policy contained many positive improvements. Difficulties with the housing market continued with insufficient social housing to meet demand, but he noted that officers were doing all they could in that respect.

Councillor Tony Vickers queried when the new software would be installed to enable the revised Policy to be fully implemented. Councillor Cole gave her expectation that this

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would be early in the new year. The new software was in the process of being fully tested prior to installation.

Councillor Steve Masters added his awareness of all the hard work undertaken by officers on the Policy, in particular the provision for rough sleepers. He asked for his thanks to be passed on. Councillor Cole agreed to do so.

Councillor Masters then turned to the reference made in the Policy to approaching the private sector on the need to increase the social housing stock. He queried whether the Council would consider providing its own housing stock in some form, rather than a reliance on the private sector. Councillor Masters felt that the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) was a potential site on which to do so.

In response, Councillor Cole stated that the Council had no standard housing stock. However, the Council continued to look at ways to improve social housing provision. Social and affordable housing would be considered on Council land as sites came forward. This could therefore be a consideration on the LRIE if housing was to be developed on the site.

Councillor Masters then asked if a commitment would be made to undertake an analysis of the cost benefits of social and affordable housing delivery in-house, in comparison to the private sector.

Councillor Cole pointed out that the Council and Sovereign Housing Association had established the Joint Venture which had provided two small affordable housing schemes which would hopefully be expanded. The possibility of forming a housing company was another consideration. The Council would continue to explore all appropriate avenues.

**RESOLVED that** the revised Housing Allocations Policy, as set out at Appendix A, be adopted and fully implemented when the Housing Department's ICT allocations system was deployed.

### **Other options considered:**

The option not to review and develop a revised Housing Allocations Policy was dismissed due to changes in legislation and associated statutory guidance and the requirement to ensure that our policies reflect these.

## **61. Response to the Local Electricity Bill Motions (EX3966)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 8) which addressed two motions submitted to Council seeking support of the Local Electricity Bill. The first motion was submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs at the 3 March 2020 Full Council meeting and the second was from Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter submitted at the 10 September 2020 Full Council meeting. The report sought to address these motions and to make recommendations as to whether they should be implemented.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter confirmed that the Environment Advisory Group had been very supportive of the motions as were at least two of Berkshire's three MP's. The report had gone into a little bit more detail and had highlighted some ways in which the drafting of the Bill could be improved. For example by encouraging and showing greater direction towards explicit green energy rather than just local energy and the recommendation broadly was to recommend to all our three MP's that this Council was supportive of this sensible change in law and it looked forward to it progressing through Parliament in the early part of the following year. The support was contingent on the resolution of the issues identified in the APSE Energy report which had been attached as Appendix B to the report.

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Councillor Richard Somner confirmed that he was happy to support the proposal and there was clearly cross party support on this as it has been raised by two different parties.

Councillor Tony Vickers stated that some small companies were trying to get into this field by what could be achieved by the Bill. They would be suppliers of renewable energy and he felt that the Council was making it conditional on there being explicit mention of renewable energy. It would be a shame if the Bill fell just because of that as he felt that the majority of the companies that would be formed would be promoting renewable energy. Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter agreed that it was a good point but the purpose of the Bill was to empower organisations and definitely smaller companies to supply renewable generated electricity for local users at a competitive price.

Councillor Adrian Abbs expressed his disappointment that it had taken so long to get a response to these motions particularly when there had been cross party agreement.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) The Council supported the Local Electricity Bill that this support was contingent on the resolution of the issues identified in the APSE Energy report attached as Appendix B;
- (2) The issues identified within the existing draft of the Bill would be brought to the attention of the local MP's so that they could potentially be addressed as the Bill progressed through Parliament.

### **Other options considered:**

The Motions could be rejected but this would be at significant odds with the Council's Climate Energy Declaration, the associated target of achieving carbon neutrality for both the Council and the district by 2030, the Council's 'maintain a green district' priority for improvement and the recently adopted Environment Strategy which specifically targeted the increased adoption of energy from renewable sources.

## **62. Safer Schools Motion (EX3964)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 9) concerning the response to the Motion proposing a range of safety and environmental improvements outside schools which was presented to Council by Councillor Erik Pattenden in March 2020.

Councillor Richard Somner confirmed that this report had taken some time and considerable resource to complete due to the complexity of the issues raised. This was the reason for commissioning an independent report from WSP. This report had been discussed at the Transport Advisory Group in October.

Councillor Somner felt that the report was both factual and honest. It identified the work already undertaken by the Council and work that it continued to do. It also gave direction on areas to be focused on further into the future. It was important to ensure that Education colleagues were fully aware of the resources and support that was available to them.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter seconded the report. He stated that the issues raised within it overlapped with many other issues in particular traffic congestion around schools which was certainly a big issue in his ward and general road safety. The issues in the report were complex and he looked forward to the results from this and any follow on work that would take place.

Councillor Erik Pattenden said that the point of the Motion had been to bring all of the issues under the umbrella of safer schools. If the Council was already doing some of those things in other disparate areas the focus of a safer school did not exist and he

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asked if that focus could be provided to the initiatives that were already underway. Councillor Somner did not agree with the word 'disparate' as there was a programme of works through the department that included liaison with other departments. Highways and Transport would continue to work with the Education Team. The issue was that some of the work that was undertaken was not necessarily solely for the benefit of schools. If the focus was on one area then it was possible that need in other areas would be overlooked and that would be remiss as road safety applied to everyone across the district. Schools would be an important part of that but it was only a part of it. Traction could be gained by making sure that work could be done across the district which was surely the better approach particularly in the current climate. For example the motion suggested that car sharing was an option for schools but mixing families together to get them to school would not be best practice at present. It was essential that the Council was able to adapt but part of that came from being able to provide that resource or methodology across the wider area.

Councillor Adrian Abbs gave an example of how being disparate was an issue within the Council when two departments were not communicating with each other. Efforts needed to be made to ensure this was avoided.

Councillor Tony Vickers noted that at one time there had been a dedicated School Travel Plan Officer post who had worked with schools and he wished that that could be reintroduced. He agreed that the last nine months had been difficult for schools and therefore they had not been able to give this the priority it needed but he hoped that going forward it might become possible. The Government advice was to promote active travel and starting with schools was the best place to start as it would build habits of a lifetime into travel from home to work i.e. walking or cycling. Each individual school was in a different environment and he felt that having a dedicated Officer to pull all this together with support from Highways Officers would be beneficial.

Councillor Somner agreed with the officer comment made in the report in relation to this point. Discussion needed to take place between Public Health and Education Officers to take work forward, and he would ensure this took place.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) The measures proposed in Councillor Pattenden's Motion might be appropriate in certain circumstances in some locations but should not be implemented as a single initiative;
- (2) The Council would continue to implement road safety and environmental improvements outside schools on the basis of identified local needs as part of the annual capital programme;
- (3) The Council would continue to invest in highway infrastructure that promoted and enabled active travel, especially to schools, as part of the annual capital programme;
- (4) The Council would continue to work with schools to deliver road safety initiatives to equip children with the skills and knowledge required to travel to school safely, especially on foot or by bicycle or scooter. The Council should also evaluate the extent to which schools were aware of and engaged with these services;
- (5) The Council would continue to promote active travel to school, which by reducing reliance on car-based transport would lead to an improvement in local air quality and improve the health, fitness and mental wellbeing of children;
- (6) The Council would continue to monitor air quality across the district and to engage with schools to promote initiatives to reduce vehicle idling.



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### **Other options considered:**

Each of the specific suggestions made in Councillor Pattenden's Motion were considered by the consultants and discussed with Council Officers, with comments as to the feasibility of each being made in the report in Appendix A.

### **63. Newbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation (EX3979)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the response to the Motion regarding the pedestrianisation of roads in Newbury Town Centre, which had been presented to Council by Councillor David Marsh in September 2020.

Councillor Richard Somner stated that as a proposal the report had been discussed in detail at the Transport Advisory Group meeting in October. The position of the authority, Officers and the Portfolio Holder had been consistent in that this had originally been a temporary under exceptional circumstances and whilst it had been popular with some it was equally disliked by others. As could be seen via social media and in press releases it had not found wholesale support in one direction or the other. Councillor Somner reminded Members of the engagement with key stakeholders originally and throughout the temporary measure and this would continue to be the case as the study of the town centre took place. Full consultation would also need to take place for any permanent measure to be enacted should that be the outcome. There was still some concern about removing traffic from one of the town centre routes as it would merely increase traffic on the others. New studies would need to be undertaken to provide up to date figures to include in any debate if that was what came out of the town centre work that was ongoing.

Councillor Carlyne Culver said that she welcomed the fact that full pedestrianisation in the long term option had been included in the paper as she felt that it was really important from the point of view of helping to meet the objectives of the climate emergency in the Environment Strategy by reducing pollution. It would also assist with social distancing at the moment and would enable people to shop safely. She felt that it would be a great asset if full pedestrianisation could be introduced in the future as it would make the town centre an even nicer place to be.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) The measures proposed in Councillor Marsh's Motion would not be implemented, at least in the short term;
- (2) The consultants tasked with undertaking the Newbury Town Centre Study be asked to include the principle of permanent pedestrianisation in their work in order to facilitate consensus or, at least, a way forward on the issue;
- (3) Prior to any informal consultation with stakeholders, the consultants would work with the Highways Network Management team to ensure that any specific proposals made public were in accordance with the relevant road traffic legislation;
- (4) An assessment to be made of the extent to which the capacity that the town centre roads added to the network was actually needed. This would require modelling work by external transport consultants and therefore had time and cost implications;
- (5) Should the above work determine that changes to the pedestrianised hours were desirable and could be implemented on a practical and legal basis a permanent traffic regulation order could be drafted and taken forward to statutory consultation.

### **Other options considered:**

- (1) Implementing a 24-hour traffic free zone on a temporary basis with immediate effect, as proposed by the Motion, was not considered by officers to be reasonable within the legislation. Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation

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Act 1984 stated that the authority must be “satisfied that traffic on the road should be restricted or prohibited... because of a likelihood of danger to the public”.

- (2) Implementing a 24-hour traffic free zone on a permanent or experimental basis with immediate effect was not possible due to the amount of preparatory work that was required, including the consideration of the issues listed in 5.13 of the report, and the requirement to consult stakeholders.
- (3) Completely ruling out any changes to the traffic-free hours would not be appropriate given the views expressed by Members at Transport Advisory Group and the forthcoming wider study of Newbury town centre, of which vehicular access was a key component.

### 64. **2020/21 Performance Report Quarter Two (EX3884)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 11) which provided assurance that the core business and Council priorities for improvement measures were being managed effectively.

The report also sought to highlight successes, in particular maintained strong levels of performance for core business areas, supported by the actions taken by the Council, partner organisations and community groups to aid the recovery from Covid-19. In the few cases where performance had fallen below the expected level, details were provided including any further actions.

Councillor Jo Stewart in introducing the report explained that this had been another challenging quarter which included a lead up to a period of lockdown. She then highlighted the following points from the report:

- There had been a continued rise in the number of benefit claimants, in particular young people. Councillor Stewart was therefore very pleased to report that the Council was participating fully in the Kickstart scheme that sought to help get young people into the workplace in both local businesses and within the Council. To date 13 posts had been created within the Council and it was hoped that more would follow.
- The Council had been very busy in distributing grant funding to support local businesses.
- Exception reports had been produced for the collection of Council Tax (reported as ‘amber’) and the collection of Business Rates (reported as ‘red’). These both came as a result of the action taken by the Council to ease the financial burden on residents and businesses by pausing the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates. It was hoped that some of the deficit could be covered by Central Government and further information was awaited on that.
- The report recommended the inclusion of new measures as part of striving to continually improve. These were listed in Appendix D. Two related to befriending schemes within the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio and three in relation to key activities within the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio.

Councillor Stewart concluded her presentation by advising Members that links were provided within the report to its data sources.

Councillor Lynne Doherty took the opportunity to give thanks on behalf of the Executive to the Council’s officers for their continuing hard work, particularly during such a challenging year. The hard work of officers had kept services running as close to normal as possible, as was evidenced in this report.

Councillor Graham Bridgman pointed out that a large number of the key performance indicators had been thrown into disarray by Covid-19. This was making it difficult in some cases to be clear on the progress being made. By way of an example, he referred to

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Adult Social Care. The Care Quality Commission had largely suspended operating meaning areas of improvement in Adult Social Care could not be retested at the present time.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) The strong progress and achievements made, despite challenges and constraints as a result of Covid-19, be noted;
- (2) The impact of the Council's conscious decision to provide additional support to residents and local businesses and any further actions planned had been reviewed, in particular for:
  - Council Tax collected as a percentage of Council Tax due
  - Non domestic rates collected as a percentage of non-domestic rates due
- (3) The inclusion of new measures emerging as a result of Strategic Goals being delivered (as recommended by the OSMC) be approved. The list of measures and further details were provided at Appendix D.

### **Other options considered:**

None considered.

## **65. 2020/21 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two (EX3908)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning the in-year financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets as at Quarter Two of 2020/21.

The Quarter Two forecast was an underspend of £1.5m which was 1.1% of the Council's 2020/21 net revenue budget of £131m. The two main services contributing to the underspend were Adult Social Care and Children & Family Services.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon apologised that the table on page 255 of the agenda under paragraph 5.2 had errors in the second column with the figures not being updated from Quarter One and he would ensure that it was corrected and circulated the following morning. However, the over and under spend figures for all directorates and the total were correct. The forecast under spend position at Quarter One had been £600k so it was noted that the forecast under spend had increased by around £900k. This was almost all from the People Directorate and in particular Adult Social Care. Deaths had been higher than the previous year although it was expected that there would be an increase in demand on the service in the second half of the year from clients in step down placements requiring longer term services. Children & Family Services had continued to see a fall in clients requiring placements and a fall in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children which was not surprising given the reduction in route transport. Education were forecasting a £200k under spend arising from savings from Home to School Transport, external funding being received and successful trading income.

The total under spend forecast will inform the budget setting process along with decisions on Council Tax and the Adult Social Care precept for 2021/22. It was also noted that the under spend in the current year would not automatically transfer to the following year but the impact on next year's budget would be considered. Covid funding from Government and the impact of the recently announced Local Government Settlement would also be considered.

Councillor Graham Bridgman referred to the under spend in Adult Social Care and the fact that the CCG had picked up the bill for hospital discharges for a period of about six months. However, that period of time was coming to an end and there were a number of individuals who were in step down beds having come out of hospital. This was literally a

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holding area for a decision to be made about their long term care with the possibility of them coming on to the authority's books for long term service provision. Therefore the Adult Social Care model showed quite a steep rise in demand in the long term service provision. Consequently, there were other factors in the Adult Social Care number which would work their way through going forward.

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted that there had been a lot of movement in the forecast over the past 13 weeks. He understood that there was a considerable amount of volatility but he hoped that Officers would work on getting the forecasts to be tighter in their movement quarter on quarter. He also stated that there would be a risk reserve for Adult Social Care and if that was not required what sum would that potentially release into the under spend position.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon responded that Councillor Brooks was right about the numbers it was a big jump from quarter to quarter. In respect of the modelling Officers were continually trying to improve that and he felt that it was in a good place. This had been an unusual year and there had been diverging movement from the budget. Councillor Mackinnon also confirmed that he was part of the Budget Board discussions where the ASC model was closely monitored. In respect of the risk reserve Councillor Mackinnon stated that he was not in a position to discuss that at present and the decision would be made closer to the budget setting process. Councillor Brooks asked what the risk reserve figure was as he thought it was around £900k. Councillor Mackinnon confirmed that the figure was £850k. .

**RESOLVED that** the Quarter Two forecast of a £1.5m under spend be noted.

**Other options considered:**

None considered.

### 66. **2020/21 Capital Financial Performance Quarter Two (EX3909)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 13) which provided the Quarter Two financial position against the Council's approved capital budget.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon reported that at the end of Quarter Two, expenditure of £44.5 million had been forecast against the revised budget of £56.9 million. An overall forecast underspend of £12.4 million of which £7.3 million was proposed to be re-profiled into 2021/22 and later financial years. It was noted that further re-profiling was likely to follow.

The underspend had increased from the £6 million reported at Quarter One.

The fact that there had been delays to the Capital Programme was not surprising during the pandemic. There had been delays to planned maintenance, transport projects and the refurbishment of Four Houses Corner. ICT projects had also been paused until the review of the Council's office accommodation needs had been concluded. The final stages of the Superfast Broadband project had also suffered a delay, but it was close to completion.

**RESOLVED that** the Quarter Two forecast financial position be noted together with the proposed re-profiling of expenditure from 2020/21 into 2021/22.

**Other options considered:**

None considered.

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### 67. Treasury Management Mid Term Report - Financial Year 2020/21 (EX3989)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the treasury management semi-annual and annual reports. This report provided an overview of the treasury management activity for financial year 2020/21 as at 30 September 2020.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon highlighted the Council's borrowing and investment activity over the first six months of 2020/21. The Council had a Capital Financing Requirement of £239m. As at 30 September 2020 the Council held £221.8m of loans – an increase of £2.4m compared to 31 March 2020. PWLB funding margins had lurched quite substantially and there remained a strong argument for diversifying funding sources. During the first two quarters of the financial year the Council became the first authority to successfully launch a community bond which was designed to fund green initiatives in support of the Council Strategy. The target of £1m had been achieved. In relation to investments the Council continued to hold cash balances with banks, building societies and Government including local authorities.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked if Councillor Mackinnon could confirm that movements would be largely neutral for the Council. Councillor Mackinnon replied that the drop in PWLB rates would not have dropped in this period. So going forward, the PWLB rate dropping back down when it did, it will be back at the original requirements before the artificial bump, so roughly revenue neutral. Councillor Brooks asked if Councillor Mackinnon could come back with what the forward look might be in year.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **Other options considered:**

None considered.

### 68. 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) The question submitted by Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of encouraging greater diversity among candidates in future elections was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance.
- (b) The question submitted by Councillor Steve Masters on the subject of whether the Universal Basic Income figure of £660 billion was a gross or net figure would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (c) The question submitted by Councillor Steve Masters on the subject of providing examples of when the Green group had 'run to the press' would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.
- (d) The question submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of how the Council would ensure that opposition members were kept informed on LRIE following the removal of an opposition member from the Board would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.
- (e) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of support given to schools and nurseries to protect teaching and support staff from coronavirus was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (f) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of Continuing Healthcare Funding would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.

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- (g) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of where the level of Continuing Healthcare Funding placed the Berkshire West CCG in the national rankings would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.
- (h) The question submitted by Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of the process of enabling the Local Plan to take account of its Master Plan for the LRIE was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (i) The question submitted by Councillor Martha Vickers on the subject of the request to make the Rail to Refuge scheme permanent was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.
- (j) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of increasing the number of candidates applying for senior officer roles was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance.
- (k) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of plans to move from the Market Street office within the next 10 years was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.05pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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