

DRAFT

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

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

TUESDAY, 4 MAY 2021

Councillors Present: Adrian Abbs, Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Phil Barnett, Jeff Beck, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Jeff Brooks, Jeff Cant, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Jeremy Cottam, Carlyne Culver, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Clive Hooker (Chairman), Nassar Hunt, Gareth Hurley, Owen Jeffery, Rick Jones (Vice-Chairman), Alan Law, Tony Linden, Royce Longton, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, Thomas Marino, David Marsh, Steve Masters, Geoff Mayes, Andy Moore, Graham Pask, Claire Rowles, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart, Martha Vickers, Tony Vickers, Andrew Williamson, Keith Woodhams and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance)), Tessa Ethelston (Group Executive (Cons)), Susan Halliwell (Executive Director - Place), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager) and Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Erik Pattenden

PART I

1. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Clive Hooker and his wife, Christine, for being so supportive over the past year. He also thanked Sarah Clarke the Monitoring Officer for her reassuring support both before and during meetings. He also thanked members of her team, Moira Fraser and Linda Pye and special thanks to Jo Watt for managing the Chairman's diary and making sure that he was briefed and ready for any occasion.

The past year had been like no other - the Covid pandemic had changed many things from the way the Council worked and conducted its business and to the different way in which it interacted with people and organisations. He confirmed that he had recently made a short video thanking staff, the voluntary sector and communities for all they had done over the last 14 months to make life more bearable for many who had been suffering during the pandemic, such as those living in isolation or those not able to get their medication or shopping. He especially wanted to thank the staff who had gone over and above and beyond the call of duty for the past 14 months – he could not name them all but they had risen to the challenges magnificently. He especially thanked those involved in the community hub who had made such a difference to the way people could ask for help and always ensured that help was at hand. Many others had seen their roles changed, for example the grants that had been made during the pandemic to help our local businesses. Behind the scenes a team from Revenues and Benefits had been working really hard to ensure that the grants were distributed with minimal delay. Staff efforts over this period had been truly wonderful and he thanked all members of staff for all the work that they had done.

Councillor Pask wanted to highlight some of the more pleasurable memories of being Chairman over the last two years. This year, apart from making several videos to support and recognise local organisations he had actually only attended three live events in person. One was VJ Day in Newbury, another was Remembrance Sunday in Newbury

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and he also had the sad privilege to attend the very poignant service to represent West Berkshire at Christchurch Cathedral in Oxford, just over two weeks ago, for a remembrance service for the Duke of Edinburgh. There were only 40 people there and he was the only Councillor from Berkshire in attendance. The previous year was much more business as usual which included lots of citizenship ceremonies which were very enjoyable, staff recognition events, a visit by Princess Alexandra to Thrive at Beech Hill and a visit by the Princess Royal to Priors Court to celebrate their 20th Anniversary, beating retreat at Dennison Barracks, the Shaw House summer fayre, the Berkshire Gardens Trust garden tours, events at the Royal County of Berkshire Show and especially memorable, as always, anything to do with the Royal Berkshire fire and Rescue Services, especially their award ceremony which was well attended to see the magnificent work those people did. He always enjoyed the Remembrance Day services especially the one at Welford. There were lots of Carol Services throughout the district but supporting volunteer centre events was particularly memorable as they made such a difference to our communities. Finally, the last event he attended in that year was a visit to the House of Lords on behalf of the Berkshire Youth Trust, where again the magnificent work they had been doing was recognised.

Councillor Pask stated that he had been honoured to represent West Berkshire on behalf of West Berkshire Council and he thanked Members for granting him the privilege of representing the Council over the last two years.

Councillor Lee Dillon thanked Councillor Pask for his two years of service as the Chairman of the Council. Councillor Dillon had taken on a civic role for consecutive years and knew that as well as undertaking the role of Chairman Councillor Pask would have also undertaken his duties as a District Councillor. On behalf of the opposition Members he thanked Councillor Pask for his two years of service.

2. Election of the Chairman for the Municipal Year 2021/22 (C3994)

The Monitoring Officer advised that following the vote for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council a short video would be played showing the Covid safe exchange of the Chains of Office. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman would then read their Declarations of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor Lynne Doherty proposed Councillor Clive Hooker as Chairman for the Municipal Year 2021/22. This was seconded by Councillor Graham Pask.

Councillor Lynne Doherty added her thanks to Councillor Graham Pask for his two years of service which was much appreciated by all Members. It gave her great pleasure to propose Councillor Clive Hooker as she had first met Councillor Hooker at one of the many induction sessions that Members were required to attend in the 2015 intake. Since that time she had got to know Clive Hooker as both a member of the Conservative Group and also through his role of Chairman of Western Area Planning. Within that role Clive had demonstrated a number of traits that she held dear which included fairness and integrity. He was always considered and balanced in his views and sought to treat everyone fairly in his dealings with them. It was these very traits that gave her confidence to propose him as Chairman as she was sure that he would continue to act in this manner in the coming year.

When she had first spoken to Clive about becoming Vice-Chairman in 2019 with the intention to then become Chairman in 2020 he had been truly honoured to be asked and he felt sure that he and Christine would enjoy being the Council's civic representatives for the year and looked forward to the many events and occasions that they would attend on behalf of West Berkshire Council. At this point Clive had no idea that his move into the role would in fact take two years. She was grateful to both Clive and Graham for their

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patience and endurance over this time as the Council moved through the roadmap out of Covid and she saw a growing number of events being reinstated across the district in the future. She hoped that Clive would now have the opportunity that so many of his predecessors had had - to act as the Council's ambassador and represent West Berkshire. Councillor Doherty was sure that he would do well when it came down to his role as Chairman and that he would take his duties very seriously – preparing beforehand and then treating everyone with respect whilst retaining a firm control. Clive had been a magistrate for 34 years and she was sure that he had had more difficult crowds than this one to control. It therefore gave her great pleasure to propose Councillor Clive Hooker as Chairman of the Council for 2021/22.

Councillor Graham Pask said that it gave him great pleasure to second the nomination for Councillor Clive Hooker as he had been an outstanding Vice-Chairman for the last two years. Last year had not gone as planned and he hoped that as Councillor Doherty had stated that events would start to open up for him and Christine to enjoy.

Councillor Tony Vickers added his congratulations to Councillor Clive Hooker for being nominated and as his Vice-Chair to his well-run Western Area Planning Committee for the last two years he was very happy to see Clive elevated to the position of chairing the Full Council meetings and he was sure that he would take that role seriously but with a sense of humour when appropriate.

RESOLVED that Councillor Clive Hooker be elected as Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

3. **Election of the Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2021/22 (C3995)**

Councillor Graham Bridgman stated that he would like to nominate Councillor Rick Jones for the position of Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2021/22. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Clive Hooker. There were no further nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Graham Bridgman stated that Councillor Rick Jones and his wife Val had lived in Purley on Thames for some 35 years and had brought up their family there. Councillor Rick Jones had had a very varied career in IT, banking and consultancy in London together with short periods in Paris and White Plains in the USA. Councillor Jones had been a member of Purley Parish Council since 2003 and indeed was Chairman from 2006 through to 2015. The reason he gave up that Chairmanship was because he was first elected to West Berkshire Council in January 2015 through a By-Election. He was then appointed to the Executive in 2017 where he took on the Resources portfolio, followed by the Adult Social Care portfolio and latterly the Health and Wellbeing portfolio. He was on the Executive until May 2020 but he remained as deputy to Councillor Bridgman on Health and Wellbeing and had taken a very keen interest in community development for wellbeing and resilience and addressing inequalities.

Councillor Jones had told Councillor Bridgman that his wife Val was looking forward to the coming year not least because that would involve spending on new dresses. Councillor Bridgman was sure that both Rick and Val would have a great time meeting new people and he was delighted to propose Rick as Vice-Chairman of Council.

Councillor Clive Hooker stated that Councillor Jones had started out his working life, like him, in the engineering industry as a production engineer. He was a good listener and he found it easy to talk to people which were two very important attributes for the role he had ahead of him and he fully supported the nomination of Councillor Rick Jones for Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year.

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RESOLVED that Councillor be elected as Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

The video showing the exchange of civic regalia was then shown following which the Chairman and Vice-Chairman read out their declarations of acceptance of office. Councillor Clive Hooker and Councillor Rick Jones confirmed that they would make appointments to come in and see the Monitoring Officer in order to sign the declaration of office book.

The Chairman thanked Jo Watt and Ben Tunstall for producing the video of the exchange of the regalia. This enabled Council to experience at least a variation on the customary ceremonial elements of the Annual Council meeting which would otherwise have been missed.

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The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2021 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Richard Somner declared a potential interest on certain matters within the agenda due to his employment at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Nassar Hunt declared a potential interest on certain matters within the agenda due to his having taken a job at the Ministry of Justice but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Lee Dillon declared a potential interest on certain matters within the agenda due to his employer being listed as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

6. Appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2021/22 Municipal Year (C3996)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty:

“That the Council noted the appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.”

Councillor Lynne Doherty took the opportunity to thank Portfolio Holders for their support and work over the past year. As a team the Executive worked collectively with Members to ensure that it delivered the promises that were set out in the Council Strategy. She was proud of what it had been able to achieve so far this year which had also seen additional pressures as a result of responding to the global Coronavirus crisis. This had created additional pressure in every service area and adjustments had had to be made to enable the vital work to continue and she thanked Portfolio Holders for their input into that.

Councillor Doherty noted that she had been in the position of Leader for two years and had gained experience in many different areas that residents looked to their Council to

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deliver. That experience would enable her to make the changes necessary to continue to focus on priorities and to make further improvements to ensure that West Berkshire remained a great place to live, work and learn.

A few weeks ago Councillor Doherty had made changes to the People Directorate in terms of portfolios primarily driven by the changing health agenda. She now highlighted some proposed changes she was making to the Place Directorate. She had listened to both Parish Councils and residents on the importance of place shaping – ensuring infrastructure supported development and development supported infrastructure – this would create a vision of shaping that could result in healthier people. She therefore intended to restructure by bringing both Planning and Transport under one Portfolio Holder to ensure a holistic view of place for the coming years. Councillor Richard Somner had agreed to take on this challenge and would take the role going forward. Councillor Doherty thanked Councillor Hilary Cole for all the work she had done with the Planning portfolio since 2016. Planning was one of the most contentious areas of the Council and Councillor Cole had taken it all in her stride in order to prioritise the need to deliver against policy. To ensure that the Council ultimately protected taxpayer's money from the lengthy appeals process and to ensure that it was a plan lead authority, as opposed to letting uncontrolled development which would have a negative impact on our beautiful district. Councillor Cole would retain Housing and Strategic Partnerships but would also take on a new responsibility of Transformation. For a number of years the Council had been looking at new ways of working to ensure that it remained efficient and effective and fit for the future. As the authority moved out of Covid and towards recovery there was a need to drive this agenda across all directorates. Councillor Cole would utilise her many years of Council experience with her desire to innovate and drive customer focus.

Councillor Doherty also mentioned Councillor Graham Bridgman who was also taking on a new portfolio whilst still remaining Deputy Leader. She was grateful for his support and guidance and could not have got through the last year without his constant presence.

All other portfolios remained the same.

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

7. **Health Scrutiny (C4008)**

(Councillor Richard Somner declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that he was employed by the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillor Nassar Hunt declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that he had recently taken a job at the Ministry of Justice. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillor Lee Dillon declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that his employer was listed as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 8) concerning a proposal to form a new Health Scrutiny Committee reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and which would be responsible for scrutiny of Public Health and NHS services in West Berkshire.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Howard Woollaston and seconded by Councillor Alan Law:

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“That the Council:

- (a) support the proposal for a Health Scrutiny Committee, reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC), to undertake scrutiny of the planning, development and operation of Public Health and NHS services for the citizens of West Berkshire;
- (b) delegate scrutiny of Public Health and NHS services in West Berkshire to the Health Scrutiny Committee;
- (c) approve the terms of reference for the Health Scrutiny Committee as set out in Appendix B of this report; and
- (d) delegate authority to the Service Director, Strategy and Governance in consultation with the Group Leaders to agree membership and terms of reference for an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the need for a Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee”.

Councillor Howard Woollaston stated that the NHS was having a major restructure which included the creation of the Integrated Care System which ran across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB).

Health Scrutiny has always been part of the Overview and Management Scrutiny Commission’s role but it will become even more important under the new system. During his time as Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing the NHS was a mysterious beast with a large number of acronyms and a language of its own. It is very hard to get to grips with the detail unless you immerse yourself in it and the broad remit of OSMC did not allow for this. Hence the conclusion that a new Health Scrutiny Committee was required which would focus on this key statutory responsibility. This covers public health and NHS matters including the activities of the Health and Wellbeing Board, NHS dentistry and pharmacies. It cannot be delegated to Officers and all Members of the Executive were barred. It was supposed to be a cross-party committee of three Conservatives and two Liberal Democrats. There could be up to two non-voting co-optees appointed to bring specific health expertise. This was a statutory requirement and he believed that by creating the Committee the Council was giving it the seriousness it deserved and he therefore proposed the Motion.

Councillor Graham Bridgman echoed the comments made by Councillor Woollaston around the complexity of the NHS – it was a beast and the beast was changing. Not only was the role of local government in the NHS changing with the new White Paper on Health but also with the proposals that had been coming forward from the Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust in terms of redevelopment and North Hampshire in terms of redevelopment, there was a need for scrutiny at a Council level and he agreed that the changing health landscape meant that a new Health Scrutiny Committee should be formed.

Councillor Tony Linden welcomed the new Health Scrutiny Committee as it would be valuable and it was important that work on such a broad area should carry on.

Councillor Martha Vickers also welcomed the formation of the new Committee and as a Member of the Health and Wellbeing Board she welcomed scrutiny. It would be a hard task going forward particularly around health inequalities in the area and she hoped that energy would be put into the most important areas and also making sure that the authority was engaging with its communities. The public needed to see the importance of public health and how they could actually contribute to the agenda.

Councillor Lee Dillon noted that there were two reports on the agenda on the subject of public health and the Outside Body report was also appointing people to the Health and

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Wellbeing Committee. It was therefore important that members of the public were aware of where to raise their concerns to the appropriate body. He was supportive of the proposal but felt that an education piece was required over the coming months with Members and also members of the public around what was the right vehicle to scrutinise the right organisation.

Councillor David Marsh queried why a Member of the Green Party had not been invited to be part of this Committee as all parties were interested in health. Indeed Councillor Steve Masters had an excellent track record in the area of health, particularly in relation to mental health. Places on these committees should not be around proportionality but should be looking at what the Council had to offer in terms of expertise. The Monitoring Officer clarified that the allocation of seats on committees was done in accordance with a statutory framework and there was a sequential test which was applied to allocate them on a proportional basis. That was subject to two other proceeding qualifications and criteria which were fully detailed in the report. She would be happy to discuss that further with Councillor Marsh outside of the meeting if he wanted more detail.

Councillor Alan Law assured Councillor Marsh that the Green Party was proportionally represented on OSMC. OSMC covered a broad range of issues but when he had been asked to look at one or two health and wellbeing issues it was clear that OSMC would have been out of their depth and that a health committee was needed to focus specifically on health issues. He therefore welcomed the composition of the committee and the proposed Chairman of the committee and was happy to second the report.

Councillor Woollaston reiterated the point that the Green Party was represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board and it was therefore not being ignored from a health perspective.

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

8. **Health Scrutiny Arrangements across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (C3933)**

(Councillor Richard Somner declared a personal interest in Agenda item 9 by virtue of the fact that he was employed by the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillor Nassar Hunt declared a personal interest in Agenda item 9 by virtue of the fact that he had recently taken a job at the Ministry of Justice. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillor Lee Dillon declared a personal interest in Agenda item 9 by virtue of the fact that his employer was listed as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 9) concerning the proposal to form a new, mandatory joint committee with health scrutiny powers to consider matters affecting patient flows across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System geography.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Howard Woollaston and seconded by Councillor Alan Law:

“That the Council:

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- (a) support the proposal for a joint health overview and scrutiny committee to consider health issues at the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) level;
- (b) delegate scrutiny of health issues at the BOB ICS level to the joint health overview and scrutiny committee; and
- (c) approve the terms of reference for the joint health overview and scrutiny committee as set out in Appendix B of this report”.

Councillor Woollaston stated that the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System covered an area with a population of 1.8m people. A joint health overview and scrutiny committee (JHOSC) was required to consider proposed changes affecting the patient-flow geography at the BOB level. This would require each of the affected local authorities to delegate health scrutiny powers on services provided at the ICS level to the JHOSC and to agree the terms of reference.

The proposal was for a committee of 19 Members (7 Members for Oxfordshire, 6 Members for Buckinghamshire and 6 Members for Berkshire West (2 Members from each of the three Unitary Authorities)). Co-opted, non-voting members could also be temporarily appointed to bring specialist knowledge onto the committee or inform specific work streams or agenda items.

Councillor Alan Macro welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise this new health body but he did have a concern in respect of the Terms of Reference in that the scrutiny committee would be completely reactive. It seemed to be making comments on proposals consulted on and Councillor Macro would have liked to know if the committee believed there was some kind of deficiency in the services being provided at a system wide level following which they could raise that with BOB.

Councillor Lee Dillon referred to the number of seats which indicated that West Berkshire would have two seats to make up the six in total. He noted that in the appointment of and allocation of seats report later on the agenda it recommended that both of those should go to the Conservative Group. He asked how it could be ensured that Opposition views on cross unitary or cross authority groups were heard. The Monitoring Officer responded that it was the requirement that the majority of seats on any committee had to be allocated to the administration. Therefore where there were only two seats then they would by default go to the administration. Councillor Dillon noted that in the later report it stated that (1) not all seats on any committee were to be allocated to the same political group and then (2) the majority of seats on any committee must be allocated to the majority group. This meant that there were two conflicting statements and therefore which one took precedent. Councillor Graham Bridgman asked whether this was a committee of Council to which those rules would apply or was it an external committee to which Members were appointed. The terms of reference for that committee would have had input from five different local authorities. The Monitoring Officer stated that her view was that this was referring to the totality, so when it referred to not all the seats, she felt that it was quite clear that the majority of seats on the body should not actually belong to a particular group. It would be similar to the Fire Authority, where there was a cross border and different political makeup, but the allocation of seats to the Fire authority were made in accordance with the political balance of the relevant authority and therefore the same applied here in a similar way to the Joint Public Protection Committee.

Councillor Bridgman stated that in response to what Councillor Macro had said, his recollection was that the Health and Social Care Act actually said that the NHS and like bodies had a duty to engage with a committee like this if the committee like this existed, therefore, in other words, it was necessary to form the committee in order that the NHS

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then had a duty to engage. Whether or not there would be an opportunity for it to be proactive he felt that it was very early days and it would be necessary to see how it developed.

Councillor Steve Masters agreed with the point made by Councillor Dillon. There was talk of a spirit of co-operation and rather than being parochial and keeping it in house it should be one member from one party and one from another.

Councillor Alan Law reiterated the point made previously in that a special focus was needed and it was necessary to have Council representation on these external bodies whether that be from one party or two was immaterial. The committee would have an increasingly important influence on the lives of our residents and therefore it did make sense to have an input into that from a scrutiny point of view. He did have some empathy with the comments made by Councillor Macro in relation to the terms of reference. He felt that it was down to the people on the committee to decide whether they would be proactive and demand scrutiny on certain subjects. He had confidence that that would evolve over time. The committee would also report through into OSMC which was proportionally represented by all parties within the Council.

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

9. **Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2021/22 Municipal Year (C3997)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the appointment of and allocation of seats on Committees for the 2021/22 Municipal Year. It was noted that amended appendices had been circulated.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“That the Council:

- 2.1 noted that under paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice had been received that the Members set out in paragraph 5.1 were to be regarded as Members of the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green Party Groups respectively.
- 2.2 the Council agreed to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in paragraph 5.4 (Table A).
- 2.3 the Council agreed to the allocation of seats to the Political Groups in accordance with section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 as set out in paragraph 5.12 of the report (Table B).
- 2.4 the number of substitutes on Committees and Commissions be as set out in paragraph 5.15 (Table C).
- 2.5 in respect of the Area Planning Committees, a substitute Member must represent a ward within that Committee's area, and in respect of the District Planning Committee, they must be a Member of the same Area Planning Committee as the Member they were substituting for.
- 2.6 the Council approved the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix A and noted the appointments set out in Appendix B which were in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.
- 2.7 the Council, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 as amended, agreed that the Council's Policy Framework for 2021/22 be as set out in paragraph 5.20 of this

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report, and that any necessary amendments be made to the Council's Constitution.

- 2.8 the Council noted that other plans, policies and strategies requiring approval which were not included in the approved Policy Framework and which were not otherwise reserved by law to Council, would be the responsibility of the Council's Executive in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.
- 2.9 the Council noted that Paragraph 2.6.5 of Article 6 of the Constitution, would be amended to reflect any changes made to the Executive Portfolios by the Leader of the Council and announced at the Executive meeting on 25 March 2021 or at the Annual Council meeting.
- 2.10 the appointment of two non-voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance and Ethics Committee as detailed in Appendix A.
- 2.11 to re-appoint three Independent Persons (Standards) namely Lindsey Appleton, James Rees and Mike Wall and to appoint an Independent Person (Audit) to focus on the risk and audit functions of the Governance and Ethics Committee.
- 2.12 to note the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.13 authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the changes to the number of Members of the Council and following the appointments to Committees.
- 2.14 It was recommended that Council approve the creation of a Safer Streets Champion (as noted in Appendix B) in order to:
 - work with our communities to understand their concerns and receive suggestions for how we want to address street harassment;
 - work in partnership with Thames Valley Police to explore a potential bid for Safer Streets Fund funding;
 - work closely with the Public Protection Partnership, Thames Valley Police, Town Centre managers and others to challenge and eradicate street harassment in our district;
 - seek to develop better public awareness of what constitutes street harassment and unacceptable behaviours; and
 - work with our three West Berkshire MPs to seek further powers for the Police to be able to take appropriate action where street harassment was witnessed or reported."

Councillor Lynne Doherty thanked Members for their contributions and work on the various committees and particularly the current Chairmen. This had been a year like no other and she appreciated that everyone had been working in very difficult circumstances. The Council had adapted well to virtual meetings which had enabled the wheels of democracy to turn in West Berkshire. Councillor Doherty noted that several changes had been made mainly due to the fact that this was the halfway point in the administration and she had wanted to enable those who had not had an opportunity to chair a committee to do so. This was in the interest of fairness and the development of some of the new Members from the 2019 intake.

Councillor Doherty also referred to page 13 of the supplementary pack from which it could be seen that a new champion role had been identified for safer streets. This followed her Motion to the Executive back on 25 March 2021 to create this role to work alongside the Safer Communities Partnership and to energise the focus around concerns of street harassment. She was pleased to recommend that Councillor Claire Rowles

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should take on this role of champion for safer streets as the current Member on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. She would be ideally placed to lead this work.

Councillor Lee Dillon had seconded the report and his party would vote in support, however, he again raised the issue around representation and it should be noted that the Joint Public Protection Committee had no Opposition on it as was the case for the new Health Scrutiny body. Also the terms of reference of the Schools Forum allowed for Executive Members to attend. Shadow Portfolio Holders could attend but were not allowed to speak at the meetings. He therefore felt that there were always improvements that could be made to ensure that there was political balance across the whole organisation.

Councillor Lynne Doherty confirmed the points made by the Monitoring Officer in terms of the composition and the proportionality. With regards to the Schools Forum it was actually schools that owned that group and set the rules which would be applied.

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

10. **Appointments to Outside Bodies 2021/22 (C3993)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning the annual nominations to the following Outside Bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel
- Local Government Association General Assembly

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“2.1 That the Council is requested to approve the appointments in accordance with Appendix A of Member representatives to the following outside bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (Dennis Benneyworth, Tony Linden, Garth Simpson and Jeff Brooks)
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel (Claire Rowles)

2.2 Council is asked to note the appointments as detailed in Appendix A of Member representatives to the:

- Local Government Association General Assembly (Lynne Doherty, Graham Bridgman, Dominic Boeck, Lee Dillon)”.

Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that it was not proposed to make any changes to the representatives on those the above Outside Bodies.

Councillor Lee Dillon raised a concern as to how Members would attend those Outside Bodies and actual Committee meetings as the High Court Judgment had ruled that virtual meetings were not actually allowed and that it was necessary to meet in the Council Chamber or in room suitable for the size and number. His group would have liked to have seen emergency legislation tabled by the Government to enable Councils still to meet remotely. The Council had also seen public participation increase due to the hosting of online meetings and whilst it was in the Council’s gift to continue to stream meetings he was not sure if this was the best medium for public questions. He felt that it was unfortunate that Councils had not been extended the courtesy of being able to decide the most appropriate way for it to be able to meet during the recovery phase of Covid.

Councillor Graham Bridgman said that having been somewhat involved in looking at how meetings could take place in a Covid safe way and having listened to some of the court case that ended up with the judgment he fully supported the view expressed by

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Councillor Dillon. Council had commented earlier on the fact that it was disappointed that the Government had not brought forward legislation to allow local authorities to continue to meet remotely until at least 21 June. However, there were a number of people who wanted to hold physical meetings again but only in a Covid safe manner.

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

11. **Monitoring Officer's Annual Report to the Governance and Ethics Committee - 2020/21 (C3992)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning an update on local and national issues relating to ethical standards and to bring to the attention of Members any complaints or other problems within West Berkshire. The report also presented the Annual Governance and Ethics report to Full Council.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Howard Woollaston and seconded by Councillor Jo Stewart:

That the Council:

“note the content of the report which would be circulated to all Parish/Town Councils in the District for information”.

Councillor Howard Woollaston introduced the Annual Monitoring Officer's report to the Governance and Ethics Committee which had been approved by them. It was also brought to Council as required by the Constitution. It showed that there were no significant issues in regard to standards of ethical behaviour and the declaration of gifts and hospitality was down on previous years.

Councillor Jo Stewart thanked the Monitoring Officer for producing the report and the Governance and Ethics Committee for keeping the Council on a straight path for what had been a really strange and often difficult year. She concurred with the conclusion that despite the significant rise in the number of complaints over the past year Members in West Berkshire continued to maintain high standards of ethical conduct and she was therefore happy to second the report.

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

12. **Licensing Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Licensing Committee had not met.

13. **Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Personnel Committee had not met.

14. **Governance and Ethics Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 19 April 2021.

15. **District Planning Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the District Planning Committee had not met.

16. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had met on 20 April 2021.

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17. **Joint Public Protection Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Joint Public Protection Committee had met on 31 March 2021.

18. **Council Strategy Refresh 2021 (C4056)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 19) concerning the refreshed Council Strategy 2019-2023 which articulated the progress that had been made and introduced new or updated projects to support the delivery of the Council's core business and priorities for improvement. The refreshed Council Strategy reflected the changes in the social, economic and environmental context and built on the enhanced strategic framework developed during the first two years of the Strategy. This was an overarching strategic document that set out the priorities for improvement over the lifetime of the strategy and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to continue to deliver the core services that people in West Berkshire needed and valued.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty and seconded by Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter:

That the Council:

“approve the refreshed Council Strategy covering the period 2021-2023 set out in Appendix B and noted that the Council Strategy reflected the updated Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy”.

Councillor Lynne Doherty recommended approval of the refreshed strategy as the first two years of the strategy had delivered some really positive outcomes for the people of West Berkshire. For example, the strong performance of the Council's Children and Family Services, the continued high performance of getting children into the school of their choice and the continued capital investment into education. Even when the Council's KPI's indicate that the Council was making good progress it was still prudent to review any strategy at the half way point to ensure that the priorities and commitments remained relevant and to ensure that the Council was on track to deliver all that it had set out to do. In addition to that it was also necessary to factor in the impact of Covid on local communities and therefore this refresh strategy had also been informed by the Recovery and Renewal Strategy. Councillor Doherty was pleased to announce that there was very little in way of a change of direction. It was essential to focus on core business such as protecting children, economic recovery following Covid, delivery of the environment strategy and waste collection. The strategy would help the Council to drive forward and to maintain the message that West Berkshire was a great place to live, work and learn for its residents.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that the strategy was low on objectives and goals. A strategy should involve setting goals and priorities, determining actions to achieve the goals and mobilising resources to execute the actions. This strategy was short on objectives and long on text and narrative. It should be clear to the public what the Council wanted to achieve and what had already been achieved. He queried where the meaningful targets were so that Officers had a clear steer as to what needed to be achieved.

Councillor Dominic Boeck stated that as lead Member for Children and Young People in Education he was pleased that Council was being asked to support the continued prioritisation of protection and achievement as set out in the refreshed strategy. The strategy did update on some of what had been achieved in protecting children and supporting education. The pandemic had imposed enormous pressures on us all and had proved to be extraordinarily challenging to the people who worked in these services and the strategy set out the approach that would be taken to ensure that vulnerable children

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received better outcomes and to support everyone to reach their full potential. The strategy would drive detailed plans which would set goals against which outcomes could be measured and he confirmed that he would be looking for even greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention. Real benefits had already been seen from initiatives such as the Family Safeguarding Model from engaging with young people as early as possible and through supported learning journeys. He was certain that the adoption of the strategy was the start of new beginnings which would enhance and improve the lives of residents of West Berkshire.

Councillor Adrian Abbs referred to paragraph 4.3 of the Executive Summary in the covering report which set out the two most significant changes in context – (1) the coronavirus pandemic and (2) the Council declaring a climate emergency in July 2019. He challenged the second one in relation to the declaration of a climate emergency as it had only been as a result of pressure from members of the public and Opposition Members that one had been declared and it would be necessary to keep pushing for more substantive action to be taken. The issue was that after two years there was very little actual physical evidence or natural evolution to establish a strategy. He would like to see the wording altered to reflect the cross party push for climate action.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon responded to the comments made by Councillor Abbs and stated that last year the Council had raised £1m through the Community Municipal Investment fund which had raised money for environmental projects and that money had been deployed in the district on the installation of solar panels and other environmental initiatives.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter stated that a strategy should be high level and overarching with a longer term framework than a typical list of actions. From an environmental point of view he agreed that the goal of hitting carbon neutrality, not only for this Council, but for the entire district of nearly 160,000 people, in 10 years by 2030 would be extremely challenging. It would not only take the actions of this Council and of the Government but also the overwhelming majority of all residents over the coming years to achieve this goal. To have a strategy with a long list of things which needed to be done would be bound to fail and would be totally inflexible. The strategy was backed up by a detailed Delivery Plan which would be a rolling and regularly refreshed list of actions as a result of an environment which was constantly changing and which presented a large number unknowns. As pointed out by Councillor Mackinnon the Council had already started to put in place quick wins where it was appropriate to do so but things did take a long time to plan as they were often complex in nature. This Council had installed electric vehicle charging points and it would continue to build on that along with the conversion of streetlights to low energy usage. He acknowledged that there was still a lot of work to do and there would be many challenges ahead but it could be demonstrated that the Council had achieved a lot in the past two years and it would continue with that rate of progress and accelerate in many areas over the years to come.

Councillor Lynne Doherty referred to the comments made by Councillor Brooks and stressed that a strategy would guide the direction of travel but that it was the delivery plan which would follow through with the actions and the KPI's to monitor those actions. The Council Strategy was heading in the right direction and it had a number of other strategies sat behind it with their own delivery plans. There were areas that the Council needed to refocus on particularly as a result of Covid and these would be covered in the Recovery and Renewal Strategy which would be coming to the Executive on 10 June 2021.

Councillor Steve Masters raised a point of order and stated that this should be about the broader achievements of the Council and not the policies of the Conservative Party.

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

19. **Place Directorate Restructuring Costs (C4059)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 20) concerning authority being sought for redundancy payments to be made that might result from the internal recruitment process to fill the new Service Director, Development & Regulation post identified within the Senior Management Review 2019. .

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Richard Somner:

That the Council:

“authorise the redundancy payments detailed within this report and included in the Part II paper”.

Councillor Hilary Cole stated that this paper was in two parts and she reminded Members that the report around payments was confidential and would be discussed following the exclusion of the press and public.

The Council had undertaken a senior management review in 2019 which had proposed the establishment of the Place Directorate including the creation of an Executive Director, Place and Services Directors for Environment and Development and Regulation. The Service Director, Environment post had been recruited to in April 2020 and the Executive Director, Place had been recruited in December 2020. It was proposed that two posts would be deleted from the organisation structure on completion of the recruitment process to the Service Director, Development and Regulation. The report set out the potential redundancies which might occur by 31 August 2021 as a result of recruitment to the post. It sought approval to make the redundancy and, if appropriate, retirement payments as a result of the staffing changes. The estimated total financial payments were set out in the Part I report and in more detail in the Part II report. Any costs would be covered by the Council’s restructuring reserve but would be overall cost neutral as a result of deleting the two posts.

Councillor Jeff Brooks said that he understood that reorganisations needed to happen but he queried how long it would take to become cost neutral as it involved a large upfront payment. Councillor Hilary Cole responded that the cost neutrality issue was covered in the Part II paper and she reiterated that the costs would be met through the restructuring reserve.

Councillor Richard Somner confirmed that this was a necessary restructure and it would enable the Council to continue to develop and transition. The figures set out in the report were a worst case scenario and should Officers be redeployed then the upper most value would not be reached. It was important to note the continued progression of the transformation programme especially as the authority moved forward with the changing face of service provision.

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

20. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers](#).

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21. Place Directorate Restructuring Costs (C4059)

(Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)

(Paragraph 2 – information identifying an individual)

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

(Paragraph 4 – information relating to terms proposed in negotiations in labour relation matters)

The Committee considered an exempt report (Agenda item 22) concerning authority being sought for redundancy payments to be made that might result from the internal recruitment process to fill the new Service Director, Development & Regulation post which had been identified within the Senior Management Review 2019.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Richard Somner:

That the Council:

“authorise the redundancy payments detailed within this report and included in Appendix 1”.

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

(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 9.45pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature