

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

- (a) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Claire Rowles:**

Civility in Public Life

“The Council recognises the hard work that Councillors do to support their communities and believes they should be able to continue doing so without fear or intimidation. The Council also seeks to achieve greater diversity and inclusion across elected Members and particularly to attract more women candidates.

The Council is therefore committed to promoting civility in public life and supporting the well-being of its elected members.

The Council agrees with the UK Local Government Associations’ Joint Statement on Civility in Public Life, which reads:

“The intimidation and abuse of Councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; it can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, prevent individuals from standing for election and undermine public trust in democratic processes.

These harmful behaviours, whether occurring towards, between or by elected members are entirely unacceptable.”

This Council resolves to treat each other with the respect we all deserve, and commit to disagree with each other in a polite manner both in-person and online in accordance with our Code of Conduct”.

- (b) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Dominic Boeck:**

T Levels

“That this Council welcomes the Further Education White Paper which has been published by HM Government. This new plan will overhaul the technical education system, help plug skill gaps, level up opportunities and support our economic recovery.

The introduction of T Levels, which are high quality technical qualifications on a par with A Levels, is a much needed and once in a generation reform. Building on these reforms, the measures announced in the White Paper will put an end to the illusion that a degree is the only route to success and a good job, and that further and technical education are exciting and challenging options.

It puts employers at the heart of the skills system, where they will be given a central role in designing almost all technical courses by 2030, to make sure that the

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

education and training people receive is directly linked to the skills needed for real jobs.

The Council also welcomes the Chancellor's 'Plan For Jobs', which includes measures such as the extension of the Kickstart Scheme – which has given 100,000 young people employment, including 13 opportunities to work within West Berkshire Council, and a further 12 with local external partners. The Chancellor's Plan for Jobs is working and the number of people in employment and average wages are continuing to rise as we recover from the pandemic”.

(c) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor James Cole:

“The Council has a clear commitment to delivering the objectives set out in its Environment Strategy. This commitment is reflected in its ambitions to ensure the Chestnut Walk development, being progressed through a Joint Venture with Sovereign Housing to deliver 8 affordable homes within Hungerford, achieves the highest possible environmental standards. The Council commits to achieving the highest possible environmental standards of this development balancing it against the best value of the disposal of its land”.

(d) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

Response to COP26 in Glasgow

“Council notes:

That COP26 in Glasgow concluded with the Glasgow Climate Pact, which recognises a crucial role for communities and local authorities. By “recognizing the important role of ... local communities and civil society, including youth and children, in addressing and responding to climate change, and highlighting the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action” the Pact makes plain the need for action at every level of government and society.

That shortly before the Glasgow conference the UK government published its Net Zero Strategy, which includes the intention to establish a Net Zero Forum to coordinate the strategy with local government.

That COP26 failed to provide the national targets that could put the world on course for limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5C; failed to provide the carbon price mechanisms needed to shift the world economy away from fossil fuels; failed to provide the necessary finance for less developed nations to develop without fossil fuels or to deal with the loss and damage caused to them by wealthier nations that are historically responsible; failed to outlaw all loopholes in ‘offsetting’ mechanisms; and failed to commit to phasing out fossil fuels.

Council believes:

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

That the chances for a strong outcome from COP26 were weakened by the UK government's mixed messages on climate action, not least the reduction in tax on internal flights, the continued commitment to new fossil fuel extraction in Cumbria and the North Sea oil fields, and cuts to overseas aid.

If we are to become a carbon neutral district we need new developments to be carbon neutral and we need to divest from all investment in fossil fuels.

Council resolves:

- 1.) *To write to Alok Sharma MP to thank him for his work so far and urge him to apply maximum pressure to all parties for the remainder of his presidency.*
- 2.) *To organise carbon literacy training and briefing sessions for council staff and members to ensure we are consistent in addressing the climate emergency across all our activities.*
- 3.) *To organise a second climate conference in West Berkshire which brings all stakeholders together.*
- 4.) *To work with other unitary authorities in Berkshire to divest staff pension funds from fossil fuels, including those who are merely transitioning because we only have nine years left to achieve carbon neutrality. Instead, invest in funds that are contributing to decarbonisation and adaptation to climate change.*
- 5.) *To require developers to submit a Climate Change Declaration with their planning applications to encourage them to build to higher energy efficiency standards.*
- 6.) *To write to our three local MPs urging them to lobby the government for the following:*
 - *Conduct an independent review into UK fossil fuel subsidies and set out a plan and timetable to phase these out.*
 - *Commit to no more coal, oil or gas extraction in the UK, and no more UK investments in fossil fuel extraction overseas.*
 - *Commit to no airport expansion across the UK, and for international aviation and shipping decarbonisation to be included in nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in future trade deals”.*

(e) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Jeff Brooks:**

Integrity of West Berkshire Council

“This Council will act with the utmost integrity at all times and will ensure that all of its actions put our residents first. Where mistakes are made we will put them right. Where injustices are apparent we will act to resolve them.

In everything we do, the needs of our residents will be uppermost in our policies and actions. We will never take short term gains over the interests of the people we are here to serve”.

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

- (f) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon:**

Motion: Return to Fully Democratic Process

“West Berkshire Council needs to return to a fully democratic process in its decision making as soon as possible which must include all 43 members being able to attend meetings in person in order to be able to cast their vote in line with the proper conduct of Council business.

Council notes:

- The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ceased in May 2021 which afforded councils the ability to debate and vote electronically.*
- Since that time West Berkshire Council has attempted a hybrid solution, allowing some members to attend in person and other electronically; and requiring (as the law permits) for all those voting to be attending in person.*
- The current Chamber, under coronavirus safety protocols, cannot accommodate all elected members, staff and public safely.*
- This Council is continuing to therefore operate with restricted numbers of members, including at full Council meetings. This action, whilst supported in the short term, prevents the full and proper interaction of all 43 Councillors representing their wards in vital Council decisions.*

Accordingly Council resolves:

- That all members will be able to attend every and any Council meeting with effect from, and including, the Council Budget meeting in March 2022.*
- Council officers will ensure that a suitable venue is available should there be capacity restrictions in the Market Street Council Chamber due, for example, to legacy safety issues”.*

- (g) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs:**

Motion: West Berkshire Council Pensions Divestment from Fossil Fuels

“Council notes:

- The Berkshire Pension Fund has of the order of £27million invested in fossil fuels.*
- Divesting this pension fund would be a clear and meaningful action that can be taken at a local government level to positively impact on this Council’s green agenda.*

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

Fossil fuel investments are becoming increasingly less attractive because of the global transition to a more sustainable economic and environmental model.

Such investments are now being consistently out-performed by renewables.

In light of this, and supported by the statements below

- *Former Bank of England Governor Mark Carney warned in December 2019 that fossil fuel investments risk becoming “stranded assets” (i.e. worthless) as investors exit the sector.*
- *As continued investments in fossil fuels pose material financial risks to portfolios, funds have fiduciary duties to consider the benefits of decarbonising as part of their investment strategies.*
- *Pension funds have a legal duty to treat members ‘fairly as between them.’ Meaning that the longer-term interests of younger members who may well be affected more by the climate transition must be taken into account.*

This Council commits to:

- *Call on the Berkshire Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels. This can be done through the Council’s representative on the pension fund advisory panel calling for the development, adaptation and adoption of responsible investment policies which:*
 - *Immediately freezes any new investment in publicly traded fossil fuel companies.*
 - *Divests the fund within three years from direct ownership of both primary fossil fuel corporations and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds*
 - *Actively seeks to invest in companies that are making significant attempts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and minimise climate risk.*
- *Recognise that fossil fuel investments should be considered as part of the council’s ‘carbon footprint’ and the divestment of the Berkshire pension fund is an important step we can take to reduce our impact on our community and the world”.*

(h) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs:**

Motion: Helping West Berkshire Taxi trade go greener

“Overview:-

Given the Council’s declaration of a climate emergency at a district wide level, it is a critical part of the delivery to have any body, company or individual contributing to carbon emissions join West Berkshire Council in achieving its stated goals of net zero by 2030.

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

Transport is amongst the largest contributors of carbon emissions and the taxi trade is one group over which West Berkshire Council has some direct influence.

During recent meetings with the trade body several key factors were established that have led directly to this motion and, should this motion be adopted, allow West Berkshire Council to encourage the whole trade in going greener at pace.

For the purposes of this motion "Taxis" refers to vehicles licenced for plying for hire on ranks or that can be hailed in the street and private hire vehicles which are vehicles licensed by the Council which must be pre-booked. "Licence fees" refers to those fees associated with Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences, plus Private Hire Operators (PHO) licences for both new vehicles / operators and renewal of licences.

Other direct benefits would also result from the adoption of this motion in and around taxi ranks where charging infrastructure is deployed.

- Street vendors that use car parks next to taxi ranks could use direct electricity feeds rather than the petrol and diesel generators currently used.*
- Reductions in noise from all vehicle types and street vendors would result from the removal of fossil fuel engines.*
- Improvements in Air Quality and specifically a reduction in Nitrous Oxide and fine particulate matter which would lead to a safer environment for all.*

Council notes:

- 95% of Taxis are still diesel according to the latest survey of the trade.*
- That 60% of those that recently responded to a consultation said they are considering changing their vehicle in the next 3 years.*
- That 80% of the journeys made in a taxi are less than 50 miles.*
- That 80% of taxi drivers drive less than 200 miles a day.*
- That poor air quality (especially in built up areas) is a significant risk to health.*
- That whilst 50% of respondents would consider electric for personal use, only 30% thought they might choose electric for work.*
- That to meet our climate emergency declaration goals by 2030, significant changes in transport modes are needed as quickly as possible.*
- That most battery electric vehicles suitable for use as a taxi have ranges of more than 200 miles.*
- That full plug-in hybrids often have a range on pure electric exceeding the average journey needed by taxi.*
- The upper end of the cost estimates for licences is £36K assuming all 60% of those thinking of a change do so in year 1.*

In order to help achieve this:

This Council will introduce an incentive scheme to help all forms of vehicle licensed by West Berkshire for public transport to go green. The incentive scheme would run until the 31 March 2025 and would result in the Council subsidising licence fees over a three-year period for each taxi.

Item 22:

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 2 December 2021

This scheme will introduce a zero-licence fee tariff for any taxi that is powered fully by electricity and a 50% reduction of the licence fee for any taxi that can do a minimum of 50 miles on electric power before switching to fossil fuel - known often as plug-in hybrids. The cost of this proposal for every 10% of fee take up would be a subsidy of:

- *£6.5K fully electric*
- *£3.25K for hybrid*

This Council commits to:

- *Introducing the subsidised incentive scheme within next year's budget.*
- *Providing (where practical) fast charging points next to taxi ranks to remove range anxiety for taxi drivers".*