

EXECUTIVE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY, 31 MARCH 2011

Councillors Present: Barbara Alexander, Pamela Bale, David Betts, Keith Chopping, Hilary Cole, Graham Jones, Alan Law, Gordon Lundie and Joe Mooney

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Teresa Bell (Corporate Director - Community Services), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Margaret Goldie (Corporate Director - Children and Young People), David Holling (Head of Legal & Electoral) and Jon Winstanley (Projects Manager - Highways & Transport), Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Policy Officer), Councillor Adrian Edwards, Councillor Royce Longton, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor Gwen Mason, Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey, Councillor Irene Neill, Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor David Rendel, Robin Steel (Group Executive (Cons)), Councillor Julian Swift-Hook, Councillor Tony Vickers and Councillor Keith Woodhams

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Anthony Stansfeld

PART I

105. Minutes

The Minutes of the special meeting held on 6th January 2011 and the meeting on 17th February 2011 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

106. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

107. Public Questions

(a) Question submitted by Mr Graham Farquhar to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Transport Policy

A question standing in the name of Mr. Graham Farquhar on the subject of planning conditions was answered by the Executive Member for Planning, Housing and Transport Policy.

(b) Question submitted by Mr Richard Garvie to the Portfolio Holder for Education

A question standing in the name of Mr. Richard Garvie on the subject of funding reductions to local Children's Centres was answered by the Executive Member for Education.

(c) Question submitted by Mr Richard Garvie to the Leader of the Council

A question standing in the name of Mr. Richard Garvie on the subject of the quarrying of the incinerator site was answered by the Leader of the Council.

(d) Question submitted by Mr Richard Garvie to the Leader of the Council

A question standing in the name of Mr. Richard Garvie on the subject of the sale of social housing was answered by the Leader of the Council.

(e) Question submitted by Mr Richard Garvie to the Portfolio Holder for Community Care, Pensions, Insurance

A question standing in the name of Mr. Richard Garvie on the subject of future of residential care was answered by the Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance.

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(f) **Question submitted by Mr Richard Garvie to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Economic Development, Property, Health & Safety**

A question standing in the name of Mr. Richard Garvie on the subject of attracting new employment and investment in the area was answered by the Executive Member for Finance, Economic Development Property and Health & Safety.

108. Petitions

Councillor Tony Vickers presented a petition containing 19 signatures relating to the long term and dilapidated state of 22 Westbourne Terrace, Newbury. The petition was not referred to a Committee but an assessment would have to be made by one of the Council's Planning Officers and if appropriate a recommendation made to serve a notice pursuant to Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 under delegated officer authority.

Councillor Alan Macro presented a petition containing 78 signatures relating to the reduction of traffic, speeding and to address parking problems in Church Street, Theale. The petition was referred to the Speed Limit Task Group/Individual Decision.

109. Community Led Planning - Performance Report (EX2207)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning progress of Community Led Planning within the District for the first half of the 2010/11 financial year.

Councillor Pamela Bale introduced the report by stating that this was a successful period of time for parish planning. 70% of the District had a Community Plan in place. A further three communities had submitted draft plans for consideration and five communities were preparing for their plans to be refreshed. West Berkshire Council was seen as a leader for community led planning.

Very positive feedback had been received from communities and this was included as an appendix to the report. A good deal of hard work was required but this brought significant benefits to communities. These included eligibility for a number of different grants such as the Parish Plan Grant and Vibrant Villages Grant. Communities could also attract external funding and the overall funding received by communities across the District was close to £1m in 2010/11. Most recent grant awards had focused on young people – cycle tracks, play equipment and so on.

Some common themes had been identified and these were being followed up with appropriate Officers, most commonly these related to speeding traffic.

The achievements of Mortimer Parish Council had been recognised by their receipt of a community empowerment award.

The annual Community Planning Conference was held on 5 March 2011, this was held jointly with a West Berkshire Partnership event. The conference was well attended and much positive feedback had been received from attendees.

Councillor Paul Bryant commented that a plan was not in place for Speen, but an active and successful Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) was operating in the area which was plugging the gap. This could well be the case in other areas across the District. This was a positive example of community empowerment.

RESOLVED that Members note the actions in the report without the need for any additions.

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Reason for the decision: This report forms part of the Council's performance monitoring framework.

Other options considered: None.

110. **Report and Action Plan of the Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral & Assessment Arrangements within West Berkshire (EX2206)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the recent unannounced inspection of the authority's Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements in November 2010. Councillor Gordon Lundie reported that the previous unannounced inspection had been carried out on the 12th and 13th January 2010. One of the main roles of the Referral and Assessment Team was to identify children at risk of harm and it was therefore an important entry point within Children's Services. The Inspectors had considered a range of evidence as to the quality, effectiveness and impact of the service, including reading case records, supervision files and observing and interviewing a range of staff. Their findings had been published in a report on 15th December 2010 and would contribute to the annual review of the performance of Children's Services for which Ofsted would award a rating later in the year.

Councillor Lundie stated that the areas identified for action in January 2010 had been fully addressed along with the previous areas of development apart from one exception relating to casework allocations to family support workers. Additional resources had been allocated to the Team which had been effective. The Baby P incident had seen an increase in the number of cases due to the more intensive level of vigilance. One of the areas of strength which had been recognised by the Inspectors was the effective delivery of early intervention services, which included the good use of the CAF and the Locality Network system.

Areas for development included assessment timescales which it was felt had not been consistently or robustly monitored. However, Councillor Lundie reported that he had sat in on a number of meetings and cases had not been prioritised on timescales but on the element of risk to the child. Despite that timescales were rarely missed.

Councillor Lundie concluded that on the whole the findings had been positive and that the service was performing well.

Councillor Alan Macro commended Officers and Social Workers on the positive aspect of the service. However, he was concerned about the areas for development and in particular the second one which noted that although social work caseloads were manageable and balanced, the more qualified and experienced staff experienced additional pressures as they were required to undertake child protection enquiries. He felt that procedures needed to be put in place to ensure that this issue was followed up. Councillor Lundie responded that the supervisor audits would ensure that this was covered off.

Councillor Julian Swift-Hook also commended Officers on their achievements. He referred to the Action Plan where it seemed that a large number of spreadsheets were used and he queried whether any of those could be transferred to the RAISE system which would be a more secure method of storing information. Councillor Lundie advised that if the spreadsheets used were found to be ineffective then consideration would be given to using the RAISE system. However, there was no evidence to suggest that data security was currently an issue within Children's Services.

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RESOLVED that the report be noted and the action plan agreed.

Reason for the decision: Statutory requirement.

Other options considered: None.

111. **Traffic Management and Road Safety Programme 2011/12 (EX2205)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 8) concerning the Traffic Management and Road Safety Programme for 2011/12.

Councillor David Betts was pleased to present the Programme for the Executive's approval. Approximately £600k was made available as part of the Programme, with 50% of that figure already committed to a range of schemes. The remainder of the funding was unallocated and would be used to react to issues raised by Parish and Town Councils, Ward Members and residents.

Executive approval would allow the delivery of a number of projects to help support local communities. These included the installation of 17 warning signs with flashing lights at schools across the District and a number of local safety schemes.

Councillor Keith Woodhams requested a breakdown of the Government funding received, the expenditure committed to organisations including Thames Valley Police and the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership for road safety work, and some detail on the return for this expenditure. Councillor Betts agreed to provide a detailed written answer, but he did advise that an improved arrangement had been negotiated with Thames Valley Police and the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership. This included the maintenance of speed cameras at a reduced cost.

Councillor Alan Macro was pleased to note that work was planned on the A4/A340 roundabout in Theale, but queried whether this would encompass the Common Hill junction as he was aware of safety concerns at this junction. Councillor Betts agreed to discuss these concerns with Highway Officers.

RESOLVED that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Programme for 2011/12 be approved.

Reason for the decision: To ensure that this year's programme is approved at the same time as the Council's Capital Programme and is in place for the financial year 2011/12.

Other options considered: None.

112. **Children's Social Care Complaints Report (EX2224)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 9) concerning the statutory complaints process for the year 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. Local authorities were required to publish an annual report in order to keep the local authority informed about the operation of its complaints procedure. Along with the corporate complaints process local authorities were required to have a specific complaints process for Children's Social Care matters. The complaints process was split into three stages:

Stage 1 – issues were investigated and a response provided, usually by the Team Manager;

Stage 2 – formal investigation, usually by an external person, with the provision of a written report;

Stage 3 – appeal to an external body of three independent people following which a report would be provided. The Director would then respond to the complainant enclosing the panel report.

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The majority of complaints were dealt with at Level 1. However, in 2009/10 the numbers of complaints at Stage 1 had dropped from 86 to 48, Stage 2 had remained static at one and there had been no Stage 3 complaints as was the case in the previous year. The drop in numbers overall was a consequence of the increased efficiency of dealing with issues as they arose.

Councillor Lundie reported that the main areas for complaints had been around the attitude of staff which had risen to 12 in 2009/10 from 3 in 2008/09. However, this had been due to the fact that staff had challenged parents increasingly and only one of those complaints had been upheld.

Complaints provided an essential mechanism for shaping services to meet the needs of service users in order to prevent complaints from arising again. Having discussions with difficult parents at the beginning had helped the process and Councillor Lundie felt that the service was working well.

Councillor Alan Macro commended Officers and staff in the reduction of the number of complaints but was concerned about the length of time it had taken for the report to be presented to the Executive. Councillor Lundie had met with the Officer as he had also been concerned about the delay. The report could only be closed off when the final complaint of that year had been resolved and this could take a further 4 months. The Officer who dealt with complaints also had responsibility for Access to Records requests. These requests involved huge amounts of record retrieval and copying and third party agreement and had statutory timescales which had to be adhered to. Priority had been given to this area of work and therefore the annual complaints report had been delayed.

Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey referred to the three housing related complaints in 2009/10 and queried whether there was an issue although it was recognised that two of those complaints were not upheld. Margaret Goldie responded that one of the complaints had been passed on to Housing to formally consider, and the other two were about how the client felt that the Social Worker was not doing enough to help them obtain housing. Neither of those two complaints were justified as young people were encouraged and supported to do certain of the tasks to move on to independent living for themselves. Therefore the level of expectation of the service user was higher than the service provider.

RESOLVED that the report be received and its recommendations agreed in preparation for its public presentation.

Reason for the decision: Local authorities must each financial year publish an annual report in order to keep the local authority informed about the operation of its complaints procedure. The report should be 'presented to staff, the relevant local authority committee, and to the regulator and general public'.

Other options considered: None.

113. **Anti Child Poverty Strategy (EX2210)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the Council's statutory duty to produce a Child Poverty Strategy by 31st March 2011.

Councillor Gordon Lundie advised that this statutory duty was a requirement of the Child Poverty Act 2010 introduced by the previous Labour Government. This was an essential policy to have in place, but it was hoped that the Coalition Government would, in time, give a greater emphasis to addressing the root causes of child poverty.

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Poverty in West Berkshire differed to some other areas of the country. West Berkshire was relatively affluent but there were some areas of deprivation in some Wards.

One of the purposes of the Strategy was to improve the life chances of those from disadvantaged backgrounds through education, employment and good parenting in both rural and urban areas of the District. Work was needed to help identify at risk families and then offer support.

Councillor Tony Vickers raised a concern that the data used for the Strategy was not more recent than the 2001 Census. He felt that more recent data was required for such a sensitive subject. Councillor Lundie pointed out that population growth estimates were also used in the production of the Strategy, but he did accept that improved figures would be a benefit. Unfortunately it would take some time before data from the current Census could be used.

Councillor Alan Macro questioned the decision to make the Teenage Pregnancy worker redundant when considering the reference made in the report to children of lone parent families (possibly teenage parents) being at the greatest risk of being poor and the poor outcome from growing up in poverty as being an increased likelihood of becoming a teenage mother. In response, Councillor Lundie explained that the Teenage Pregnancy worker was made redundant after the grant funding this post was cut. As this was felt to be a lesser issue than in many other parts of the country it was decided that the post would not be replaced by Council funding. In addition it was hoped that work within education and schools would help cover this gap, as well as the work of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership of which both Councillor Lundie and Councillor Julian Swift-Hook were Members.

Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey referred to the action to ensure that all families at risk of or living in poverty could access information and advice at the times and in the ways that they needed it most, and suggested that the ways this was measured and reported should be widened beyond Job Centre Plus. Councillor Lundie advised that work would be undertaken in this regard.

Councillor Gwen Mason queried whether the Strategy would be presented to the Healthier Select Committee at its meeting on 7 April 2011. While Councillor Lundie was unclear on this point he informed Members that any comments from the Select Committee would be welcomed. The Strategy had already been presented to the West Berkshire Partnership.

RESOLVED that the Strategy be approved.

Reason for the decision: The Council has a statutory duty under the Child Poverty Act 2010.

Other options considered: None.

(Councillor Julian Swift-Hook left the meeting at 7.18pm).

114. **Council Plan Outcomes 2010/11: Q3 Update on Achievement (EX2108)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning Quarter 3 performance against each of the outcomes identified in the 2010/11 Council Plan and to report on any remedial action that will be or has been taken, where achievement would not be met.

Councillor Graham Jones moved the report in the absence of the Portfolio Holder. The local authority had set stretched targets and 78% of those reported were on track to be successfully achieved. In setting particularly stretched targets to improve the outcomes

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for local residents it was inevitable that there would be some which would not be achieved. However, when a target was not met, robust actions were taken to mitigate any adverse consequences.

Councillor Jones referred to page 126 of the report and the indicator in respect of working in partnership to reduce house burglaries by 9%. The Q3 results indicated that although there had been a reduction in burglary (6.8%) it was not enough to achieve the target of 9% reduction against the 2007/08 baseline by year end. However, when compared to the previous year burglary had reduced by 22.7% with only 437 reported crimes for 2010/11 compared to 565 for the same period the previous year.

Councillor David Betts confirmed that the indicator (NI 168), in respect of maintaining the continuing improvement in the condition of the district's roads by ensuring that no more than 5% of the principal road network was in need of repair, would be achieved by year end.

Councillor Hilary Cole referred to page 137 of the agenda and reported that recycling and composting targets were being met. The environmental events aimed at improving 'green education' to bring about change had been extremely successful. However, the indicator for the installation of 'voltage optimisation' technology in five Council buildings would be reported as "red" as the cost/benefit advice on this project had been flawed and consequently 4 out of the 5 projects would possibly not proceed.

Councillor Alan Law referred to the indicators in respect of High Quality Planning on page 139 of the report and a large number were reporting as "green". Over 50 empty homes in the district had been returned to use. The third Local Transport Plan had been adopted on time unlike a number of neighbouring authorities. The number of upheld planning appeals remained below the national average. A large number of the "red" indicators were as a result of the recession and the financial downturn. However, the number of planning applications were now up to the pre-recession levels. The amount of new affordable housing provision had reduced as a consequence of the recession as the number of new homes being built had slowed down. In respect of Planning performance due to the reduced number of applications being submitted recruitment had been frozen and now that applications were once again at pre-recession levels emergency measures had had to be introduced to deal with the volume of work.

Councillor Pamela Bale reported on progress with the Vibrant Villages theme. The indicator in respect of Parish Plan Surgeries was reporting as "red" as one of the surgeries had had to be cancelled as no issues were raised. As the sessions were demand led this had resulted in the target of 4 not being achieved.

Councillor Barbara Alexander reported that all targets would be achieved under Successful Schools and Learning apart from one. This was the indicator for the increase to 57 of the number of primary schools where 55% or more pupils scored Level 4 or above in English and Maths at the end of Key Stage 2. The boycotting of KS2 SATs had impacted on this measure due to the fact that not all schools had taken part. Councillor Alexander also referred to the Exception Report on page 128 of the agenda in relation to the promotion of Sustainable Schools. This target had not been achieved due to resource pressures. An external resource had been seconded from Brookfields Special School to continue working with schools to encourage sustainable practice.

Councillor Joe Mooney referred to the indicator under the Promoting Independence theme to further increase the numbers of known carers and carers who were supported to 2,000. Councillor Mooney anticipated that a number in the region of 1750 to 1800 would be achieved. The reduction in grant funding to carers would reduce capacity to

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provide carers services and there were a large number of secondments, vacancies and back-fill issues within Community Care which meant that resources were limited. Carers were certainly valued as it was recognised that the Service would not be able to function without them.

Councillor Gordon Lundie confirmed that performance within Children's Services remained strong in protecting vulnerable people. The indicator for the provision of Family Group Conferences for 75 families was reporting as "amber". This was in fact a good news story as it meant that the requirement for Family Group Conferences for high risk referrals had reduced as a result of the early intervention work which had been put in place.

Councillor David Betts reported that although the Council would not be organising a Jobsfair this year it would be supporting through the Skills and Enterprise Partnership in the early Summer.

Councillor Tony Vickers referred to the indicator under the Affordable Housing theme to prevent 450 people from becoming homeless through early intervention. He was surprised that there were no specific actions recommended to bring this indicator back on target and he hoped that the targets for the coming year would be more realistic. Councillor Alan Law responded that 86% of the target had been achieved. However, the indicator was currently measuring prevention but Councillor Law felt that it would be better to have a success ratio rather than setting an absolute target. Three homeless families had been presented to the Council in February of which one was not eligible, one had been fixed up with accommodation and one was still being processed.

Councillor Alan Macro said that it would be useful to know the number of primary schools who had achieved 55% of pupils scoring Level 4 or above in English and Maths at the end of Key Stage 2. Councillor Barbara Alexander confirmed that she would let Councillor Macro have that information outside of the meeting.

Councillor Royce Longton felt that the ethos of sustainability would become ingrained if children were educated in that area at a young age. This was obviously a low priority as the Administration had cut the post that dealt with this area of work and no other arrangements appeared to be in place. Councillor Longton queried what arrangements had been made for the forthcoming year. Councillor Barbara Alexander confirmed that no-one had been reappointed into that post but support was being received and would be encouraged to continue to do so.

Councillor David Rendel raised concerns about the level of complacency from the Administration. Last year the number of reds had doubled between Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 and the same was likely to happen this year. Councillor also queried why the measure/activity for the completion of an enhancement scheme for the High Street in Thatcham had been removed. If it had been retained as a priority then this indicator would have been met. Councillor Graham Jones responded that since the targets had been set there had been a shift in Government policy which had resulted in a number of in-year spending cuts. As a result a number of activities/measures identified in the Council Plan had had to be cut and the target had therefore been removed from the performance report. 80% of targets were likely to be met by year end and Councillor Jones advised that it was the policy of the Administration to set challenging targets. In doing so there was a likelihood that not all of those targets would be achieved. In respect of schools there would be some challenges in the future as they were expected to pick up more of the work themselves but they continued to meet those challenges in a positive way.

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Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey expressed her concerns that only 4 work placements through the Pathways to Employment services had been achieved out of a target of 25 and it was queried whether additional resource could be put into the service to lead by example. Councillor Alan Law advised that the Pathways to Employment service was no longer available. However, he felt that the indicator should not be reporting as red as 27 placements had been achieved this year – 12 by the Mental Health Team and 15 in the Adult Disability Team.

RESOLVED that the performance against each of the outcomes identified in the 2010/11 Council Plan be noted and the remedial action being taken, where achievements would not be met by the end of the municipal year, should also be noted and approved.

Reason for the decision: The Council Plan sets out the purpose and ambition of West Berkshire Council. It defines the Council's main focus of activities and the measures of performance against which it will assess itself.

Monitoring and managing performance within each of these main areas of work is key in making sure the Council delivers what it has set out to achieve - and where this has not happened, in ensuring that appropriate action is taken to mitigate the impact of the target not being met.

Other options considered: Not to report progress against the Council's stated aims and ambitions.

115. **Implementation Plan for the Local Transport Plan (EX2219)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning the Implementation Plan which set out the initial delivery plans for the new Local Transport Plan (LTP).

Councillor Alan Law introduced the report by advising that the new Local Transport Plan (LTP3) had been adopted at full Council on 3 March 2011 and would come into force on 1 April 2011. The complementary Implementation Plan detailed transport schemes and projects planned under the key LTP strategy areas for the first three years of the LTP. It was the intention to produce a fifteen year Implementation Plan to sit alongside the length of the LTP3 pending a period of consultation taking place during the summer of 2011.

The Implementation Plan had been produced through discussion and consultation with the Transport Policy Task Group and as such would have been eligible as an Individual Decision. However, due to the timescales involved and to allow for further questions, it had been brought to the Executive for approval.

In addition, the work outlined in the Implementation Plan had already been agreed as part of the Capital Programme. The LTP3 and the Implementation Plan would support the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy.

Councillor Keith Woodhams referred to the welcome grant of £913k received from the Coalition Government to fund improvements to roads damaged by the winter weather. It was hoped that this resource would be used to improve the situation with pot holes. As this point was more operational, Councillor David Betts pointed out that spend on highway maintenance had been significant and a further £0.9m had been allocated for the 2011/12 programme. Very extensive resurfacing work had been conducted in the summer of 2010 and this reduced the number of pot holes reported by nearly a third over December 2010 and January 2011. Short term plugging work had to be repeated for 26 pot holes, but the expense of these was met by the contractor. Councillor Betts added that only 11% of country roads were assessed as needing attention.

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RESOLVED that the indicative Implementation Plan would be available from 1st April 2011 alongside the new Local Transport Plan. (This would be prior to consultation on the full Implementation Plan, which is timetabled for after the local elections).

Reason for the decision: The guidance on developing the new Local Transport Plan (2011-2026) requires an Implementation Plan to be produced to support its delivery.

Other options considered: (1) Not developing an Implementation Plan was not considered to be an acceptable option given the clear steer from Department of Transport that Local Transport Plans should be accompanied by an Implementation Plan. (2) Not publishing an Implementation Plan until after the local elections is not considered to be a favourable option as the plans for delivery of the Local Transport Plan are of importance to the West Berkshire community.

116. **Use of Local Resources - Local Food (EX2191)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 13) concerning the Executive's response to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission following a review into the use of local food and the work being proposed by the Local Strategic Partnership to promote the use of local food. A number of recommendations had been made by the Greener Select Committee in September 2010 and had been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission at their meeting on 2nd November 2010.

Councillor Hilary Cole reported that Officers had considered the recommendations and a Service response had been provided and targets/actions included where appropriate.

Councillor Tony Vickers asked if a baseline figure could be included for Recommendation 1. Councillor Royce Longton felt that this work was important but there seemed to be a lack of strength in the recommendations. Getting baseline data was vital but there was no evidence that the Administration was keen to undertake this work. Councillor Hilary Cole responded that Councillor Longton was also a member of the Greener Select Committee where a considerable amount of work had been undertaken on sustainability issues and that should be recognised. The Community Furniture Project was involved in growing produce for sale and there was a regular Farmers' Market in Newbury every month which sold local produce. The demand for allotments was also growing and she therefore felt that the use of local food was increasing. Councillor Graham Jones concurred that there was a strong commitment within the authority on both sides of the Chamber for sustainability and greener issues.

RESOLVED that the Officers' responses to the recommendations are endorsed by the Executive.

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

Other options considered: None.

117. **Decommissioning of Statutory Ceremony Room at Shaw House (EX2270)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning proposals to decommission the current Ceremony Room at Shaw House and if agreed to provide the present Interview Room as the Statutory Room for ceremonies from 1st January 2012.

Councillor Graham Jones, on Councillor Anthony Stansfeld's behalf, asked the Executive to approve the recommended actions in the report which would improve the use of the facilities available.

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RESOLVED that:

1. the decommissioning of the current Ceremony Room at Shaw House be approved and for the current Interview Room to become the Statutory Room with effect from 1 January 2012 subject to approval of plans by the General Register Office;
2. the Ceremony Room be licensed as a non statutory room;
3. any additional changes or amendments to service provision under New Governance arrangements are delegated to the Proper Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for the decision: In order to further develop the Registration Service bring it in line with neighbouring authorities and to provide additional income to the Service.

Other options considered: To keep arrangements as they currently exist.

118. Flood and Water Management Act 2010

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 15) concerning the implications of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 for West Berkshire Council.

Councillor David Betts stated that this was an important report and West Berkshire Council were well prepared to take on the responsibilities arising from the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The aim of the recent changes in legislation was to improve the management of local flood risk. West Berkshire Council would be taking the role of Lead Local Flood Authority but would need to work closely with the Environment Agency, water companies and others to undertake the new responsibilities. The Council would be responsible for undertaking a Flood Risk Assessment and identifying flood risk areas. Much of this would build on the work that had already been undertaken since the floods in the Summer of 2007 but there were additional responsibilities for which two additional posts had been proposed which would be funded by Defra.

Councillor Pamela Bale reiterated her thanks to the Highways Team for the work that had already taken place to reduce the risk of flooding in the area and welcomed the enhanced resources which would increase the ability of the team to undertake work.

Councillor Keith Woodhams queried how any proposed works would be communicated to Ward Members. He also stated that two residents had raised insurance issues recently and felt that insurance companies should be encouraged to take on new business as a number of local residents were stuck with their current insurer.

Councillor Tony Vickers asked about the availability of flood risk maps which would assist to inform members of the public and insurance companies. He queried the accuracy of the maps and whether it was a time limited job. Jon Winstanley confirmed that a considerable amount of information had been obtained from the Environment Agency to model into the maps and would also feed into the Flood Risk Assessment. The end goal was to link all the information together.

Councillor David Betts advised that this work would go a long way to address the issues in respect of insurance companies but they tended to work with postcodes rather than Environment Agency maps. Some people had asked for a letter from the Highways Engineer on flood risks and insurance companies had taken these on board when making a decision. In respect of the communication with Ward Members, this would continue to work well as it currently did. The posts had funding available for a two year period and it was hoped that they would continue after that time.

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Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey referred to page 210 of the agenda and noted that £85k had been allocated in 2011/12 for the mapping and setting up of a drainage asset register/database and queried why the cost of this was so high. Jon Winstanley confirmed that it would be used for investigation purposes to identify drainage assets which would all have to be uncovered in order to map the asset and assess the condition. This was a huge piece of work.

RESOLVED that:

1. the implications of the new legislation be noted and accordingly approve the restructuring of the Projects Team to establish a small Drainage Team to undertake the duties of the Flood and Water Management Act and to manage the Council's existing drainage/flood prevention duties under the Highways and Land Drainage Acts;
2. the proposal for the creation of the following two new full time posts be supported:
 - a. A Senior Technician at a cost of £30k per annum (including overheads) to be appointed at the beginning of 2011/12 financial year on a two year fixed term contract;
 - b. A Project Engineer at a cost of £40k per annum (including overheads) to be appointed at the beginning of the 2012/13 financial year on a one year fixed term contract;
3. the use of Defra grant funding to cover the cost of these posts be approved together with the provision of revenue budgets to undertake the duties under the Act as detailed in Para 6.6, Table 1 of this report.

Reason for the decision: To enable the Council to take on board the new duties under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Other options considered: None.

119. Members' Question(s)

(a) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder responsible for Environment, Cleaner Greener, Public Protection & Customer Services submitted by Councillor Royce Longton

A question standing in the name of Councillor Royce Longton on the subject of air pollution around the Burger King Roundabout was answered by the Executive Member for Environment, Cleaner Greener, Public Protection & Customer Services.

(b) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children & Families, Youth Service, Culture & Leisure submitted by Councillor Gwen Mason

A question standing in the name of Councillor Gwen Mason on the subject of Youth Centre buildings being complaint with disability requirements was answered by the Executive Member for Children & Families, Youth Service and Culture & Leisure.

(c) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder responsible for Highways, Transport (Operational) & ICT submitted by Councillor Tony Vickers

A question standing in the name of Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of ensuring developers provided on-site parking was answered by the Executive Member for Highways, Transport (Operational) and ICT.

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(d) Question to be answered by the Leader of the Council submitted by Councillor David Rendel.

A question standing in the name of Councillor David Rendel on the subject of the production of a new Council Plan was answered by the Leader of the Council.

(e) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Cleaner Greener, Public Protection & Customer Services submitted by Councillor David Rendel

A question standing in the name of Councillor David Rendel on the subject of excessive levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in Central Thatcham was answered by the Executive Member for Environment, Cleaner Greener, Public Protection & Customer Services.

(f) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder responsible for Highways, Transport (Operational) & ICT submitted by Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey

A question standing in the name of Councillor Gabrielle McGarvey on the subject of information in respect of Residents' Parking Schemes was answered by the Executive Member for Highways, Transport (Operational) and ICT.

(g) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder responsible for Councillor Anthony Stansfeld submitted by Councillor Alan Macro

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of the current status of CCTV in Theale, Pangbourne and Lambourn was answered by the Executive Member for Strategy, Performance and Community Safety.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.35 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature