

Meeting of West Berkshire District Council

Thursday 19 May 2016

Summons and Agenda




WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

To: All Members of the Council

You are requested to attend a meeting of
WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
to be held in the
**COUNCIL OFFICES, MARKET STREET,
NEWBURY**

on
Thursday 19 May 2016
at 7.00pm



Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support
West Berkshire District Council

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday, 11 May 2016

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).

2. **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman to report on functions attended since the last meeting and other matters of interest to Members.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

The Chairman will make Member Long Service presentations to:

- Paul Bryant (20 Years)
- Pamela Bale (10 Years)



Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday, 19 May 2016 (continued)

4. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016/17 (C2993)

To elect the Chairman for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

5. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016/17 (C2994)

To appoint the Vice-Chairman for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

6. MINUTES

The Chairman to sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Council ordinary meeting held on 1 March 2016 and the extraordinary meeting held on the 24 March 2016. **(Pages 7 - 36)**

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any Personal, Disclosable Pecuniary or other interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' [Code of Conduct](#).

8. GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 (C3034)

Purpose: To present the Annual Governance and Ethics Committee report to Full Council. **(Pages 37 - 56)**

9. APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE 2016/17 MUNICIPAL YEAR (C2995)

Purpose: The Leader of the Council to announce the composition of the Executive for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

10. APPOINTMENT OF AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES FOR THE 2016/17 MUNICIPAL YEAR (C2996)

Purpose: To consider the appointment and allocation of seats on Committees and associated bodies for the 2016/17 Municipal Year; and to agree the Council's Policy Framework for 2016/17. **(Pages 57 - 70)**

11. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

At this point, the Council meeting will be adjourned to enable the Committees appointed by the Council to meet to determine their Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen. The order for each meeting is set out below:

- a) Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
- b) Communities Panel
- c) Environment Panel
- d) Resources Panel
- e) Licensing Committee
- f) District Planning Committee



Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday, 19 May 2016 (continued)

- g) Eastern Area Planning Committee
- h) Western Area Planning Committee
- i) Governance and Ethics Committee
- j) Personnel Committee

12. **RECOMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING**

At the conclusion of the meeting of the Personnel Committee, the Council will recommence.

13. **WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL STRATEGY: REFRESH 2015 - 2019 (C3055)**

Purpose: To present the refreshed Council Strategy 2015 to 2019 for consideration and approval by Council. The refreshed document also articulates the progress that has been made and introduces new or updated projects to support the delivery of the Council's priorities for improvement. **(Pages 71 - 102)**

14. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS): 2017/18 TO 2019/20 (C2977)**

Purpose: To agree the medium term financial planning and strategy for the organisation. The MTFS is a rolling three year strategy which is built to ensure that the Council's financial resources, both revenue and capital, are available to deliver the Council Strategy. The MTFS should be read in conjunction with the Revenue Budget 2016/17, Capital Strategy 2016 to 2021 and Investment and Borrowing Strategy reports. **(Pages 103 - 126)**

15. **"GETTING TO GOOD": A MODEL FOR IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY AND BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FRONTLINE TEAMS (C3116)**

Purpose: This report serves to inform on the progress of the Children and Family Services since their Ofsted Inspection of March 2015 and sets out a framework to build a 'Good' and sustainable frontline Children's Social Care Service. It references the core activities of decision making and management oversight and sets out the principles for an improved work plan and capacity to deliver further service improvement with the aim of achieving a 'Good' Ofsted Inspection rating. **(Pages 127 - 154)**

16. **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL (C3103)**

Purpose: This report proposes changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel to provide a robust framework that upholds the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to carrying out its responsibilities towards children and young people in care including care leavers. **(Pages 155 - 164)**

17. **LICENSING COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Licensing Committee has not met.

Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday, 19 May 2016 (continued)

18. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Personnel Committee has not met.

19. GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of Council, the Governance and Ethics Committee met on 14 March 2016 (special) and 25 April 2016. Copies of the Minutes of these meetings can be obtained from Strategic Support or via the [Council's website](#).

20. DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the District Planning Committee has not met.

21. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission met on 05 April 2016. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Strategic Support or via the [Council's website](#).

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.



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Agenda Item 6.

DRAFT

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

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2016

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

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

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

PART I

92. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman informed Members that it was with regret that he had to announce that Sir Robert Anthony Bevis Durant (known as Tony Durant) former MP for Reading North and Reading West had passed away. Councillor Tony Linden described him as a conscientious man who had served his residents very well. Councillor Pamela Bale commented that she had very fond memories of Tony and his wife Audrey and stated that he was a kind and generous man. Councillors Mollie Lock and Alan Macro said he always conducted himself as a gentleman.

The Council observed a minutes' silence.

The Chairman reported that he and the Vice Chairman had attended 27 events since the last Council meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members that they had received an Amendments and Corrections sheet in respect of this meeting which covered a number of agenda items.

93. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2015 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Pamela Bale's attendance at the meeting being recorded.

The Minutes of the special meeting held on 21 January 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

94. Declarations of Interest

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

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

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

The Deputy Monitoring Officer also informed Members that Councillor Mike Johnston had notified him that he had a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget) by virtue of the fact that his wife was employed, on a casual basis, by the Visitor Information Centre and he would be leaving the room during the course of discussing and voting on this matter.

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

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

Councillor	Outside Body	Other
Bale, Pamela	East Downlands Children’s Centre Advisory Board Governor of Pangbourne Primary School	Regular user of Pangbourne Library
Bryant, Paul	Greenham Common Trust Donnington Trust Harwell Restoration	
Clifford, Jeanette	Governor of St Bartholomew’s School A foundation Governor of the St Bartholomew’s Foundation	User of Newbury Library; User of Northcroft Leisure Centre; Attends events at The Watermill;

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

Councillor	Outside Body	Other
	<p>A member of The Corn Exchange</p> <p>Newbury Town Council link Councillor to the West Berkshire Museum</p> <p>Trustee of Mabel Luke Charity – almshouses</p>	
Goff, Dave	Foundation Governor at St Bartholomew's School	
Jackson-Doerge, Carol	<p>Corn Exchange</p> <p>The Watermill Theatre</p> <p>Governor of St Marys Burghfield</p>	
Jaques, Marigold	West Berks Citizens Advice Bureau	
Jones, Rick	<p>WB Mencap – WBC representative</p> <p>West Berkshire Disability Alliance</p>	
Lock, Mollie	Burghfield Children's Centre - Member on the Board (no financial responsibilities)	<p>User of Mortimer Library.</p> <p>User of No 75 Bus service.</p> <p>Bus Passes.</p>
Macro, Alan		<p>Occasional user of Theale Library</p> <p>Member of Theale Parish Council. (Theale Parish Council utilises, and helps fund, the Neighbourhood Warden Service and CCTV Service)</p>
Podger, James	Governing Body at Mary Hare School	
Stansfeld, Anthony		Police and Crime Commissioner

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

95. Petitions

Councillor James Podger presented a petition, on behalf of Ms Kate Lo, containing 2,454 signatures relating to the potential removal of funding for the Oasis Youth Club and Befriending schemes for young people with autism, through Short Breaks. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

Councillor Mollie Lock presented a petition, on behalf of Ms Katherine Whitehouse, containing 217 signatures relating to the potential closure of Burghfield Children's Centre. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

Councillor Alan Macro presented a petition containing 365 signatures relating to the potential closure of Theale Library. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

Councillor Lee Dillon presented a petition containing 102 signatures relating to the potential closure of Thatcham Library. This petition would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget debate that evening.

96. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#). *(right click on link and 'Edit Hyperlink'. Insert URL to pdf on website in 'address' field)*

There were no public questions received in relation to items not included on the agenda. The following questions were submitted in relation to items on the agenda.

- a) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of the impact cuts would have upon the wider economy was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning Economic Development, Regeneration and Pensions .
- b) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of an Impact Needs Analysis was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning Economic Development, Regeneration and Pensions.
- c) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of alternative revenue streams was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- d) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of public/ private partnerships was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste and Customer Services.
- e) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of the future use of library buildings was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Car, Housing, Countryside, Community, Culture and Leisure Services.
- f) A question standing in the name of Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of the future of library and children centres, stock and equipment was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Education, Property and Broadband .

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

- g) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of postponing the expenditure on the budget was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing and Devolution.
- h) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of lobbying Central Government to increase the Council's settlement was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Leader of the Council .
- i) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of meeting statutory obligations in respect of libraries was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community, Culture and Leisure Services .
- j) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of a holistic approach to the transitional funding from Central Government was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Leader of the Council.
- k) A question standing in the name of Mr Peter Norman on the subject of Councillors obligations to all their constituents was asked by David Marsh and answered by the Leader of the Council.

97. Membership of Committees

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised of the following changes to the membership of Committees since the previous Council meeting:

Western Area Planning Committee

Councillor Anthony Stansfeld had been replaced by Councillor Adrian Edwards. Councillor James Cole was now a substitute on this Committee.

Licensing Committee

Councillor Adrian Edwards had been replaced by Councillor Clive Hooker.

98. Licensing Committee

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

99. Personnel Committee

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

100. Governance and Ethics Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 09 December 2015, 05 January 2016, 08 February 2016 (special and ordinary), 17 February 2016 and 22 February 2016.

101. District Planning Committee

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

102. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had met on 05 January 2016 and 23 February 2016.

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

103. Notices of Motion

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 13(a) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Alan Macro relating to forgoing the index link to the Councillor's Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in 2016/17 and reversing the increase to the Basic Allowance adopted in May 2015.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Alan Macro and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

That the Council:

“recognises the financial pressure that it is under as a result of significant reductions of the Council's Revenue Support Grant by the Government and therefore resolves to:

1. Forgo the index linked increase to the Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances due for 2016/17, saving £5,210
2. Reverse the £1,039 increase to the Councillors' Basic Allowance awarded in 2015, saving £54,028.”

Councillor James Fredrickson noted that the first part of the Motion (1% increase for Councillors) was already built into the 2016/17 budget savings proposals and so this part of the motion had already been resolved.

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

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 13(b) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Anthony Chadley relating to lobbying Central Government for a Fair Deal in Regards to the Local Authority Funding.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Anthony Chadley and seconded by Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter:

That the Council:

“notes that the proposed Local Government Settlement was only announced in late December, giving the Council only 2 months to consider savings proposals, consult residents and review feedback;

and notes that whilst the £1.4million of transitional funding provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government will lessen the impact of the required savings, the Council still needs to find £17.5 million next year.

It is therefore proposed that this Council continues to lobby the Government for a fair deal in regards to local authority funding”

(Councillor Manohar Gopal left the meeting at 8.14pm and returned at 8.17pm)

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

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 13(c) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Graham Jones relating to local retention of Business Rates.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Laszlo Zverko:

That the Council:

“Welcomes the devolution agenda and fully supports the Chancellor's announcement that all business rates will be returned to local government.

West Berkshire currently generates £84m in business rates but only £17m is returned to West Berkshire Council to help fund local services and the essential infrastructure needed to keep us strong.

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

With the complete removal of any remaining government funding without the return of our withheld rates income there will be further significant cuts in local services during the lifetime of this Council.

Local authorities and democracy would be strengthened by a direct link between the money raised in an area being spent in the same area.

This Council calls upon Her Majesty's Government to guarantee the return of business rates to West Berkshire and ask for the timeline to be reduced to 2018 thus giving local authorities a direct incentive to encourage local economic growth through improved services and infrastructure.

This Council therefore requests that the Chairman lobbies the relevant Minister in regard to ensuring that rates raised in West Berkshire will be returned and that this will be considered for implementation within the lifetime of this Parliament."

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

104. Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2016/17 (C2976)

(Councillor Tony Linden left the meeting at 8.17pm and returned at 8.24pm)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the Council's borrowing limits as set out by CIPFA's Prudential Code and which also set out the Annual Investment and Borrowing Strategy for 2016/17.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Laszlo Zverko:

That the Council:

"Adopts the 2016/17 Investment and Borrowing Strategy and formulates the Treasury Management Policy in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 and CIPFA's Prudential Code and Code of Practice for Treasury Management".

Councillor Croft in introducing the item explained that this was a technical report that the Council was required to produce annually. He noted that the Treasury Management Team was a cross party group.

(Councillors Graham Jones and Keith Chopping left the meeting at 8.19pm and returned at 8.20pm)

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that the Liberal Democrat Group supported the strategy and welcomed the addition of the extra twelve month borrowing capability.

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

105. Capital Strategy and Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 (C2978)

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

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) concerning the five year Capital Strategy for 2016 to 2021, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement and the Asset Management Plans for Property and Highways. The document also set out the funding framework for the Council's five year Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Jeanette Clifford:

That the Council:

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

“approves the Capital Strategy and Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21”.

Councillor Croft noted that despite having difficult decisions to make in respect of the revenue budget the Council would continue to invest in the future of West Berkshire. The strategy set out that over the next five years the Council would be investing:

- £57m for new school places and improvements to existing buildings,
- £55m in the maintenance and improvement of the district’s highway network;
- £1.5m for the delivery of superfast broadband across the district;
- £11.5m in occupational health equipment, home adaptations and supported living for older people and people with disabilities and also supporting looked after children;
- £3.8m for the maintenance and improvements of parks, open spaces and sporting and cultural facilities.

(Councillors Graham Pask and Ian Morrin left the meeting at 8.20pm and returned at 8.21pm)

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that the Liberal Democrat Group were broadly supportive of the strategy. He noted that the Government funded new school places at £1100 per square metre. This level of funding did not reflect actual build costs in West Berkshire. He therefore requested that the Council lobby Central Government to attain a level appropriate for the area that was not based on a national formula. Councillor Dillon then proposed an amendment which sought to include an additional aim into the strategy. The amendment suggested using capital to generate longer term income for the Council and was designed to focus Members and Officers’ attention on income generation.

AMENDMENT: Proposed by Councillor Lee Dillon and seconded by Councillor Roger Croft:

That the Council:

“actively uses the Capital budgets to help generate income that can support the revenue budget of the Council through longer term investments”.

Councillor Croft stated that he was happy to second the amendment as it would help to focus efforts.

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

Discussion then returned to the Substantive Motion.

Councillor Garth Simpson stated that the highways element of the Capital Programme (£55m) totalled around 40% of the expenditure. Around £5m would be spent on improvements to the A339 in light of the Sandford and London Road Industrial Estate developments and £5m would be spent on the conversion of street lights to energy saving LED lights which would generate significant revenue savings. In addition 41% of the budget would be spent on maintaining and improving the highways asset and 15% would be spent on flood alleviation schemes.

(Councillor Laszlo Zverko left the meeting at 8.25pm and returned at 8.26pm)

Councillor Alan Macro reported that he was disappointed to note that in paragraph 4.5.5 of the report it stated that the Council would have to make available around £8m of funding to meet the demand for new school places over the next five years due to a shortfall in funding from the Department for Education.

Councillor Alan Law stated that, other than the Atomic Weapons Establishment, the Council was the largest investor in the district and invested around £30m annually on the economy.

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

Councillor Jeanette Clifford stated that the strategy was good news and she was pleased that it had been so well received.

Councillor Croft reiterated that the strategy identified £140m of capital investment in West Berkshire over five years. The funding would be derived from the Council, Central Government, the Local Enterprise Partnership and developer contributions.

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

FOR the Substantive-Motion

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

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

106. Revenue Budget 2016/17 (C2979)

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

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

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

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

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

(Councillors Pamela Bale, Paul Bryant, Jeanette Clifford, Dave Goff, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Rick Jones, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, James Podger and Anthony Stansfeld declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 for the reasons set out

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

in the table in Agenda Item 4. As their interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

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

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

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

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

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

“That the Council:

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

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates.

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

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

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

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

Executive Members and Officers had been working hard to identify savings proposals which would still allow the authority to set a balanced budget. Councillor Croft thanked them and all the residents that had responded to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the public

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

consultations. He reminded members of the public that the Phase 2 consultation would close on 7 March 2016. Councillor Croft acknowledged the impact some of these savings could have on residents' lives.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He also gave notice of his second amendment that proposed four service areas where the Executive recommended some of the £1.4m transition funding should be spent. As the Phase 2 consultation would close on 7 March 2016 it would be inappropriate to make any comment or decision on those proposals until the consultation closed and the results had been analysed.

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

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor Hilary Cole stated that school crossing patrols were not a universal service and only benefitted pupils at certain schools. It would therefore not be unreasonable to ask those schools to fund the service or to seek sponsorship for it. It was unfair to ask other residents to subsidise these schools.

Councillor Graham Jones thanked Councillor Macro for removing the reference to home to school transport from his original amendment as its inclusion could have fettered Members discretion when they were considering the Phase 2 savings. He reiterated Councillor Boeck’s comment that if the transition funding was spent now there would not

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

be the opportunity to spend it on the Phase 2 proposals and therefore he was unable to support the amendment.

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

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

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

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

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

FOR the Amendment

Billy Drummond, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro

AGAINST the Amendment

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

ABSTENTIONS

Paul Hewer, Tim Metcalfe, Graham Pask

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

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

Members then returned to the Substantive Motion. Councillor Alan Law stated that he had some empathy with residents' frustration at having services removed that had seemed to be in place forever. He outlined the changes that had had a significant impact on funding.

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

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The transformation programme, which would ensure services were delivered in a different way, and which was being implemented in Adult Social Care, would generate around £800k in savings. She too was pleased to see that £100k of the transition funding would be spent on the Two Saints floating support service and Step by Step lodging service and an additional £100k had been allocated to the Adult Social Care Disability Clients programme. This funding would allow the organisations and Officers' time to come up with new ways to deliver services to the most vulnerable in the community.

Within Culture and Countryside Phase 1 savings included closing the Visitor Information Centre and public conveniences in the Wharf area in Newbury. She was disappointed that neither the Newbury BID nor the Town Council had been able to commit to take

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

these on. She was pleased that Kintbury residents had been able to come up with a proposal to take over the running of the Kintbury Jubilee Leisure Centre.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He was aware that the services provided by Children's Centres were important and highly regarded by young families. These services would still be provided albeit in a

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

different way. The district would be divided into three family and wellbeing areas. The Council would rationalise the number of buildings it used to provide these services and would also strive to make use of existing community buildings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

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

FOR the Substantive-Motion

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

AGAINST the Substantive-Motion

Billy Drummond and Alan Macro

ABSTAINED

Mollie Lock

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

107. Statutory Pay Policy 2016 (C2980)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 17) concerning publication of the Statutory Pay Policy Statement which would be effective from the 1st April 2016.

(Councillors Mollie Lock left the meeting at 9.51 and returned at 9.52pm)

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor James Fredrickson and seconded by Councillor Marcus Franks:

That the Council:

“approve the policy for publication in accordance with s38 of the Localism Act 2011”.

Councillor Fredrickson explained that the policy had to divulge the remuneration of the Council’s Chief Officers, lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and those who were not chief officers.

Councillor Franks commented that he was pleased to see that fair wage burden would be borne by the employer and not the state.

Councillor Fredrickson reminded Members that the Council had a statutory duty to publish the policy.

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

(Councillor Clive Hooker left the meeting at 9.52pm and returned at 9.54pm)

COUNCIL - 1 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

108. Amendments to the Constitution - Scheme of Delegation (C2981)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 18) concerning amendment to the Council's Scheme of Delegation (Part 3 of the Constitution) in light of legislative changes and current practice.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Quentin Webb:

That the Council:

"agrees the proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation".

Councillor Croft explained that the Scheme set out responsibilities that were delegated to Committees as well as specific Officers. The Council was required to review the Scheme annually.

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

109. 2016/17 West Berkshire Council Timetable of Public Meetings (C2926)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 19) concerning the timetable of public meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Roger Croft and seconded by Councillor Alan Macro:

That the Council:

"approves the timetable of public meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year".

Councillor Croft in introducing the item noted that this report was usually presented to Members in December each year but as there had been a change of leadership in November 2015 it had been agreed that this decision would be delayed until March 2016.

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

110. Members' Questions

There were no Member questions submitted.

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

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

DRAFT

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

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2016

Councillors Present: Peter Argyle (Chairman), Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Manohar Gopal, Paul Hewer, Clive Hooker, Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Tim Metcalfe, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Anthony Stansfeld, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb (Vice-Chairman), Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Legal Services Manager), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Peta Stoddart-Crompton (Public Relations Officer), Andy Walker (Head of Finance), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Stephen Chard (Policy Officer), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and James Gore (Digital Content Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter, Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Keith Chopping, Councillor James Cole, Councillor Roger Croft, Councillor Rob Denton-Powell, Councillor Nick Goodes, Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge, Councillor Mike Johnston, Councillor Gordon Lundie, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor Ian Morrin, Councillor Graham Pask, Honorary Alderman Royce Longton, Honorary Alderman Joe Mooney and Honorary Alderman Alan Thorpe

PART I

111. Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Monitoring Officer noted that Councillor Lynne Doherty had been granted a dispensation by the Governance and Ethics Committee to speak and vote on financial proposals pertaining to Short Breaks Funding should they arise during the discussion that evening.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer stated that Councillors Marcus Franks and Lee Dillon had an interest in Agenda Item 3 (2016/17 Budget - Phase 2 Consultation and the Transitional Grant) by virtue of the fact that their employer, Sovereign Housing Association, received funding from the Council for its Neighbourhood Warden Scheme. Both Councillors had applied to the Governance and Ethics Committee for a dispensation to speak and vote on this item. The Committee decided that a dispensation should be granted but that the dispensation would permit Councillor Franks and Councillor Dillon to speak but not vote on this item.

Sarah Clarke explained that Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge was a trustee of the Corn Exchange. As she had a fiduciary duty to the trust she determined, in respect of Agenda Item 3 (2016/17 Budget - Phase 2 Consultation and the Transitional Grant), not to attend the meeting and would therefore not take part in the vote.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that all Members had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on Agenda Item 3 should discussions refer to Council Tax matters

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

The Councillors set out below declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3 (2016/17 Budget - Phase 2 Consultation and the Transitional Grant).

Councillor	Outside Body	Other
Bale, Pamela	East Downlands Children's Centre Advisory Board Governor of Pangbourne Primary School Governor of Theale Green School	Regular user of Pangbourne Library
Bryant, Paul	Greenham Common Trust Donnington Trust Harwell Restoration	
Clifford, Jeanette	Governor of St Bartholomew's School A foundation Governor of the St Bartholomew's Foundation A member of The Corn Exchange Newbury Town Council link Councillor to the West Berkshire Museum Trustee of Mabel Luke Charity – almshouses	User of Newbury Library; User of Northcroft Leisure Centre; Attends events at The Watermill;
Cole, Hilary	West Berkshire Disability Alliance	
Goff, Dave	Foundation Governor at St Bartholomew's School	
Jaques, Marigold	West Berkshire Citizens Advice Bureau	
Jones, Rick	West Berkshire Mencap – WBC representative West Berkshire Disability Alliance	
Lock, Mollie	Burghfield Children's Centre - Member on the Board (no financial responsibilities)	User of Mortimer Library. User of No 75 Bus service. Bus Passes.

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

Councillor	Outside Body	Other
Podger, James	Governing Body at Mary Hare School Governor at John O' Gaunt School	
Stansfeld, Anthony		Police and Crime Commissioner

112. 2016/17 Budget - Phase 2 Consultation and the Transitional Grant (C3100) (Urgent Item)

(All Members had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item should discussions refer to Council Tax matters).

(Councillor Lynne Doherty's employer was a recipient of Short Breaks funding and she had a personal disclosable interest in their affairs. Following the granting of a dispensation to speak and vote on this item, unless short breaks for children were specifically discussed, she determined to remain in the meeting and vote on the item).

(Councillors Marcus Franks and Lee Dillon declared a personal and disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 3 by virtue of the fact that their employer, Sovereign Housing Association, received funding from the Council for its Neighbourhood Warden Scheme. Following the granting of a dispensation to speak but not vote on this item they determined to take part in the debate but not vote on this item).

(Councillors Pamela Bale, Paul Bryant, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Dave Goff, Marigold Jaques, Rick Jones, Mollie Lock, James Podger and Anthony Stansfeld declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3 for the reasons set out in the table in Agenda Item 2. As their interests were personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 3) which provided an update on the results of Phase Two of the public consultation exercise in relation to the 2016/17 budget. The report provided information on the total number of responses received to the consultation and detailed the total number of responses received for each savings proposal including the one income proposal relating to car parking fees and charges.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor James Fredrickson:

That the Council:

1. "notes the responses received to each of the 15 public facing savings proposals and the one income generation proposal in relation to Phase 2 of the public consultation exercise undertaken on the 2016/17 budget.
2. makes available the remaining 2016/17 transitional funding to those services set out below
 - Library Service - £475,000
 - Theatres (Corn Exchange) - £56,000
 - Public Transport - £337,000
 - Children's Centres - £50,000
 - Domestic Abuse Response Team - £25,000
 - Neighbourhood Wardens - £50,000

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

- Citizen's Advice Bureau - £25,000
3. Approves, where transitional funding is not deemed to be appropriate, the recommendations set out in the Overview and Recommendations template (Appendix C)."

Councillor Graham Jones, in introducing the item, commented that at the 01st March 2016 meeting the Council had to adopt the most difficult budget that he had ever been involved with. The scale and speed of the reductions in Government Grant funding were immense. He noted that the changes had produced a lot of debate and he thanked Members and residents for the quality and maturity of the debate that had ensued. He noted that communities across the District would be significantly affected by the cuts however the authority had to live within its means.

He explained that the Council would have to recalibrate what it could do given the ongoing reduction in its income and also taking account of growing pressures particularly in the care area. Councillor Jones noted that the care area consumed a significant portion of the Council's budget and that, in future, the Council would be able to provide care, collect waste, maintain the road network and precious little else. Other activities would have to be facilitated and that would require significant leadership from elected Members but also those present in the Chamber.

The Council had to rethink what it did and how it did things as well as what functions were important to the community and how these services would be provided. He thanked the local Members of Parliament (MPs) that had lobbied hard for the transitional funding that the Council had received from Central Government to transform services.

There had been two phases to the consultation that had informed the thinking behind the recommendations that were being considered at this meeting. He thanked Officers, residents and Parish and Town Councillors for their input. In particular he thanked the Town and Parish Councillors for their input as to what was important to their communities and what they could do to help deliver those services.

At the 01st March 2016 Council meeting Members had allocated £400k of the transitional funding. Following the completion of the second phase of the consultation Members were now in a position to allocate the remaining £1m. The proposals were set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report. He highlighted that £475k had been allocated to libraries which he recognised as important community assets. Councillor Jones stated that no libraries would be closed until a needs impact assessment had been concluded. The Council wanted to work with communities and Parish and Town Councils to transform these services.

Councillor Jones also noted that £25k would be allocated to the Domestic Abuse Response Team. He noted that this area had generated fewer consultation responses but the Council recognised its responsibilities in respect of this largely invisible function.

Councillor Jones reminded those present that the funding that was being discussed that evening was for the transformation of services and not to be used for ongoing expenditure. The Council would need to seek solutions if these services were to be continued and dialogue with interested groups would continue. He noted that there was an opportunity for Town and Parish Councils to take on services that were important to their communities. The Council would continue to work with them to seek solutions for the long term benefit of the District.

Councillor Lee Dillon noted that there had been an impressive response to the consultation especially given the short time scales and he thanked those that had participated. He especially thanked Save Our Services for their energy in engaging with both residents and Members. These responses made it easier to understand what was

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

important to residents. He had understood from those responses that what was important to residents was: protecting the vulnerable, keeping communities connected and committing to younger year's education.

He then commented on the individual proposals. He stated that it was important to signpost the small number of regular users of the Calcot Service point to the online services that they could access when the service closed.

He felt that transforming the Children's Centres would be reliant on finding suitable community access points. There were some rural communities whose community faculties were already fully booked at peak times. He was concerned that if access points could not be identified it could lead to increased rural isolation. He therefore asked that the model proposed for Children's Centres be reconsidered and that permanent bases be found in rural communities and that they were fully resourced.

He noted that the Council was asking Parish and Town Councils and community groups to take on additional services and therefore lamented that no transitional funding had been allocated to the Community Council for Berkshire (CCB) to support these endeavours. He would however encourage the parish councils to work more closely with CCB to develop the skills needed to deal with these changes so that they would be more resilient and could deal with the changes.

He encouraged Members to take a more active role in mitigating the cuts especially in the Trading Standards, Licensing, Environmental Health Services and dealing with service complaints. In order to do so Members would have to be trained and he suggested that this training be deemed mandatory for all Members.

There had been a reduction in funding for substance misuse services. Although some transitional funding had been allocated for this area of work a reduction in funding could lead to increased costs to the public purse overall and could also impact negatively on the users themselves. This hard to reach group could become disengaged from local services and one of the consequences of this could be an increase in crime levels. He therefore asked to see the detail behind these proposals as soon as possible to ensure that early intervention was focussed on.

In terms of public transport funding, it was important for residents to remain connected and public transport should enable them to access vital services including for example hospitals, the Citizen's Advice Bureau and leisure centres. He was concerned about pockets of residents that would not have any access to services for example residents of Beech Hill should the proposed savings be enacted. He therefore requested that some of the transition funding be used to keep the 154 bus service from Beech Hill to Reading going.

He also asked the Council to revisit the decision to purchase the three mini buses using £150k of the transition funding. He felt that the mini buses could be funded through the capital programme which would mean that the majority of the £150k could be diverted to protect other frontline services.

Councillor Dillon acknowledged the role played by the Neighbourhood Wardens and he hoped that a solution could be found by the Town and Parish Councils to retain this valuable service.

In terms of libraries the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the comments made by Councillor Graham Jones that no libraries would be closed until a needs assessment had been completed. They also asked that the communities be re-consulted on any proposals arising post the needs assessment.

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

Councillor Dillon stated that he hoped that the two Groups would be able to work together to find ways to reduce the impact of the cuts.

Councillor Hilary Cole stated that post the announcement that transitional funding would be received she had worked closely with Officers to develop proposals for the Library Service and the Corn Exchange.

She noted that £475k of the transition funding would be spent on the Library Service. Following the consultation 2751 responses were received in relation to the proposal to reduce the Library Service which demonstrated how much residents loved and valued their libraries. A number of petitions were also submitted. Members had taken cognisance of the responses and acted accordingly.

During the consultation, advice was sought from a number of key agencies including the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as well as Town and Parish Councils. The Council sought advice from the DCMS on the statutory duties outlined in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. They advised that a needs assessment would assist the Council in developing the best model for the Library Service in the immediate future.

The revised proposal recommended the retention of seven static libraries and one mobile library. Streamlining the routes of the mobile service and using one mobile library was a sensible efficiency saving. Funding had been allocated to rural bus subsidies to enable residents in rural areas to continue to access library services. The 'at home' service would also be continued. This service allowed volunteers to deliver books to residents who were genuinely unable to access libraries.

The two libraries proposed for closure were Theale and Wash Common. These two libraries cost the most in relation to their footfall. This did not however mean that these libraries would be closed. Officers would meet with Theale Parish and Newbury Town Councils to establish how they or any community groups could run a service and, if so, what level of assistance could be offered by the Council. Councillor Cole stressed that the proposed closure of Theale Library would not impact on the library at Theale Green School. The new model included the installation of Self Service and Self Access technologies thereby reducing the staffing levels required in the libraries.

Further meetings would continue to take place with Town and Parish Councils and community interest groups to give more focus to how the transitional funding could be used to develop more effective partnerships.

Councillor Cole noted that £56k of transitional funding had been set aside for the theatres. The consultation had generated 3224 responses about theatres which illustrated how important the cultural offering was to residents. The Corn Exchange received significant funding from the Council but because of the large reduction in the Council's Revenue Support Grant the proposal was to reduce this sum. Following a meeting with the Corn Exchange it was agreed that £56k of transitional funding would be allocated to them. This would allow them time to seek other funding streams and review their own strategy during the transition period.

Councillor Cole thanked Officers who had worked with her to deliver these proposals. The timescales had been challenging but the Officers had risen to the challenge and she felt that they should be commended on their efforts.

Councillor Garth Simpson commented that in terms of reductions in bus subsidies, totalling £780k, priority had been given to preserving the route network as much as possible by reducing the number of peak services or lowering the frequency of services or number of days. Of necessity some services had to be withdrawn as the subsidy costs had been huge. There were 398 consultation responses. Meetings had taken place with Parish Councils to discuss the impact the cuts would have on them. Some of the Parish

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

Councils (Pangbourne, Basildon, Aldermaston and Lambourn) had made offers of financial contributions in order to retain services. The Council welcomed their input and would seek to try and incorporate their improvements within the limitations of cost. The Council had awarded £337k of transitional funding to support subsidised buses. Negotiations and discussions with other authorities and organisations were ongoing and it was possible that further improvements to routes might yet emerge.

There were three other proposals for reducing expenditure namely the withdrawal of the Readibus Service as of 27 March 2016, the withdrawal of the Council contributions to the national concessionary travel scheme as of the 01 May 2016 and the removal of funding for the development and maintenance of real time passenger information except where Reading Borough Council had an interest in retaining the service.

The Council was also considering buying up to three, capital funded, 16 seater mini buses that could be used to replace the commercial services on certain routes as cheaper substitutes. The Council had commissioned a total transport study from Plymouth University and this had shown some options to consider in order to make better use of community transport assets. A pilot operation was underway with South Central Ambulance Service and the Council's community transport mini buses. These options would be evaluated over the forthcoming year.

Councillor Simpson noted that residents needed to patronise the buses as the Council could not subsidise empty buses. Councillor Simpson commended the Officers in the Transport Operations Team who had worked under extreme pressure to deliver these savings proposals.

Councillor Alan Law commented that in addition to the consultation responses listed on page 13 of the papers a number of petitions had also been submitted. As there were a few petitions submitted in relation to public transport the number of responses to this issue were sometimes understated.

Councillor Law responded to the criticism about the consultation process levied by Councillor Dillon. He pointed out that the Council was made aware of the need to find the additional £5m or £6m savings just before Christmas. Given the holiday period the Council could only undertake a three week consultation period on the phase two savings. The Council had been able to undertake a six week consultation on the phase one savings as there was sufficient time to do so. He accepted that the three week consultation period was not ideal. He felt however, under the circumstances, that the Executive and Officers should be congratulated on an excellent job. He thanked residents for the excellent response that they had provided which had given a clear steer to the Administration.

Councillor Law noted that nationally there was a trend of devolution of responsibility more closely aligned to the users of services. He was therefore encouraged to hear that some local parishes were getting involved with the subsidy of bus services. The positive side of the financial situation was that it had enabled Councillors and the community to focus on issues that they normally did not engage on. He thanked the local MPs and the Leader for securing transitional funding.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented on the use of the transitional funding to support Children's Centres. This was an area that had received the fourth highest number of responses to the consultation, a total of 384 responses. He noted how important the services that were delivered at these centres were to residents. He commented that these centres were important to people, often including some of the most vulnerable members of the community, who were not always the most vociferous residents.

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

He was working with Officers to ensure that the services currently being provided by the centres continued to be provided albeit that they would be delivered in a different but affordable way. He therefore proposed that £50k of the transitional funding be used to establish a wider network of community access points. This would enable the Council to use hubs supported by community outreach services. If approved the funding would be used to work with faith groups, voluntary organisations and health professionals to provide a good range of resources to be delivered through the access points. Training would have to be provided funded by the transitional grant. During the consultation it became apparent that there was a lot of concern about the loss of buildings. He sought to reassure residents and Members that the services would continue to be delivered.

Councillor Marcus Franks noted that the Council was required to set a balanced budget. The phase one and proposed phase two savings had generated a lot of soul searching. The reality, however, was that local government was changing and the authority had to concentrate on its statutory duties and protecting the most vulnerable residents.

He thanked all those residents that had participated in the consultation but was concerned that the most vulnerable residents were often not able to generate a lot of signatures and responses. He was therefore pleased that this concern was reflected in the proposed expenditure of the transitional funding which Members were being asked to consider at this meeting.

Councillor Franks noted that at the start of the economic downturn the Council had provided the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) with additional funding to meet the anticipated increase in demand for their services. It was therefore unfortunate that the Council had now been forced to reduce the funding it made available to them. However he was pleased to note that an additional £25k of transitional funding had been made available to the CAB thereby halving the funding cut for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Franks welcomed the transitional funding of £25k for the Domestic Abuse Response Team. He noted that in addition funding had also been secured from the Home Office to continue the work of the domestic abuse outreach service.

Councillor Franks also drew Members' attention to the savings proposal relating to the Waste Service in relation to the contract with RE3 Partnership for the Smallmead Household Waste and Recycling Centre. He and Officers continued to hold discussions with the RE3 Partnership with the aim of retaining access for West Berkshire residents to the site. He urged residents in that part of the district to ensure that they were aware of what recyclables were collected at the kerbside and to make use of that service. He also encouraged them to acquaint themselves with the recycling centre at Padworth.

Councillor Pamela Bale thanked the Executive and relevant Officers for the amount of time they had spent reviewing the considerable number of responses to the phase two consultation. She acknowledged that it had been difficult to find constructive ways of maintaining these important services with the limited transition funding available. She was therefore particularly pleased to see the proposals that affected Pangbourne. In particular she welcomed the retention of the 143 bus service which was often a lifeline for older and vulnerable residents in the village. Residents valued the service and this was borne out by the petition that they had submitted and she, therefore, thanked the Parish Council for committing additional funding which would help to secure the service.

The potential closure of Pangbourne Library had generated a lot of concern. Residents registered their support for the library by responding to the consultation and they had also set up an embryonic 'Friends of Pangbourne Library' group. The transition funding would enable Officers to set up the self service model but would also allow the Friends Group time to look at ways that they could support the new service.

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

The Children's Centre in Pangbourne, which was scheduled for closure, operated from the local school and the transition funding would allow time for the school and the Children's Centre to review possible options identified by the users of the Centre during recent discussions.

Councillor Bale acknowledged that it was impossible to meet the imposed savings requirement without affecting the services provided to residents. The Neighbourhood Wardens provided a valued service and she hoped that it would be possible to identify a way to retain that service. By working together she hoped that the impact of the savings requirements could be minimised and she again thanked all those involved in this difficult process.

Councillor Tim Metcalfe reported that West Berkshire was very proud of its brigade of volunteers, many of whom gave freely of their time. The onus was therefore on the Council to support them in whatever way it could and efforts should be made to reduce bureaucracy wherever possible.

Councillor Tony Linden was pleased to note that one of the mobile libraries would be retained and he hoped that ways could be found to retain the Neighbourhood Warden Service in his area. He hoped that the engagement with residents on these savings proposals might encourage more residents to consider joining their local parish councils. He encouraged Central Government to ensure that Business Rates were retained locally and that the distribution of this funding was done equitably.

Councillor Mollie Lock was pleased to note that the retention of the 154 bus service was being looked at as it would prevent isolation of the residents of Beech Hill. She also welcomed the use of transition funding to support Children's Centres which she felt were an essential service.

Councillor Adrian Edwards stated that he had been closely associated with Wash Common Library since 2004. He commented that it was a well used community centre and he was therefore sad to hear that the proposal was to close it. It cost £37k to run the library and he would hold discussions with the Town Council and community groups to see if options could be found to retain it albeit perhaps on a smaller scale.

Councillor Graham Bridgman noted that Beech Hill was an isolated community. It did not have many community facilities but it did have a vociferous Parish Council and a good striving community and to keep that community in touch with the rest of the District and Reading was vital. He was therefore pleased to hear the comments about the potential retention of the 154 bus service.

Councillor James Fredrickson commented that the vast majority of the Council's budget was spent on services that it was legally obliged to deliver in the context of increasing demand. The Council therefore had to consider removing funding for services such as Neighbourhood Wardens as part of the recent consultation exercise. The consultation had however brought parishes and community groups together to see what further contributions they could make in order to retain these valued services. The consultation exercises highlighted that the community valued the work that the Wardens did to make the area safer, cleaner and more welcoming. As a result £50k of transitional funding would be made available to them.

Unlike many authorities in a similar situation West Berkshire Council had decided to consult publicly on the savings proposals. Even when the timescales were very limited the Council agreed that it wanted to engage with the community to understand their views and priorities.

Councillor Fredrickson commented on the concerns raised about the legality of the savings proposals including the potential closure of libraries. He noted that discussions

COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2016 - MINUTES

had taken place with the Department of Communities and Local Government throughout the process to ensure that due process was being followed.

Councillor Fredrickson noted that the Council and local MPs had fought hard for transition funding which not all authorities had received. Once it was received it was agreed that it would all be spent on protecting front line services. Work was ongoing to try and secure more access to the £80m of Business Rates that was generated in West Berkshire.

As part of the consultation the Council had engaged with over 40 organisations and over 300 meetings had been attended over the last three months by Members of the Executive. The reality however was that savings had to be made. The transition funding needed to be made available as soon as possible to the communities so that they could make the best possible use of it.

Councillor Fredrickson commented that immense care had gone into the preparation of the budget proposals whilst balancing very difficult decisions that no Members wanted to make.

Councillor Graham Jones thanked Members for the full debate. He commented that the consultation had highlighted to him how different things mattered to different people. Members had to grapple with balancing very different and conflicting needs. The budget that the Council had to spend was limited and both locally and nationally residents and authorities had to live within their means.

A number of solutions were being considered. In terms of rural isolation a lot of good work had been done on introducing village agents. In terms of Children's Centres the services mattered more than the buildings and therefore the services needed to be protected.

Councillor Jones noted that many Councils in the South East would be having similar debates to this one as they had been particularly badly affected by reductions in the Revenue Support Grant. If the Council was aware of the level of savings that had to be made the budget would have been prepared very differently. The settlement had come as a shock to West Berkshire and most authorities across the Country. He paid tribute to his colleagues for their creative thinking particularly in relation to the libraries where there was a lot of very good work going on to try and protect and transform the service.

Councillor Jones also recognised the novel and creative work that was being undertaken in respect of bus services to try and protect that service as far as possible. He thanked the community for the way that they had engaged in the process. The Council had consulted, listened and acted but there was still a lot more work to do.

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

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.41pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

Governance and Ethics Committee (Annual Report 2015/16)

Committee considering report:	Council on 19 May 2016
Lead Member:	Chairman of the Governance and Ethics Committee
Date Lead Member agreed report:	25 April 2016
Report Author:	David Holling
Forward Plan Ref:	C3034

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the Annual Governance and Ethics Committee report to Full Council.

2. Recommendations

1. Members are requested to note the content of the report.
2. Report to be circulated to all Parish/Town Councils in the District for information.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** There are no financial issues arising from this report. However the costs associated with external investigations and a lack of internal resources may lead to a budget pressure. During 2015/16 these costs amounted to £12,789.00
- 3.2 **Policy:** Revised policy and changes to processes adopted at Council in May 2012 and reviewed in December 2013.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.
- 3.4 **Legal:** There are no legal issues arising from this report. The matters covered by this report are generally requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 in so far as appropriate and the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting regulations.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** The benefits of this process are the maintenance of the Council's credibility and good governance by a high standard of ethical behaviour. The threats are the loss of credibility of the Council if standards fall.
- 3.6 **Property:** There are no property issues associated with this report.
- 3.7 **Other:** A diminution in standards of behaviour by elected Members could have a significant reputational impact on the Council.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 None

5. Executive Summary

5.1 Following the enactment of the Localism Act 2011 a number of changes were made to the Standards Regime. As part of the governance arrangements it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would make quarterly reports to Governance and Ethics Committee which set out the number and nature of complaints received and informed Members of any other activity that was taking place around the Code of Conduct regime. It was also agreed that an annual report would be presented to Full Council at the Annual meeting and that the year end report would be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils.

5.2 The key issues identified in the report are:

- At the Full Council meeting on the 02 July 2015 Members agreed to merge the Standards Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee into the Governance and Ethics Committee (G&EC).
- The Advisory Panel would be retained and would still be responsible for dealing with any complaints where evidence of breach of the Code of Conduct was identified following an investigation. The Advisory Panel made recommendations to the Governance and Ethics Committee.
- Three Independent Persons would be retained and they would be used on a rotational basis on the Initial Assessment Panel and Advisory Panel.
- The G&EC granted three dispensations to District Councillors during 2015/16 and the Monitoring Officer, under delegated authority, granted a dispensation to all West Berkshire Councillors to speak and vote on any items pertaining to Council Tax until May 2019.
- Training on the Code of Conduct was included in the District Councillor's Member Induction Programme post the May 2015 elections. Additional training was also provided to Town and Parish Councillors on the 17 June 2015 and 13 October 2015.
- All elected Members of the West Berkshire Council and all Town and Parish Councils have completed and submitted their Register of Interest forms.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received in 2015/16. Twenty six complaints were received in total compared to nine in 2014/15. Sixteen of these complaints pertained to district Councillors and ten to Parish or Town Councillors.
- Following the Initial Assessment of these complaints no further action was taken on twenty one of them, a local resolution was sought in two cases, one was withdrawn, one was investigated and the outcome of one was awaited.
- Two investigations were concluded in 2015/16 (one pertained to a case from 2014/15) and the cost of these external investigations amounted to £12,789.00. The cost of these external investigations and a lack of internal resources could lead to a budget pressure should the trend continue.

- Both investigations pertained to Parish Councillors and it was not possible to recover these costs from the authorities concerned.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 2015/16 following the elections in May 2015 brought a number of new Councillors to the Authority all of whom attended the induction training of the Code of Conduct. This also acted as a reminder to re-elected Councillors and provided a useful base for the new municipal year. Training was also provided to Parishes throughout the year again fulfilling the one of the many functions of the Committee to ensure that standards of conduct were maintained across the district.
- 6.2 The increase in complaints during the year whilst unusual when compared to relatively little activity of previous years is explained by multiple member complaints relating to one meeting. This was addressed effectively by the actions of the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Persons. A number of the complaints also arose at a time when elections were approaching which could have had a bearing on the increase although there is no evidence to confirm that was the case.
- 6.3 The Independent Persons continue to fulfil a very useful function as regards the ethical framework and have contributed a good deal of outside knowledge and common sense the decision making process. Their views will be considered during the forthcoming revisions to the Code of Conduct referred elsewhere on this agenda.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A - Supporting Information
- 7.2 Appendix B – Gifts and Hospitality Register

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Governance and Ethics Committee (Annual Report 2015/16) – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 was enacted on 15th November 2011 and it made fundamental changes to the system of regulation of the standards of conduct for elected and co-opted members of Councils and Parish Councils.
- 1.2 In order to ensure that the process was working effectively locally it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would make quarterly reports to Governance and Ethics Committee which set out the number and nature of complaints received and inform Members of any other activity that was taking place around the Code of Conduct regime. It would also provide a means of updating the Committee on the progress of investigations.
- 1.3 It was also agreed that an annual report would be presented to Full Council at the Annual meeting and that the year end report would be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils. The annual report would include the quarter four activity. This report also includes a look forward to the forthcoming Municipal Year.

2. Governance Arrangements

- 2.1 At the Full Council meeting on the 02 July 2015 Members discussed merging the then Standards and Governance and Audit Committees and it was agreed that:
 - The two Committees would be merged to form a Governance and Ethics Committee;
 - A revised set of terms of reference of the Governance and Ethics Committee would be adopted;
 - The membership of the revised Governance and Ethics Committee would comprise ten members (eight District Councillors appointed on a proportional basis and two co-opted non-voting Parish/Town Councillors);
 - The structure of agendas would be arranged so as to ensure that the Parish Councillors would only need to attend the 'Standards' element of the meeting;
 - The Advisory Panel and Independent Persons would be retained;
 - Members would not be able to sit on both the Advisory Panel and the Governance and Ethics Committee;
 - Authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to amend all relevant parts of the Constitution to reflect the new governance structure;
 - The Monitoring Officer would be authorised to appoint three Independent Persons who would be used on a rotational basis on the Initial Assessment Panel and Advisory Panel.
- 2.2 The Advisory Panel (comprising 8 Members: 2 from the Administration, 2 from the main opposition party, 2 parish/town councillors and 2 independent persons) is responsible for dealing with any complaints where evidence of breach of the Code

of Conduct has been identified following an investigation. The Advisory Panel reports its findings to the Governance and Ethics Committee for a formal decision. The Advisory Panel is chaired by an Independent Person.

- 2.3 A revised Code of Conduct was adopted in December 2013. It was agreed that this Code would be reviewed three years later. A small Task Group has been set up to undertake this activity and it is anticipated that any changes will be brought to the 05 July 2016 Council meeting.

3. Independent Persons

- 3.1 Under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council also has to ensure it has appointed at least one Independent Person who is consulted before any decision is made to investigate an allegation against any Member of the Council or any Parish Councillor. It was agreed at the Full Council meeting on the 27 September 2012 that the Independent Person may be consulted directly either by the person who has made the complaint or the person the complaint has been made about. Three Independent Persons have therefore been appointed in order to ensure that a conflict situation does not arise.

- 3.2 James Rees, Mike Wall and Lindsey Appleton were appointed as the Council's Independent Persons for the 2015/16 Municipal Year. It is proposed that these Independent Persons be retained for the 2016/17 Municipal Year if they are willing to continue.

- 3.3 A person is not considered to be "independent" if:-

1. They are or have been, within the last five years, an elected or co-opted Member or officer of the Council or of any Parish Council's within this area. This also applies to committees or sub-committees of the various Councils.
2. They are a relative or close friend of a current elected, or co-opted, Member or officer of the Council or any Parish Council within its area, or any elected or co-opted member of any committee or sub-committee.
3. The definition of relative includes the candidate's spouse, civil partner, grandparent, child etc.

- 3.4 In addition The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 require provisions to be made relating to the potential dismissal or disciplining of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer or Section 151 Officer. A panel needs to be set up to advise on matters relating to the dismissal of these Officers. The Act requires at least two Independent Persons who have been appointed under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 to be appointed to the panel. The roles of the Independent Persons have therefore been updated to take cognisance of the legislative change.

4. Governance and Ethics Committee

- 4.1 The overall purpose of the Governance and Ethics Committee is to provide effective challenge across the Council and independent assurance on the risk management and governance framework and associated internal control environment to members and the public, independently of the Executive. The Governance and

Ethics Committee is also responsible for receiving the annual Audit Letter and for signing off the Council's final accounts.

4.2 The Committee is charged with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the Council. They promote, educate and support Councillors (both District and Parish) in following the highest standards of conduct and ensuring that those standards are fully owned locally.

4.3 The roles and functions of the Governance and Ethics Committee are to:

1. consider and make recommendations to the Council on proposed changes to the Constitution;
2. consider any governance issues emanating from the Government and determine their effect on the Council's business and governance processes;
3. review the effectiveness of the Council's Risk Management arrangements, the control environment and associated Anti Fraud and Corruption arrangements;
4. seek assurance that action is being taken on risk related issues identified by auditors and inspectors;
5. be satisfied that the Council's assurance statements (currently produced annually by all Heads of Service) and the Annual Governance Statement properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it;
6. be satisfied that any Partnership that the Council enters into has robust Governance and Risk Management arrangements and that any risk to the Council from the Partnership is minimised;
7. approve the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan (to ensure that there is adequate coverage) and monitor performance (assessing whether adequate skills and resources are available to provide an effective function);
8. receive an interim and annual report from the Head of Internal Audit on work undertaken during the year;
9. consider any issues brought to the attention of the Committee, or Chair and Vice-Chair, by the Chief Internal Auditor at any time during the year;
10. consider reports of external audit and inspection agencies;
11. ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit and inspection agencies and other relevant bodies and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted;
12. review the financial statements, including the suitability of accounting policies and treatments, provisions or adjustments;
13. review the external auditors' annual audit letter and any other reports and opinions; monitor management action in response to any issues raised; and comment on the external auditors' planned work program;
14. promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members;
15. assist the Councillors and co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;

16. advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
17. monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
18. advise, train or arrange to train Councillors and co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
19. grant dispensations to Councillors and co-opted Members on requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;
20. ensure arrangements are in place under which allegations of misconduct in respect of the Members' Code of Conduct can be investigated and to review such arrangements where appropriate;
21. exercise (15) to (20) above in relation to the Parish / Town Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the Members of those Parish / Town Councils.

4.4 During 2015/16 the Governance and Ethics Committee comprised the following Members:

- Steve Ardagh-Walter (Conservative)
- Jeff Beck (*Vice-Chairman*) (Conservative)
- Graham Bridgman (Conservative)
- James Cole (Conservative)
- Rick Jones (Conservative)
- Anthony Pick (Conservative)
- Quentin Webb (*Chairman*) (Conservative)
- Lee Dillon (Liberal Democrat)

- Sheila Ellison (Substitute) (Conservative)
- Tim Metcalfe (Substitute) (Conservative)
- Billy Drummond (Substitute) (Liberal Democrat)

4.5 The Governance and Ethics Committee has a special responsibility to the 56 Town and Parish Councils within the District. It is responsible for ensuring that high standards of conduct are met within the parishes and that all Parish and Town Councillors are aware of their responsibilities under their Codes of Conduct.

4.6 The District Councillors are therefore supported on the Governance and Ethics Committee by two co-opted Parish Councillors who are appointed in a non-voting capacity. During 2015/16 the Governance and Ethics Committee comprised the following Parish Councillors:

- Barry Dickens (co-opted non voting Parish Councillor)
- Chris Bridges (co-opted non voting Parish Councillor)

5. **Advisory Panel**

5.1 The Advisory Panel is responsible for dealing with complaints where evidence of a breach of the Code has been identified by an independent investigator and reports its findings to the Governance and Ethics Committee for formal decision.

5.2 The District Councillors on the Advisory Panel are representatives of both political groups within the Council and are not appointed in accordance with the

proportionality rules. During 2015/16 the Advisory Panel comprised the following District Councillors:

- Adrian Edwards (Conservative)
- Richard Crumly (Conservative)
- Mollie Lock (Liberal Democrat)
- Alan Macro (Liberal Democrat)

5.3 During the 2015/16 Municipal Year the following Parish Councillors were appointed to the Advisory Panel:

- Tony Renouf
- Darren Peace

6. The Monitoring Officer

6.1 In West Berkshire Council the role of the Monitoring Officer is a statutory post and rests with the Head of Legal Services. The Monitoring Officer has a key role in promoting and maintaining standards of conduct.

6.2 As well as acting as legal adviser to the Governance and Ethics Committee and Advisory Panel, the Monitoring Officer carries out the following functions:

- reporting on contraventions or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law and reporting on any maladministration or injustice where the Ombudsman has carried out an investigation;
- establishing and maintaining registers of Members' interests and gifts and hospitality;
- maintaining, reviewing and monitoring the Constitution;
- advising Members and Parish Councillors on interpretation of the Code of Conduct;
- conducting or appointing an external investigator to look into allegations of misconduct;
- performing ethical framework functions in relation to Parish Councils;
- acting as the proper officer for access to information;
- undertaking an initial assessment, in consultation with the Independent Person, when complaints relating to alleged breach of the Code of Conduct are received;
- making arrangements for relevant matters to be considered by the Governance and Ethics Committee and Advisory Panel;
- advising whether Executive decisions are within the policy framework; and
- advising on vices issues and maladministration, and in consultation with the Section 151 Officer financial impropriety, probity, and budget and policy issues to all Members.

7. The Work of the Committee 2015 – 2016

7.1 One of the functions of the Governance and Ethics Committee is to oversee the Council's Constitution. The Council is therefore asked to note that since April 2015

Part 2 (Articles of the Constitution), Part 3 (Scheme of Delegation), Part 4 (Council Rules of Procedure), Part 5 (Executive Rules of Procedure), Part 11 (Contract Rules of Procedure), Part 12 (Personnel Rules of Procedure), Appendices F (Protocol for Use of ICT Equipment Supplied to Members) and J (Protocol for Council Representation on Outside Bodies) to Part 13 (Codes and Protocols) and Part 14 (Member Allowances Scheme) have been amended by Full Council.

- 7.2 The Monitoring Officer under his delegated authority has authorised changes to the following parts of the Constitution since April 2015: Appendix A to Parts 5 (Executive Rules of Procedure), 6 (Overview and Scrutiny Rules of Procedure) and 7 (Regulatory and Other Committees Rules of Procedure), Part 1 (Summary and Explanation), Part 2 (Articles of the Constitution), Part 3 (Scheme of Delegation), Part 7 (Regulatory and Other Committees Rules of Procedure) and Part 10 (Finance Rules of Procedure)
- 7.3 The Head of Paid Service under his delegated authority has authorised changes to Part 15 (Management Structure).
- 7.4 Dispensations to speak and vote at Full Council meetings where discussions on the A339/ Fleming Road Junction Compulsory Purchase Order took place were granted to Councillors Howard Bairstow, David Goff, Adrian Edwards, Anthony Pick, Lynne Doherty, Mike Johnson, Jeff Beck, James Fredrickson and Jeanette Clifford by the Committee.
- 7.5 A dispensation to speak and vote at Executive and Council meetings where the 2016/17 budget was discussed was granted to Councillor Lynne Doherty by the Committee. Councillor Marcus Franks was granted a dispensation to speak but not vote at Executive and Council meetings where the 2016/17 budget was discussed. Councillor Lee Dillon was granted a dispensation to speak but not vote at Council meetings where the 2016/17 budget was discussed.
- 7.6 The Monitoring Officer, under delegated authority, granted a dispensation to all West Berkshire Councillors to speak and vote on any items pertaining to Council Tax. This dispensation will remain in place until May 2019.
- 7.7 Training on the Code of Conduct was included in the District Councillor's Member Induction Programme post the May 2015 elections. Additional training was also provided to Town and Parish Councillors on the 17 June 2015 and 13 October 2015.

8. Register of Interests

- 8.1 All elected Members of the West Berkshire Council and all Town and Parish Councils have completed and submitted their Register of Interest forms. District Councillors are reminded to review their interests on a regular basis and Parish Councils are reminded via their Clerks to complete and return Declarations of Interest forms to the Monitoring Officer in order that compliance with the Localism Act 2011 is maintained. The Council is under a duty to ensure that details of Parish Councillors interests are on the District Council's website in accordance with the Act.

9. Local Assessment of Complaints

Quarter 1 (April to June 2015)

- 9.1 During Quarter 1 of 2015/16 (April –June 2015) one formal complaint was received by the Monitoring Officer. The complaint (NPC3/15) was later withdrawn by the complainant.
- 9.2 In terms of existing complaints the Deputy Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person, had concluded during quarter 2 of 2014/15 that a potential breach of the Code of Conduct might have occurred in relation to NPC4/14 and the matter was referred to an independent investigator to investigate. The initial findings of the investigator were reported to the Advisory Panel on the 23 March 2015. New information came to light after the agenda was published and as a result of this the Panel agreed to defer consideration of that item until the matter could be more fully investigated.
- 9.3 During Quarters 3 and 4 of 2014/15 two further, but related complaints (to NPC4/14), were received by the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person concluded that in respect of both NPC5/14 and NPC1/15 the matters should also be referred for investigation. It was later agreed that all three complaints should be subject to a single investigation.

Quarter 2 (July to September 2015)

- 9.4 Fifteen formal complaints were received by the Monitoring Officer. Fourteen of the complaints related to District Councillors (NDC1/15, NDC2/15, NDC3/15, NDC4/15, NDC5/15, NDC6/15, NDC7/15, NDC8/15, NDC9/15, NDC10/15, NDC11/15, NDC12/15, NDC13/15, NDC14/15). All of the complaints related to planning matters. Following the initial assessment of these complaints it was determined by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person that no breaches had been identified and that no further action needed to be taken.
- 9.5 In order to try and prevent a recurrence of these complaints in respect of NDC1/15 to NDC6/15 the Monitoring Officer wrote to the subject members outlining the procedures surrounding declarations of interest at meetings and where appropriate to be mindful of conduct at site visits. In respect of complaint NDC7/15 the subject member was asked to write a letter of explanation to the complainant. This has been done. The Monitoring Officer wrote to the subject member of complaint NDC9/15 about appropriate conduct at meetings. In the case of NDC10/15 the Monitoring Officer wrote to the subject member about conduct at planning site visits.
- 9.6 One complaint was received about a parish councillor (NPC4/15). Due to the complex and longstanding nature of this issue it was decided that it would be appropriate for an independent investigator to look at the facts in so far as they were relevant to this particular complaint.
- 9.7 The findings of the investigator in relation to complaints NPC4/14, NPC5/14 and NPC1/15 were considered by the Advisory Panel on the 13th August 2015. The Advisory Panel, after a lengthy discussion, concurred with the investigator's finding that that no breach of the authority's Code of Conduct had occurred and therefore no further action should be taken in regards to NPC4/14 and NPC1/15. However they

concluded that in relation to NPC5/14 they would recommend to the Governance and Ethics Committee that there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct.

- 9.8 The Governance and Ethics Committee met on the 3rd September 2015 to consider the complaint. After carefully considering both the written evidence submitted and the oral evidence given at the hearing, the Committee found that in respect of NPC5/14 Mr Uduwera-Perera (the subject member) had breached Newbury Town Council's Code of Conduct by failing to treat others with respect and behaving in an intimidatory and/or bullying manner.
- 9.9 A formal public notice setting out the findings was published on both Newbury Town Council and West Berkshire Council's website and a public notice was placed in the Newbury Weekly News.

Quarter 3 (October to December 2015)

- 9.10 One formal complaint was received by the Monitoring Officer. This complaint related to a Parish Councillor (NPC5/15). Following the initial assessment of this complaint it was determined by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person that no breach had been identified and that no further action needed to be taken.

Quarter 4 (January to March 2016)

- 9.11 Nine formal complaints were received by the Monitoring Officer. Seven of these complaints (NPC1/16, NPC2/16, NPC3/16, NPC4/16, NPC5/16, NPC6/16 and NPC7/16) pertained to Parish Councillors and two to District Councillors (NDC1/16 and NDC2/16). A further complaint was also received but the complainant had decided not to pursue the complaint.
- 9.12 In respect of complaints NPC1/16, NPC2/16, NPC4/16, NPC7/16, NDC1/16 and NDC2/16, at the Initial Assessment, it was agreed that no further action should be taken. In respect of NPC3/16 and NPC5/16 it was agreed that some other form of action should be taken. A decision around keeping the identity of the complainant confidential in respect of NPC6/16 is still awaited.
- 9.13 The Advisory Panel met on the 11 February 2016 to consider NPC4/15. They concurred with the findings of the Investigator that the Parish Council's Code of Conduct had been breached and agreed to refer a recommendation to the Governance and Ethics Committee who would make a final determination on this matter.
- 9.14 The Advisory Panel recommended that if the Governance and Ethics Committee concurred with the finding that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred the Panel would recommend that the following sanctions be applied:
1. A formal letter be sent from the Chairman of the Governance and Ethics Committee to the Subject Member about the impact his language and tone was having.
 2. A Public Notice be placed in a local newspaper and on the Council's website
 3. The Monitoring Officer write to the Parish Council to recommend that the Subject Member be sent on an 'enhancement of interpersonal

communications’ course, funded by the Parish Council, before resuming any duties on the Parish Council Committees.

9.15 A special meeting of the Governance and Ethics Committee took place on the 14 March 2016. After carefully considering both the written evidence submitted and the oral evidence given at the hearing, the Committee found that in respect of NPC4/15 Councillor Christopher Lewis had breached paragraph 3.1 of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Code of Conduct.

9.16 The Committee decided that a letter should be sent to the Subject Member, Councillor Christopher Lewis by the Chairman of the Governance and Ethics Committee of West Berkshire Council. The letter would also advise the Subject Member that he needed to reflect on the tone of his letters and that the way that he presented his arguments could be perceived by others. The Committee noted the recommendations of the Advisory Panel as to sanctions, but felt that the above sanction was both appropriate and proportionate in the circumstances of this case.

10. Year on Year Comparison of Complaints

10.1 Table 1 Number of District and Parish Councillor Complaints Received 2009/10 to 2015/16

	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
District Councillors	4	4	5	8	2	2	16
Parish Councillors	7	5	6	10	5	7	10
Total	11	9	11	18	7	9	26

10.2 There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received during 2015/16.

Table 2 Action Taken on Complaints Received 2009/10 to 2015/16

	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
No Further Action	1	3	6	11	3	2	21
Other Action	5	2	3	2	1	3	2
Investigation	5	4	2	2	0	3	1
Withdrawn/ not progressed	0	0	0	3	3	1	1
Outcome awaited	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	11	9	11	18	7	9	26

Table 3 Outcome of Items Investigated 2009/10 to 2015/16

	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Breach	2	1	2	0	0	1	1
No Breach	3	3	0	2	0	2	0
Total	5	4	2	2	0	3	1

10.3 During the 2015/16 Financial Year two investigations were completed conducted by external investigators. The first related to NPC4/14, NPC5/14 and NPC1/15 (reflected in the 2014/15 statistics) and the second to NPC4/15. While both these complaints pertained to Parish Councils the cost to the Council of undertaking this work was £12,789.00. The payments were funded from the Head of Legal Services' Disbursement budget. There is currently no scope within the legislation to seek compensation from the parish councils. It is likely that if the current trend continues these costs will result in an ever increasing pressure on this budget. It has not been possible to identify internal resources to undertake this work.

11. Gifts and Hospitality

11.1 Appendix D (Gifts and Hospitality: A Code of Conduct for Councillors) to Part 13 of the Constitution (Codes and Protocols) states that 'Regular updates of declarations will be reported to the Governance and Ethics Committee as part of the quarterly performance monitoring reports'. A copy of the register for 2015/16 is therefore attached at Appendix B to this report..

11.2 In essence Members are required to:

- Register with the Monitoring Officer within 28 days every individual gift or item of hospitality, offered or received in their capacity as a Councillor, worth over £25 in value;
- Prior to accepting any hospitality with a value of £25 or more to seek authorisation from the Monitoring Officer;
- Be aware of serial givers or repeat offers of hospitality;
- Be aware that failure to comply with the rules is a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct and could lead to a complaint being reported to the Monitoring Officer or the Governance and Ethics Committee;
- Be aware that the press and public have the right to inspect Members' gift and hospitality declaration forms;
- Ensure that where the spouse/partner of the Member is also a recipient of any gifts or hospitality the combined value is also recorded by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with procedures.

12. Conclusion

12.1 2015/16 following the elections in May 2015 brought a number of new Councillors to the Authority all of whom attended the induction training of the Code of Conduct. This also acted as a reminder to re-elected Councillors and provided a useful base for the new municipal year. Training was also provided to Parishes throughout the year again fulfilling the one of the many functions of the Committee to ensure that standards of conduct were maintained across the district.

12.2 The increase in complaints during the year whilst unusual when compared to relatively little activity of previous years is explained by multiple member complaints

relating to one meeting. This was addressed effectively by the actions of the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Persons. A number of the complaints also arose at a time when elections were approaching which could have had a bearing on the increase although there is no evidence to confirm that was the case.

12.3 The Independent Persons continue to fulfil a very useful function as regards the ethical framework and have contributed a good deal of outside knowledge and common sense the decision making process. Their views will be considered during the forthcoming revisions to the Code of Conduct referred elsewhere on this agenda.

Background Papers:

- Reports to Council 10 May 2012 and Special Council on the 16 July 2012
- New Terms of Reference for the Governance and Ethics Committee and Advisory Panel;
- A new Code of Conduct for West Berkshire District Councillors (Full Council December 2013).
- Quarter 1, 2 and Quarter 3 of 2015/16 Monitoring Officer's Reports to the Standards Committee
- Localism Act 2011

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval



Wards affected:

All

Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim:

MEC – Become an even more effective Council

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council

Officer details:

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Job Title: Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)
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Members Register of Gifts and Hospitality 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

Date Received	Member	Event	Offer	Value	Accepted?
26.4.15	Virginia von Celsing	West Berkshire brewery in Yattendon.	Beer	£100	Yes
02.06.15	Peter Argyle	Armed Forces Briefing	Curry supper and wine - self and wife.		Yes
27.06.15	Peter Argyle	Armed Forces Day	Buffet lunch with drinks - self and wife		Yes
08.07.15	Adrian Edwards	South-East of England launch of the new English Heritage organ	Refreshments	£25.00	Yes
08.07.15	Peter Argyle	Historic England Launch	Canapes and drinks - self		Yes
09.07.15	Peter Argyle	Lord Lieutenant Evening	Canapes and drinks - self		Yes
10.07.15	Peter Argyle	Bishop of Reading Dinner	Dinner and drinks - self		Yes
16.07.15	Peter Argyle	Beating the Retreat	Canapes and drinks - self		Yes
29.07.15	Peter Argyle	RAF Welford Open Day	Coffee (and cakes - no cakes) - self		Yes
03.08.15	Peter Argyle	Readibus AGM	Buffet and soft drinks - self		Yes
19.08.15	Peter Argyle	Bluebird Care Exhibition	Tea and cakes - self (not taken)		No
29.08.15	Peter Argyle	Brihat Newa Muna	Lunch and drinks - self		Yes
08.09.15	Peter Argyle	Earl of Wessex	Buffet lunch with drinks - self and wife		Yes
09.09.15	Peter Argyle	Robert Sandilands School	Coffee (and cakes - no cakes) - self		Yes
10.09.15	Graham Bridgman	GB is a walk leader with the Council's 'Walking for Health Scheme'. As such GB has a place on a coach for a free trip to Laycock Abbey. Coach paid for by WBC Public Health budget. Awaiting individual apportioned cost.	Coach trip to Laycock Abbey	£10.00	Yes
11.09.15	Peter Argyle	Co-op Funeral Opening	Buffet lunch with drinks - self		Yes
11.09.15	Peter Argyle	High Sherrif Evening	Drinks and canapes - self and wife		Yes
20.09.15	Peter Argyle	Windsor Bandstand Opening	Coffee (and cakes - no cakes) - self and wife		Yes
21.09.15	Peter Argyle	Bishop Licensing	Refreshments offered - not taken		Yes

21.9.15	Hilary Cole	Newbury Show	Hospitality at Newbury Showground on Saturday. I was entertained to lunch by the President of the Society. I would put the cost of this at around £100 – this includes the lunch and entry to the Showground.	£100.00	Yes
30.09.15	Peter Argyle	Museum AGM	Refreshments offered - not taken		Yes
01.10.15	Peter Argyle	Homestart AGM	Buffet lunch - self		Yes
01.10.15	Peter Argyle	Black History Launch	Light refreshments - self		Yes
04.10.15	Peter Argyle	V.C. Unveiling	Refreshments offered - not taken		Yes
06.10.15	Peter Argyle	Crown Court Service	Coffee, drinks and nibbles - self		Yes
06.10.15	Peter Argyle	Corn Exchange VIP opening	Canapes and drinks - self and wife		Yes
6.10.15	Anthony Pick	Corn Exchange VIP Launch Event	Reception		Yes
6.10.15	Tony Linden	Corn Exchange VIP Launch Event	Reception		Yes
6.10.15	Peter Argyle	Corn Exchange VIP Launch Event	Reception		Yes
6.10.15	Jeff Beck	Corn Exchange VIP Launch Event	Reception		No
07.10.15	Peter Argyle	Volunteer Open Day	Buffet and soft drinks - self		Yes
13.10.15	Peter Argyle	Queen's Awards	Cakes and coffee - not taken		Yes
16.10.15	Peter Argyle	West Berks Business Awards	Canapes, dinner wine & drinks - self and wife		Yes
21.10.15	Peter Argyle	Purley Primary Event	Wine - self and wife		Yes

22.10.15	Peter Argyle	SERFCA Awards	Buffet and drinks - self and wife		Yes
22.10.15	Adrian Edwards	Wellington College awards ceremony organised by the South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association in my role of Armed Forces Champion.	Reception - food and drink to the value of £25		Yes
25.10.15	Peter Argyle	Mayor of Bracknell reception	Buffet and coffee - self and wife		Yes
26.10.15	Peter Argyle	LAC Awards	Buffet and coffee - self and wife		Yes
30.10.15	Peter Argyle	Grim Reaper production	Tickets (£8 each) - self and wife		Yes
31.10.15	Adrian Edwards	Berkshire Historic Environment Forum	Meeting and lunch - £10 payable by AE		Yes
04.11.15	Peter Argyle	WW1 Exhibition	Drinks and canapes - self and wife		Yes
07.11.15	Peter Argyle	Mega Diwali Celebration	Indian meal and soft drinks - self and wife + tickets		Yes
08.11.15	Peter Argyle	Remembrance Service	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
12.11.15	Peter Argyle	Remembrance Service	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
12.11.15	Peter Argyle	My Cancer Launch	Canapes and drinks - self		Yes
16.11.15	Peter Argyle	Vision Conference	Coffee and biscuits		Yes
20.11.15	Peter Argyle	Pontifical Mass	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
27.11.15	Peter Argyle	King or Cause	Wine - self and wife		Yes
04.12.15	Peter Argyle	Little Heath	Buffet lunch - self		Yes
05.12.15	Peter Argyle	Xmas Concert	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
08.12.15	Peter Argyle	Graduation Awards	Canapes and drinks - self		Yes
08.12.16	Graham Bridgman	Chairman of Padworth Parish Council - date to be advised	Meal and wine	Approx £35	Yes
09.12.15	Peter Argyle	Carol Service	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
11.12.15	Richard Crumly	KATS Christmas show	Ticket price (£8) to include a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie.	£8	Yes
11.12.15	Richard Crumly	Newbury Lights Ceremony	A glass of mulled wine and a mince pie from Newbury Town Mayor	£5	Yes

12.12.15	Peter Argyle	Xmas Concert	Wine - self and wife		Yes
13.12.15	Peter Argyle	Thatcham Carols	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
14.12.15	Peter Argyle	Theale Primary School	Buffet and tea/coffee - self		Yes
14.12.15	Virginia von Celsing	Received in November	Flowers from resident, to thank for assistance in a planning application.	£25	Yes
15.12.15	Roger Croft	Kennet School Presentation Evening	Bottle of wine and a bunch of flowers.	£20	Yes
17.12.15	Peter Argyle	KS5 Awards	Canapes and drinks - self		Yes
20.12.15	Peter Argyle	Newbury Carols	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
22.12.15	Peter Argyle	Memorial to D. Holtby	Refreshments offered - not taken		No
3.3.16	Adrian Edwards	Dennison Barracks	Lunch	15	Yes
17.3.16	Hilary Cole	The Watermill Theatre	Drinks reception and performance of One Million Tiny Plays About Britain.	<£25	Yes

Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2016/17 Municipal Year – Summary Report

Committee considering report:	Council on 19 May 2016
Portfolio Member:	Leader of the Council
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	5 May 2016
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	C2996

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider the appointment and allocation of seats on Committees and associated bodies for the next Municipal Year.
- 1.2 To agree the Council's Policy Framework for 2016/17 as set out in Paragraph 6.1.

2. Recommendations

1. That the Council notes that under Paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice has been received that the Members set out in paragraph 1.1 of Appendix A to this report are to be regarded as Members of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively.
2. That the Council agrees to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in paragraph 2.2 (Table A).
3. That the Council agrees 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 3.4 of Appendix A (Table B).
4. That the number of substitutes on Committees and Commissions be as set out in paragraph 4.1 of Appendix A (Table C).
5. In respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee's area who are not appointed to the Committee. Where substitutes attend the District Planning Meeting they need to be drawn from the same Area Planning meeting as the Member they are substituting for.
6. That the Council approves the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix B and in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.
7. That the Council, in accordance with Regulation 4, Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, and the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) (Amendment No.2)

Regulations 2008, agrees the Council's Policy Framework for 2016/17 be as set out in paragraph 6.1 of Appendix A and that any appropriate amendments be made to the Council's Constitution (Paragraph 2.5.2) should this be necessary.

8. That the Council, in accordance with Regulation 5, Schedule 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, approves that all other plans, policies and strategies requiring approval and not included in the approved Policy Framework be delegated to the Council's Executive.
9. That the Council agrees that Paragraph 2.6.5 of Article 6, setting out the Executive Portfolios, be amended to reflect any changes made by the Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting.
10. That the appointment of two non voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance and Ethics Committee.
11. That the appointment of two Parish/Town Councillors is made to the Governance and Ethics Committee's Advisory Panel.
12. To re-appoint three Independent Persons namely Lindsey Appleton, James Rees and Mike Wall should they be willing to continue to fulfil this role.
13. To agree to the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in paragraph 9.1
14. To agree to the membership of the three Scrutiny Panels as set out in paragraph 2.2 (Table A) of Appendix A.
15. That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the appointments to Committees.
16. To agree the revised timetable of meetings for 2016/17 (Appendix C)

3. Implications

Financial:	Members Allowances, proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel, were agreed at the May 2015 Council meeting
Policy:	The appointments and allocations will be made in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations. The Council's Policy making framework is updated annually.
Personnel:	None
Legal:	The allocation of seats to Political Groups is in accordance with Section 15(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and related regulations mentioned in this report.
Risk Management:	None
Property:	None
Other:	None

4. Other options considered

4.1 As it is a statutory requirement no additional options were considered.

5. Introduction

- 5.1 In accordance with Paragraph 4.2.2 of the Constitution, the Council is required to appoint Committees and other Member bodies that are not part of the Executive. Membership of the Council's Committees is agreed annually at the May Council meeting.
- 5.2 This report sets out the Membership of the Political Groups, the size and Membership of the Committees as well as the number of substitutes to be appointed for each of the bodies. It also sets out the 2016/17 Policy Framework.

6. Summary of Key Issues

- In accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 48 Members wish to be regarded as members of the Conservative Group and 4 Members wish to be regarded as members of the Liberal Democrat Group.
- Members, and where appropriate substitutes, will be appointed to 11 Committees totalling 95 seats.
- 84 of these seats will be allocated to Conservative Members and eleven to Liberal Democrat Members due to the fact that not all seats on any Committee can be allocated to the same political party.
- No changes have been made to the Policy Framework for 2016/17.
- The Council will continue to appoint two Parish/Town Councillors to the Governance and Ethics Committee, two Parish/ Town Councillors to the Governance and Ethics Committee's Advisory Panel and three Independent Persons.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Members are asked to agree the appointment of and allocation of seats on the Committees for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.
- 7.2 Members are asked to agree the Council's Policy Framework for 2016/17 as set out in Paragraph 6.1 of the report.

8. Appendices

Appendix A - Supporting Information

Appendix B – Membership of Committees (to follow)

Appendix C – Timetable of Meetings

Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2016/17 Municipal Year – Supporting Information

1. Political Groups

- 1.1 In accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, the under-mentioned Members have given notice of their wish to be regarded as Members of the Political Groups set out below.

Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group
Steve Ardagh-Walter	Lee Dillon
Peter Argyle	Billy Drummond
Howard Bairstow	Mollie Lock
Pamela Bale	Alan Macro
Jeremy Bartlett	
Jeff Beck	
Dennis Benneyworth	
Dominic Boeck	
Graham Bridgman	
Paul Bryant	
Anthony Chadley	
Keith Chopping	
Jeanette Clifford	
Hilary Cole	
James Cole	
Roger Croft	
Richard Crumly	
Rob Denton-Powell	
Lynne Doherty	
Adrian Edwards	
Sheila Ellison	
Marcus Franks	
James Fredrickson	
Dave Goff	
Nick Goodes	
Manohar Gopal	
Paul Hewer	
Clive Hooker	
Carol Jackson-Doerge	
Marigold Jaques	

Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group
Mike Johnston	
Graham Jones	
Rick Jones	
Alan Law	
Tony Linden	
Gordon Lundie	
Tim Metcalfe	
Ian Morrin	
Graham Pask	
Anthony Pick	
James Podger	
Garth Simpson	
Richard Somner	
Anthony Stansfeld	
Virginia von Celsing	
Quentin Webb	
Emma Webster	
Laszlo Zverko	

Recommendation 1:

- That the Council notes that under Paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice has been received that the Members set out in paragraph 1.1 of this report are to be regarded as Members of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively.

2. Appointment of Committees

2.1 In accordance with Paragraph 4.2.2 of the Constitution, the Council is required to appoint Committees and other Member bodies that are not part of the Executive or its sub-committees including the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2.2 It is proposed that Council appoint the Committees (as set out in Table A) with the number of places shown for each.

Table A

Body	Number of Seats
Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	7
Communities Panel (Including Safeguarding)	5
Environment Panel	5
Resources Panel	5
Licensing Committee	12
District Planning Committee	12 <i>(six members of the Eastern Area Planning Committee and six Members of the Western Area Planning Committee)</i>

Eastern Area Planning Committee	12
Western Area Planning Committee	12
Personnel Committee	5
Appeals Panel	12
Governance and Ethics Committee	8 <i>(two non-voting co-opted Parish Councillors will also be appointed to this Committee)</i>
Total	95

Recommendation 2, 14 and 15:

- That the Council agrees to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in paragraph 2.2 (Table A).
- To agree to the membership of the three Scrutiny Panels as set out in paragraph 2.2 (Table A).
- That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the appointments to Committees.

3. Allocation of Seats

3.1 The political balance of the Council currently stands as follows:

	Number of Members No.	Political Composition %
Conservative Group	48	92.3%
Liberal Democrat Group	4	7.7%
	52	100.00%

3.2 In allocating seats on Committees, the Council must give effect, so far as reasonably practical, to the principles contained in Section 15(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 which may be summarised as follows:

- (1) Not all seats on any Committee are to be allocated to the same political group;
- (2) The majority of seats on any Committee must be allocated to the majority Group;
- (3) Subject to (1) and (2) above, the number of seats on ordinary Committees must be allocated to each political group in the same proportion as their representation on the Council;
- (4) Subject to (1) and (3) above, the number of seats on any Committee must be the same proportion as the political group's representation on full Council;
- (5) To qualify two or more Members must form a group.

3.3 Based on 95 seats (Table A), the “basket principle” and the normal rules of rounding the following number of seats would therefore normally be allocated to each Group.

Group	Ratio	No of Seats
Conservative Group	92% x 95	87
Liberal Democrat Group	8% x 95	8
Total		95

3.3 However in accordance with rule (1) as set out in paragraph 3.2 above the Liberal Democrat Group would be entitled to one seat on each of the above eleven committees. *This means that they would therefore be entitled to eleven seats.

3.4 The seats on Committees will therefore be allocated as follows:

Table B			
Committee	Total Number of Seats	Conservative Group	Liberal Democrat Group
Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	7	6	1
Communities Panel (Including Safeguarding)	5	4	1
Environment Panel	5	4	1
Resources Panel	5	4	1
Licensing Committee	12	11	1
District Planning Committee	12	11	1
Eastern Area Planning Committee	12	11	1
Western Area Planning Committee	12	11	1
Personnel Committee	5	4	1
Appeals Panel	12	11	1
Governance and Ethics Committee	8	7	1
Total	95	84	11*

Recommendation 3 and 15:

- That the Council agrees 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 3.4 of Appendix A (Table B).
- That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the appointments to Committees.

4. Substitutes

4.1 In accordance with the Council’s Constitution, the Council is required to determine the number of substitute Members that may be appointed in respect of each Committee. The current numbers of substitutes for each is as follows:

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	Six Conservative Substitutes - two from each of the three Scrutiny Panels Three Liberal Democrat Substitutes
Communities Panel (Including Safeguarding)	Two Conservative and One Liberal Democrat Substitute
Environment Panel	Two Conservative and One Liberal Democrat Substitute
Resources Panel	Two Conservative and One Liberal Democrat Substitute
Area Planning Committees	Up to 4 per Political Group
District Planning Committee	Up to 4 per Political Group – 2 from the Eastern Area of the District and 2 from the Western Area of the District
Licensing Committee	No substitutes permitted
Personnel Committee	Up to 2 per Political Group
Appeals Panel	No substitutes permitted
Governance and Ethics Committee	Up to 2 per Political Group

4.2 In respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee’s area who are not appointed to the Committee.

Recommendations 4 and 5:

- That the number of substitutes on Committees and Commissions be as set out in paragraph 4.1 (Table C).
- In respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee’s area who are not appointed to the Committee. Where substitutes attend the District Planning meeting they need to be drawn from the same Area Planning meeting as the Member they are substituting for.

5. Appointment to Committees

5.1 Appendix B is a list of Committees and the nominations from each Political Group.

Recommendation 6:

- **That the Council approves the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix B and in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.**

6. Planning and Policy Framework

6.1 In accordance with Regulation 4, Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 and the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2008 the Council is requested to confirm the Policy Framework for 2016/17 as set out below:

- Council Strategy;
- Local Transport Plan;
- Licensing Policy;
- Gambling Policy;
- Plans and strategies which together comprise the Development Plan;
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
- Statutory Pay Policy Statement.

Recommendations 7 and 8:

- **That the Council, in accordance with Regulation 4, Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, and the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2008, agrees the Council's Policy Framework for 2016/17 be as set out above and that any appropriate amendments be made to the Council's Constitution (Paragraph 2.5.2) should this be necessary.**
- **That the Council, in accordance with Regulation 5, Schedule 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, approves that policies and strategies requiring approval and not included in the approved Policy Framework be delegated to the Council's Executive.**

7. Executive – Article 6 and Part 5 Rules of Procedure

7.1 Paragraph 2.6.5 of Article 6 of the Constitution sets out the current Executive Portfolios and this will need to be amended in the light of any proposed changes made by the Leader of the Council to these Portfolios as set out in Appendix B.

Recommendation 9:

- **That the Council agrees that Paragraph 2.6.5 of Article 6 of the Constitution, setting out the Executive Portfolios, be amended to reflect any changes made by the Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting.**

8. Governance and Ethics Committee

- 8.1 At the Full Council meeting on the 02 July 2015 Members agreed to merge the then Standards, and Governance and Audit Committees to form a Governance and Ethics Committee. It was agreed that the membership of the revised Governance and Ethics Committee would comprise ten representatives (eight District Councillors appointed on a proportional basis and two co-opted non-voting Parish/Town Councillors). It was also agreed that the Advisory Panel and three Independent Persons would be retained.
- 8.2 The Advisory Panel would comprise eight Members: two from the Administration, two from the main opposition party, two parish/town councillors and two of the three Independent Persons, used on a rotational basis.

Recommendations 10, 11 and 12:

- **That the appointment of two non voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance and Ethics Committee.**
- **That the appointment of two Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance and Ethics Committee's Advisory Panel.**
- **To re-appoint three Independent Persons namely Lindsey Appleton, James Rees and Mike Wall should they be willing to continue to fulfil this role.**

9. Health and Wellbeing Board

- 9.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is a Sub-Committee of the Executive as set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. A number of regulations linked to Committees have been disapplied in relation to this Committee such as the proportionality rules and rules pertaining to voting. It has been agreed that the membership of the Board will be as follows*:

- Leader of the Council or other appropriate elected Member
- Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing
- North and West Reading Clinical Commissioning Group
- Newbury and District Clinical Commissioning Group
- Strategic Director of Public Health or Assistant Director of Public Health
- Director of Community Services (role covers Children's Services and Adult Social Services)
- Local Healthwatch Representative
- Representative from the Umbrella Organisation (Empowering West Berkshire) representing the Voluntary and Community Sector

- Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Children and Young People
- Portfolio Holder with responsibility or Adult Social Care
- Shadow Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing
- NHS England Local Area Team
- Chief Officer (Federation of CCGs)

*Subject to any changes made to the Portfolio Holders by the Leader at the Council meeting.

9.2 Each of the Board Members have nominated a named substitute as set out in Appendix B.

Recommendation 13

- **To agree the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in paragraph 9.1 of Appendix A.**

Background Papers:

- The Local Government and Housing Act 1989
- Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990
- Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Operations Board.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval



Wards affected:

All

Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council

Officer details:

Name: Moira Fraser
Job Title: Democratic and Electoral Services
Tel No: 01635 519045
E-mail Address: moira.fraser@westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council – Timetable of Meetings- May 2016 to May 2017

	MAY 2016	JUN 2016	JUL 2016	AUG 2016	SEP 2016	OCT 2016	NOV 2016	DEC 2016	JAN 2017	FEB 2017	MAR 2017	APR 2017	MAY 2017													
Mon				1									1													
Tues				2			1	RP					2													
Weds		1	E		3	E		2	W		1	E	3	E												
Thur		2			4		1	CON			2	CON	2	C		4	X									
Fri		3		1		5		2			3		3				5									
Sat		4		2		6		3			4		4			1		6								
Sun	1		5		3		7		4		2		3		5		2		7							
Mon	2		6		4		8		5		3		4		6		5		7							
Tues	3	OSMC	7	CPP/OSMC	5	C	9		6	EP	4		8		6	CPP/EP	3	7		7		4		9	C	
Weds	4		8	W	6		10	W	7	D	5	E	9		7	E	4	8	E	8	D	5	W	10		
Thur	5	Election	9		7	HWBB	11		8	X	6	CON	10		8	C	5	CON	9		9	CON	6		11	
Fri	6		10		8		12		9		7		11		9		6		10		10		7		12	
Sat	7		11		9		13		10		8		12		10		7		11		11		8		13	
Sun	8		12		10		14		11		9		13		11		8		12		12		9		14	
Mon	9		13		11		15		12		10		14		12		9		13		13		10		15	
Tues	10		14		12	RP	16		13		11		15		13		10		14		14	LIC	11	OSMC	16	OSMC
Weds	11	E	15	D	13	E	17		14	E	12	W	16	E	14	W	11	15		15	W	12	E	17	W	
Thur	12	CON	16	CON	14	CON	18		15	C	13		17	CON	15		12		16	X	16	DPC	13	CON	18	CON
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Sun	15		19		17		21		18		16		20		18		15		19		19		16		21	
Mon	16		20	G&E/ARE	18		22	G&E	19		17		21		19		16		20		20		17		22	
Tues	17		21		19		23		20	CPP/CP	18	DPC	22		20		17	RP	21		21		18		23	
Weds	18	W	22	E	20	W	24	E	21	W	19	D	23	W	21		18	E/W	22	W	22	E	19	D	24	E
Thur	19	C	23		21		25		22		20	X	24	HWBB/X	22	X	19	X	23		23		20		25	HWBB
Fri	20		24		22		26		23		21		25		23		20		24		24		21		26	
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Mon	30										31						30									
Tues	31																31	OSMC								

Page 69

C	Council – 7.00pm except Budget meeting which starts at 6.30pm	OSMC	Overview & Scrutiny Mgmt Com – 6.30pm	W	Western Area Planning Cttee – 6.30pm	CON	Conservative Group Meeting – 6.30pm
X	Executive – 5.00pm	CP	Communities Panel – 6.30pm	E	Eastern Area Planning Cttee – 6.30pm	HWBB	Health and Wellbeing Board – 9.00am
G&E	Governance and Ethics Committee – 5.00pm	EP	Environment Panel – 6.30pm	D	District Planning Committee (provisional dates) – 6.30pm	1	Bank Holiday
LIC	Licensing Committee – 6.30pm	RP	Resources Panel – 6.30pm	DPC	District/Parish Conference – 6.30pm		School Holiday
CPP	Corporate Parenting Panel – 6.30pm						

Public Meetings: All meetings are open to the public, with the exception of Conservative & Liberal Democrat Group Meetings.
Venues: All meetings are held at Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury with the exception of: Eastern Area Planning Committee is usually held at the Calcot Centre, Highview.
Questions to Council and Executive: Questions must be submitted by 10.00am seven clear working days before the meeting.
District Planning: All stated dates are provisional subject to requirement.

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West Berkshire Council Strategy: Refresh 2015 - 2019

Committee considering report:	Council on 19 May 2016
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Roger Croft
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	13 April 2016
Report Author:	Catalin Bogos
Forward Plan Ref:	C3055

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the refreshed Council Strategy 2015 - 2019 for consideration and approval by the Council. The refreshed document also articulates the progress that has been made and introduces new or updated projects to support the delivery of the Council's priorities for improvement.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To approve the updated Council Strategy covering the period 2015 - 2019.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** The proposed work programme associated with the projects listed in the refreshed Council Strategy is fully funded within the 2016/17 budget.
- 3.2 **Policy:** The Council Strategy forms part of the Council's approved Policy Framework.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** None.
- 3.4 **Legal:** None.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** The risk management process includes the assessment of risks in delivering the council's priorities for improvement and monitoring of the actions to mitigate them.
- 3.6 **Property:** None.
- 3.7 **Other:** None

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 In May 2015, the Council approved a new four year Council Strategy which contained the priorities for improvement. The Council Strategy was subjected to public consultation.
- 4.2 This report introduces an updated version of the Council Strategy 2015 - 2019 that maintains the aims and priorities previously agreed. The new Strategy updates the progress that has been made in delivery of our priorities for improvement and provides clarification on new or amended actions or projects in order to deliver against the priorities.
- 4.3 The updated actions are also informed by the political pledges of the current administration. The updated Strategy also provides information on the Council's challenging financial position level.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The refreshed Council Strategy clearly articulates the progress that has been made in delivering projects that support the Council's priorities for improvement. The refreshed Council Strategy also proposes new projects and initiatives in support of the Council's priorities for improvement.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix A – Draft updated Council Strategy 2015 -2019
- 6.2 Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

Shaping our District

West Berkshire
Council Strategy

2015-2019

Refreshed March 2016

Working together to make West Berkshire an even greater place in which to live, work and learn

Page 73

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West Berkshire
COUNCIL

Contents

Foreword	2
Summary	3
West Berkshire - The Place and its People	4
Our Vision, Aims and Priorities for Improvement	5
Better Educated Communities	6
A Stronger Local Economy	10
Protect and Support Those Who Need It	14
Maintaining a High Quality of Life Within our Communities	18
Our Approach & Our Values - Become an Even More Effective Council	21
Refreshed Key Things We Plan to do by Priority for Improvement	24



*“Working together
to make West
Berkshire an even
greater place in
which to live,
work and learn”*

Foreword

*to adapt to the
changing world
we now live in*

Page 75

“Despite our successes there is no room for complacency and many challenges remain.”

In 2015 we published a new Council Strategy covering the period 2015 to 2019. Although we deliver, or fund, hundreds of core or essential services the Strategy focused only on the priorities for improvement set out below:

- 1. Improve educational attainment**
- 2. Close the educational attainment gap**
- 3. Enable completion of more affordable housing**
- 4. Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements**
- 5. Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**
- 6. Support communities to do more to help themselves**

These priorities were supported by our overarching approach to ‘Become an even more effective council’.

Whilst from a financial perspective we have been challenged by changes in the Government’s funding model to local authorities, our strategic direction and our priorities for improvement remain the same, and we will continue to be the most effective and efficient we can. However, going forward we will have to do things differently; finding more opportunities to work with our partners and communities, reshaping what we do and how we do it and, in some cases, stopping doing things all together. The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the size of the financial challenge facing the council in more detail. Over the remaining time of this strategy we expect to have to find a further £21.8 million savings.

This annual refresh shows the progress we have made in delivering our priorities and the key things we planned to do.

The purpose of the Strategy is not to detail all the services that we provide, but to focus on areas where we need, and want, to improve. The broader range of services we provide are included in other strategic, or operational plans, such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



Roger Croft
Leader of the Council



Nick Carter
Chief Executive

Summary

.....

Our Vision:

“Working together to make West Berkshire an even greater place in which to live, work and learn”

Our Place

West Berkshire as a district will continue to grow and that growth will be at its highest for those aged under 18 and over 65. The impact of the Care Act will increase the number of older and vulnerable adults we will need to provide care for.

We have a strong local economy with high levels of employment but we cannot afford to be complacent. West Berkshire needs to remain an attractive place to do business, so continued investment in our infrastructure is vital. We also need to continue to ensure that our local workforce has the appropriate skills.

We will need more housing, in particular affordable housing, whilst at the same time protecting the natural environment that makes West Berkshire such a good place to live.

Our communities are well educated and we have good schools but attainment could be better. We need to be more ambitious for our young people.

Our Strategic Aims

We have set four strategic aims to support our vision:

- A.** Better educated communities.
- B.** A stronger local economy.
- C.** Protect and support those who need it.
- D.** Maintain a high quality of life within our communities.

Our Priorities for Improvement

We have identified six key priorities for improvement

- 1.** Improve educational attainment.
- 2.** Close the educational attainment gap.
- 3.** Enable the completion of more affordable housing.
- 4.** Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy.
- 5.** Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- 6.** Support communities to do more for themselves.

Our Approach - A More Effective Council

As an organisation we have been told, and we know, that we have many strengths. Those strengths alone however will not see us through the coming four years because of the financial constraints. As we reshape West Berkshire we also need to reshape ourselves. In particular, we need to:

- encourage communities to do more for themselves recognising the council will have to withdraw from directly supporting some areas of activity where others can be more effective;
- find new ways of commissioning and delivering services;
- learn more from others;
- celebrate our achievements more effectively;
- develop a more modern and flexible workforce.

Our Track Record

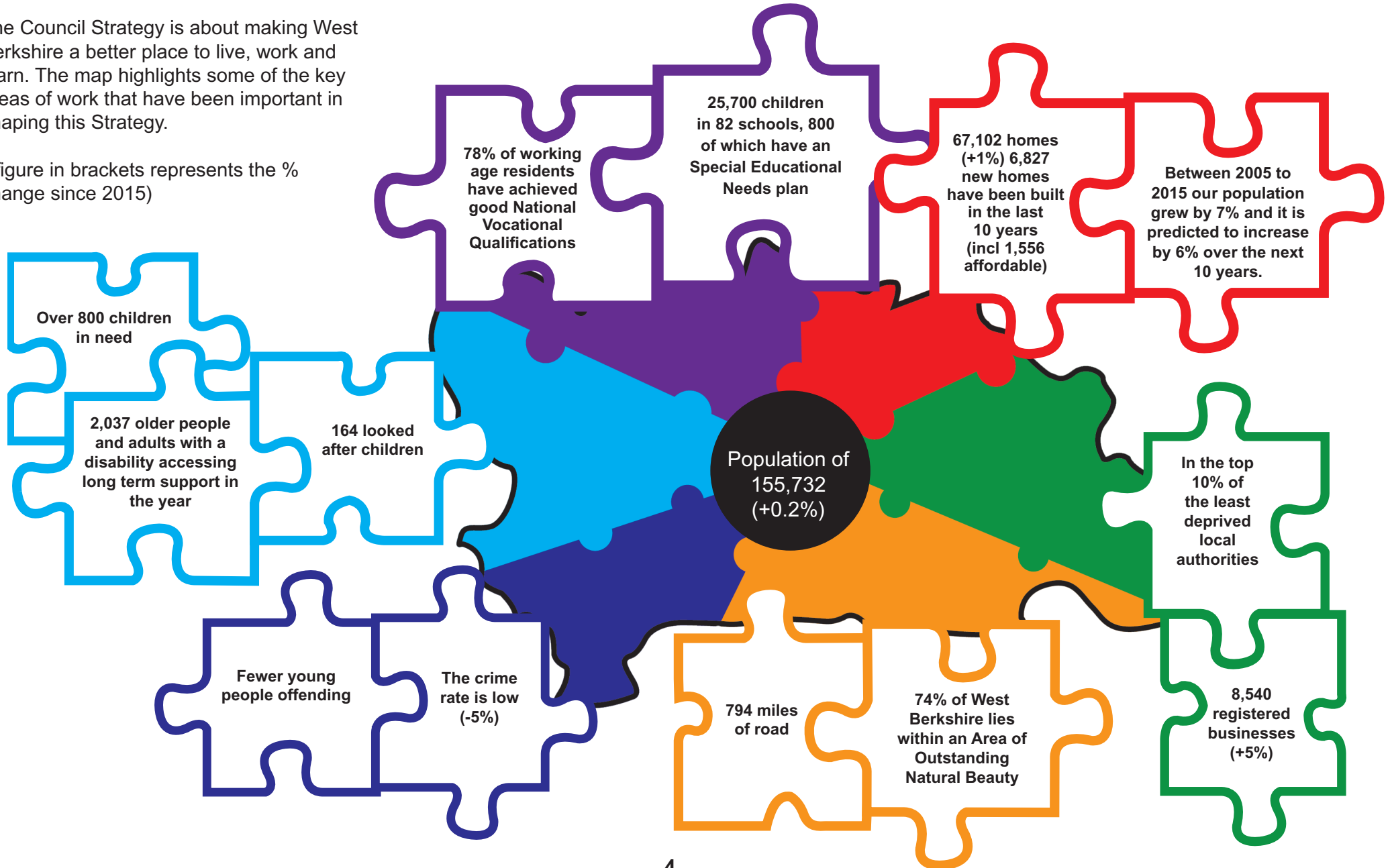
Since publishing our Council Strategy, we have:

- Completed Phase One of the Superfast West Berkshire Broadband Programme, increasing coverage in West Berkshire to 83%.
- Narrowed the attainment gap for our primary school children
- 62% of pupils have achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs (incl. English and Maths)
- Invested £5.8m in our roads
- Established the social work academy and a programme to support newly qualified social workers
- Completed building projects at Little Heath School (sixth form block) and at John Rankin Infant and Junior Schools (expansion).

West Berkshire – The Place and its People

The Council Strategy is about making West Berkshire a better place to live, work and learn. The map highlights some of the key areas of work that have been important in shaping this Strategy.

*(figure in brackets represents the % change since 2015)



Our Vision, Aims and Priorities for Improvement

Vision Working together to make West Berkshire an even greater place to live, work and learn

Aims



Priorities for Improvement



The council provides a range of core services which it believes are essential for the communities of West Berkshire. These include:

- Protecting our children
- Maintaining our roads
- Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean
- Providing benefits
- Collecting Council Tax and Business Rates
- Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults
- Planning and Housing

Given the scale of the financial challenges that lie ahead it is impossible to guarantee that these services will be immune from cuts. We will however, seek to ensure that these services are delivered to a standard that is good for those who receive them.

Aim A Better Educated Communities



Why is this important?

We recognise that children and young people are integral to the future of the area and we have a responsibility to ensure that all of them are given the best possible opportunity to succeed and to enjoy growing up in a safe, secure, healthy and economically prosperous environment.

For an area as affluent as West Berkshire, our educational attainment should be much better and we have made this our priority.

We continue to work positively with all local academies and schools for the benefit of pupils across West Berkshire.



Our priorities for improvement

- Raise the attainment of all our children at every key stage – *specifically we are aiming to be in the top 10% of councils for every key stage by 2020.*
- Close the attainment gap for vulnerable pupils – *we are aiming to eliminate the current attainment gap between disadvantaged children and other children.*

Priorities for Improvement: Improve Educational Attainment and Close the Educational Attainment Gap

Key things we planned to do

1. Continue to develop our work with schools to improve outcomes for all children and young people.
2. Invest £70m in our schools.
3. Implement a West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy.
4. Increase safety, health and wellbeing support for children and young people in schools.
5. Ensure a good start for every child.
6. Develop outstanding leaders and governors in our schools.

Progress

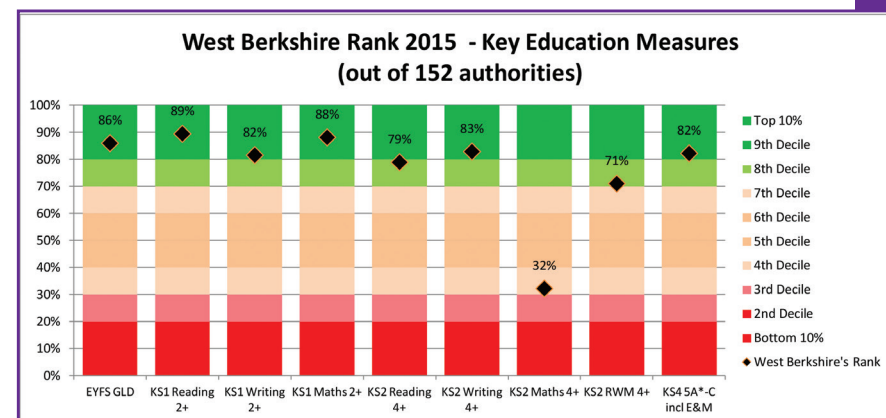
- Fig 1 shows where the council ranked nationally for all Key Stages for Academic Years 2012/13 through to 2014/15.
- 82% of 11 year olds in West Berkshire achieved the Level 4 standard in all subjects, exceeding the national average (80%). Results show continued high attainment in reading and writing scores, but with more improvement needed in mathematics *fig 2*
- 62.4% of our 16 year olds get 5 or more GCSEs graded A* to C, including English and Mathematics. This is well above the national figure of 57% for state funded schools. We are in the top 25% of national rankings thanks to impressive improvement in recent years, but not all schools perform at this level. *fig 2*
- Delivered strong results for 5 year olds in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 7 year olds, improving on 2014 results, and consistently above average in key indicators. Teacher assessments for 7 year olds are now more accurate than prior to 2013 as a result of more rigorous LA training and better moderation of schools' work.

fig 1

Rank (out of 152):				Rank as percentage:		
West Berkshire	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Foundation Stage (end of reception yr)						
Good Level of Development	11	22	22	7%	14%	14%
Key Stage 1 (end of year 2)						
Reading level 2+	6	26	16	4%	17%	11%
Writing level 2+	11	25	28	7%	16%	18%
Maths level 2+	19	34	18	13%	22%	12%
Key Stage 2 (end of year 6)						
Reading level 4+	35	12	32	23%	8%	21%
Writing level 4+	23	22	26	15%	14%	17%
Maths level 4+	74	53	103	49%	35%	68%
Read/Writ/Mat 4+	55	24	44	36%	16%	29%
Key Stage 4 (GCSE)						
5A*-C including English & Maths	65	27	27	43%	18%	18%

Years represent end of academic year, e.g. 2015 = results for 2014-15 academic year
 Note: DfE is changing the way attainment is measured from Summer 2016. Past data will no longer be comparable.

fig 2



Priorities for Improvement: Improve Educational Attainment and Close the Educational Attainment Gap

- In the primary phase, there has been further improvement in the key priority area of closing the educational gap for disadvantaged pupils. The gap for 11 year olds (Year 6) in the Level 4 standard in all subjects has narrowed from 29% in 2012 to 18.7% in 2015 (15% nationally) *fig 3*
- The educational attainment gap for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) pupils entitled to free school meals has closed from 32% to 28% . This is however still larger than the national gap and remains a priority for West Berkshire. It should be noted that cohort numbers are very small at 127 pupils out of 1962, meaning that slight variations can cause large percentage changes
- In the secondary phase, the educational attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils widened slightly for those gaining 5 or more GCSEs graded A* to C (incl. English and Maths) from 33.4% (in 2014) to 34.7% (in 2015). Improvements in closing the gap nationally have also stalled at 28.3% and there has been no trend of national improvement since 2012. This continues to be an area in which schools and the council are working hard to make improvements *fig 4*

fig 3

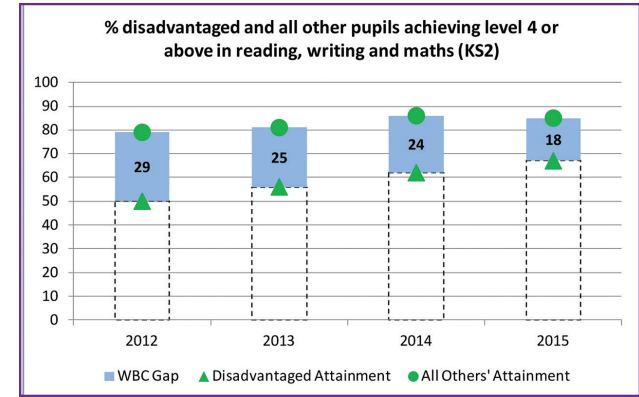
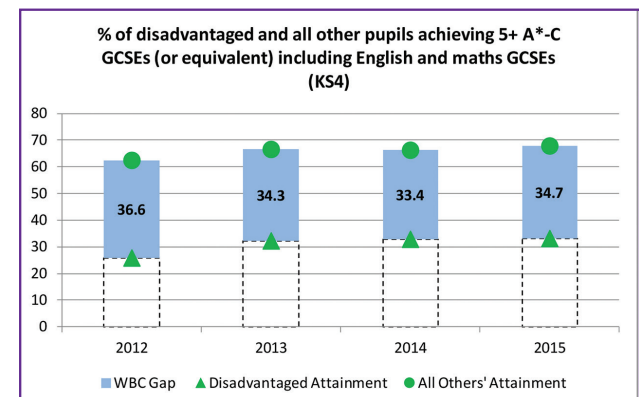


fig 4



Priorities for Improvement: Improve Educational Attainment and Close the Educational Attainment Gap

- Published a refreshed West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy that showed our progress against the previous strategy and identified areas of focus and key activities for 2015 -2017
- Provided training, coaching and support for middle and senior leaders, including Headteachers and governors, as part of the implementation of the School Improvement Strategy. This has enabled the key improvements made in the last three years. Increased training and support (high challenge, high support, evidence based practice framework called 'Restorative Practice' approach) for teaching staff in nine schools to better work with children and families who find engagement and attendance at school challenging
- Improved working with schools to promote emotional wellbeing in pupils, improve health and education for Looked After Children (LAC) and improve educational achievement of children that receive free school meals
- Focussed on safeguarding, including revision of the Model Schools' Policy; the Education service has received positive feedback regarding work around addressing bullying
- School building projects have progressed as expected, for example
 - Little Heath School (Sixth Form Block) –completed, official opening took place in autumn 2015
 - John Rankin Infant and Junior Schools (expansion) - completed
 - Kennet Valley Primary School (new classroom block) – expected to complete before Easter 2016
- Provided a new unit for secondary school pupils with autism

Updates

The majority of the key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, however some of them have been updated or developed to reflect progress already made or changes in circumstances. These are listed below:

- (Update) Implement the refreshed West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy for 2015-17
- (Update) Increase the percentage of school rated "Good" or "Better" through developing outstanding leaders and governors in our schools
- (New) Our disadvantaged children will have better results and will be closer to the results of other children

Aim B A Stronger Local Economy

Why is this important?

Having a good job, with a living wage and the resources to pay for the things you need is an essential requirement for a good quality of life, and improves wellbeing and sound health.

West Berkshire has traditionally had a healthy local economy and has now emerged strongly through the recent economic recession. The council has an important role in helping to create the conditions for private sector businesses to prosper and grow. Infrastructure, regeneration and ensuring that our workforce has the appropriate skills will be our focus areas over the coming four years.



Our priorities for improvement

- Enable the completion of more affordable housing – *we are setting an ambitious target of facilitating the completion of 1000 new affordable homes across the district over the coming five years.*
- Deliver or enable key infrastructure projects in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy:
 - *In relation to roads, our target is to be in the top 25% of councils nationally by 2019 for the condition of our main roads.*
 - *For rail, we will lobby for the extension of electrification from Newbury to Bedwyn.*
 - *We will implement a five year flood prevention programme through local flood forums and with the support of local communities.*
 - *We will take forward the regeneration of the London Road Industrial Estate, Newbury Wharf and Market Street sites in Newbury and support the regeneration of Thatcham Town Centre.*
 - *We will ensure that at least 99% of West Berkshire households have access to superfast broadband by the end of 2017.*

Priority for Improvement: Enable the Completion of More Affordable Housing

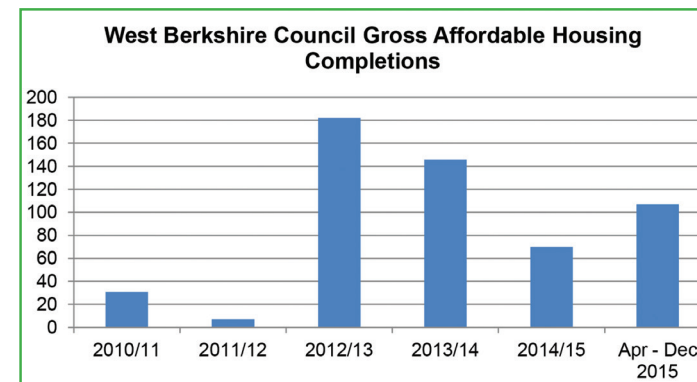
Key things we planned to do

1. Investigate new ways of delivering affordable housing.

Progress

- 107 new affordable houses have been built between April and December 2015 *fig 5*
- We currently have development with planning permissions that has the potential to deliver 3,308 units, of which 568 would be affordable (38%). In addition to this we have identified 844 affordable housing units in the Housing Site allocation DPD. This gives a total of 1,412 units 'in the pipeline'. It is currently forecast that 883 will be built in the next 5 years.

fig 5



Updates

The key thing we planned to do at the start of the Strategy has been altered to reflect progress already made.

- (Update) Pursue options to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing in the district. The local new affordable housing build could be impacted by the outcome of the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 – 16, currently making its way through the House of Lords.



Priority for Improvement: Deliver or Enable Key Infrastructure Improvements in Relation to Roads, Rail, Flood Prevention, Regeneration and the Digital Economy

Key things we planned to do

1. Invest £17m in our roads.
2. Seek to develop new partnerships with the private sector and local communities to enhance local infrastructure.
3. Keep our Community Infrastructure Levy policy under review.
4. Invest £5.2m in flood prevention schemes.
5. Support and develop Flood Forums.
6. Implement the Superfast Broadband Programme for Berkshire and West Berkshire.
7. Lobby the government for rail electrification to Bedwyn.

Progress

- Invested £5.8million in our roads, as planned, to January 2016
- Received approval for resources for three projects from the Local Enterprise Partnership:
 - Access road to Sandford (£2 million),
 - Access to London Road Industrial Estate (£1.9 million) and
 - Access to Sterling Cables (Kings Road) (£2.34 million)
- Developed partnerships to enhance local infrastructure, including:
 - The public/private sector, housing/residential led development scheme with Grainger PLC for the Market Street Redevelopment
 - The public/private sector partnership with St. Modwen PLC to deliver urban regeneration including increased employment opportunities and town centre residential housing at London Road Industrial Estate development
- Received the planning permission for provision of a new bus station as part of the Newbury regeneration project(H&T)
- Completed an Economic Viability Assessment in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule
- *Fig 6* shows where the council ranked nationally for road conditions in 2014/15.

fig 6

Rank (out of 152 - All English Single Tier and County Councils):		Rank as percentage:
West Berkshire	2014/2015	2014/2015
Principal roads where maintenance should be considered	47	31%
Source: LG Inform		

Priority for Improvement: Deliver or Enable Key Infrastructure Improvements in Relation to Roads, Rail, Flood Prevention, Regeneration and the Digital Economy

Progress

- Progressed delivery of the programme of all the flood and drainage improvement schemes, which are on track to meet the agreed deadlines:
 - Winterbourne Flood alleviation scheme reached construction work stage (completion expected Sep 2016)
 - Purley Property Level Protection Scheme was delayed due to Environment Agency – now estimated to start in 2016/17
 - Great Shefford – feasibility study was completed and submitted to the Environment Agency
 - Delivered schemes on the ground such as Tull Way attenuation pond, which is underway
 - Reached the detailed design stage for a further attenuation pond at Dunstan Park Thatcham
- Supported, with partner organisations, five flood forums (Pangbourne, Lambourn, Newbury, Streatley and Thatcham)
- Completed Phase 1 of the Superfast Berkshire Programme with superfast coverage increased from 66% to 83% in West Berkshire and 92% overall in Berkshire. During phase 2 procurement, a promise by the contractor to provide superfast broadband to all our remaining premises was secured and we therefore decided to de-scope all of those that were destined to get only a basic broadband service and to spend the funding on delivering superfast broadband to all West Berkshire households.
- Wrote to local MPs and to Department of Transport as part of lobbying activity for rail electrification to Bedwyn

Updates

The key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, with the exception of the following:

- (Remove) Lobby the government for rail electrification to Bedwyn - will be continued by our MP.

Aim C Protect and Support Those Who Need it

Why is this important?

Supporting the vulnerable, whether they are older people, adults with disabilities or children is at the heart of what the council is about. The council has very clear legal duties to support vulnerable people and it is where the majority of its resources are spent. It carries out these duties by working with partners through the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and Safeguarding Adults Board.

The implementation of the Care Act 2015 is likely to result in more people being cared for by the council. Population pressures and other factors will also increase the demand for social care in future years. We see safeguarding the most vulnerable in our communities as the most important thing we do and we have therefore maintained this as a priority.

The personalisation of social care and safeguarding adults empowers people to speak out, make informed decisions with support if necessary so that members of our communities can help each other.

Our priorities for improvement

- Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.



Priority for Improvement: Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Key things we planned to do

1. Ensure that it is easy for local people to refer their safeguarding concerns to us.
2. Where services are independently inspected they are rated at least 'good' and peer reviews of safeguarding rated highly.
3. We will see an increase in the number of people that are helped to remain living at home after a period of enablement.
4. Work in partnership with health, education, Police and voluntary and community sector organisations to improve safeguarding.
5. Improve the retention of good quality social workers through the establishment of a Social Worker Academy.
6. Implement an effective quality assurance programme for safeguarding services.
7. Improve our current training programme.

Progress

- Progressed in improving our Children's Services to achieve 'good' following the Ofsted inspection – the Department of Education acknowledged the good progress we have made and the strategies we have put in place to secure system-wide improvements.
- Our Home Care Service and all four of our adult social care residential homes are overall rated as 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with changes made in response to one care home which was previously judged as 'requires improvement on safety'
- Worked to make it easier for people to refer their safeguarding concerns and receive support:
 - Promoted and acted upon safeguarding as part of the community conversations, the work of Health Visitors and School Nurses, staff working in libraries, Trading Standards etc.
 - Prioritised safeguarding response at Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and increased multi-agency auditing of safeguarding cases
 - Commissioned a form on the council's website for reporting concerns about adult social care service providers to help focus support and scrutiny
 - Developed a public information video to increase awareness of adult and child protection and a set of easy-read documentation about adult safeguarding for people with communication difficulties
- Increased referral rates for children's safeguarding, and achieved a more timely response (in accordance to assessment timescales)
- Increased the number of people receiving telecare services and have reduced the number going into residential care. The challenge remains to achieve a higher proportion who are still at home 91 days after a period of reablement (to be monitored in service), especially since the cohort is very small.

Priority for Improvement: Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Progress

- Focussed resources and actions on priorities agreed by the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SAPB) that involves primarily statutory social care and health organisations covering West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham. We have established a Service Users Safeguarding Forum to promote safeguarding and work with organisations to determine what will keep people safe and training needs.
- Implemented multiagency training on child protection, core groups and the work with Health partners resulted in improved health assessment timescales for Looked After Children
- Delivered training in Making Safeguarding Personal to 55 staff members who undertake adult safeguarding cases
- Trained more adult social workers to be “best interest assessors” to ensure clients living in circumstances that amount to a deprivation of liberty are properly identified and protective measures are accounted for
Trained our own staff so that they can deliver Level 2 Adult Safeguarding training
Completed training needs analysis for Children and Families Services
- Completed an Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) peer review of adult safeguarding services in December 2015. The review commended the council on its relationships with providers and other partners

Priority for Improvement: Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Progress

- Established the Social Work Academy and a programme to support newly qualified social workers
- Adopted a quality assurance framework developed by the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SAPB) including a number of quality assurance tools that have been agreed across the partnership.
- Introduced a clear and effective Quality Assurance Programme for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), which has been review by the Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisors
- Progressed the development of Quality Assurance tools in Children's Services to ensure that quality services are delivered in a consistent way.

Updates

Many of the key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, however some of them have been updated or developed to reflect progress already made or changes in circumstances. These are listed below:

- (New) Continue to focus on improving our Children's Services, aiming to have the improvement notice withdrawn.
- (New) Continue to implement the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' approach by working with people to achieve their stated outcomes from the safeguarding process.
- (Update) Implement an effective quality assurance programme for safeguarding services for children and young people
- (Update) Sustain recruitment of qualified and experienced social workers and improve their access to more advanced/recent research intelligence and training for further professional development
- (New) Improve our approach to 'hearing the voice of the child' within the services and in the way we make our decisions
- (Remove) We will see an increase in the number of people that are helped to remain living at home after a period of enablement.

Aim D

Maintain a high quality of life within our communities

Why is this important?

The council has four underlying principles which guide how it works;

- (i). **Helping you to help yourself**
- (ii). **Helping you to help one another**
- (iii). **Helping you when you cannot help yourself**
- (iv). **Promoting and acting in the interests of our local community**

The council recognises that many people see themselves more as part of their immediate local area rather than as part of an administrative area called West Berkshire. As a result our focus has always been on working closely with local communities and parish councils, recognising that local people know what is best for their own community. We will also continue to work closely with communities of interest such as carers, voluntary groups etc.

We intend to do more work in this area over the coming four years, not only because limited resources mean the council will be able to do less itself, but also because it is vital that we continue to unlock the potential resources that reside within our communities and identify the most effective way of delivering services.

Our priorities for improvement

- Support communities to do more to help themselves



Priority for Improvement: Support Communities to do More to Help Themselves

Key things we planned to do

1. Accelerate the delivery of local services for local communities by local communities.
2. Work with local communities to help people live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives and improve the health of the poorest fastest.
3. Provide additional resources to work with communities to enhance volunteering activities.
4. Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people.
5. Ensure the continuation of access to libraries across the district and opportunities to participate in leisure activities.
6. Develop opportunities to engage with West Berkshire heritage
7. Work with local people to develop and improve our community planning programme.

Progress

- Identified local needs and starting to deliver solutions as part of the community conversations in Lambourn, Hungerford and Thatcham (part of the Brilliant West Berkshire – Building Communities Together initiative).
- Continued discussions with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)/ Parish Councils/local community groups are continuing to deliver the practical management of local countryside sites with the aim of having 2 sites to be under community management by Mar 2018
- Introduced the Voluntary Sector Prospectus, changing the way in which we commission services from the voluntary sector. Last year we commissioned outcomes on Helping People to Continue Caring (Carers Emergency Service and Flexible Services for Carers), Small Domestic Repairs Service and Supporting Vulnerable Adults to Access Employment. (CCH&S) (PH&W)
- Recruited 200 volunteers for activities in the Culture Service



Priority for Improvement: Support Communities to do More to Help Themselves

Progress

- Developed a new way of working in Adult Social Care Services, focussed on preventative work in order to support vulnerable adults and older people at the earliest opportunity aiming to maintain their independence and live within their communities.
- Promoted services provided by libraries through a new marketing officer. We are investigating self service for libraries to maintain low cost; Summer reading challenge for children was organised and completed in summer 2015
- Refined the guidance and process for the completion of a community plan with three communities already starting to use this approach and receive our support.
- Assisted Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council have progressed a Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be looking to adopt this following a successful examination and referendum

Updates

The majority of the key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, however some of them have been updated or developed to reflect progress already made or changes in circumstances. These are listed below:

- (New) Grow community conversations via Brilliant West Berkshire partnership working
- (Update) Work with communities to enhance existing and develop new volunteering activities
- (Update) Ensure the continuation of opportunities to participate in leisure activities
- (Update) Investigate self-service provision and alternative methods of working to support continuation of access to libraries
- (Update) Support local communities in developing community plans, delivering key local projects and progressing with their Neighbourhood Development Plans
- (New) Further support youth employment and employee career development through apprenticeships and a graduate scheme



Become an Even More Effective Council

Why is this important?

The 'Local Government Settlement 2016-17 and an Offer to Councils for Future Years' was announced in December 2015, making it clear that funding reductions will continue for at least the next four years at levels higher than initially forecasted.

Such a level of savings cannot be found by further trimming of existing services and a more radical reshaping of the council was started during 2015/16. This was driven by a review of what the council has done and wishes to do itself and a consideration of what might be best done by others, or possibly not done at all.

A review of the council was completed by the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2014. Following their annual visit in 2015, they confirmed that good progress has been made. The council has built on its strengths and addressed those areas identified as needing improvement, including operational processes, innovative practices and engagement with the public and our partners in a more open and transparent way.

Alongside our ongoing financial challenges, these areas of improvement continue to be the focus of our efforts to become an even more effective council over the coming years.

Our Values

We recognise that how we do things is as important as what we do. We have therefore established four values which reflect the culture we are seeking to create in the council.

These values are:

- **Respect**
- **Integrity**
- **Ambition**
- **Responsibility**

Our Approach

- Become an even more effective council

Our Approach: Become an Even More Effective Council

Key things we planned to do

1. Continue to deliver our core services to the agreed standard.
2. Retain and build on our strengths.
3. Reshape what we do and how we do it so that we can continue to live within our means.
4. Improve our partnership working especially with Health.
5. Develop a modern and flexible workforce where staff are recognised and valued.
6. Senior management will spend more time on strategic rather than operational issues.
7. Encourage more flexibility and innovation amongst our staff and foster ideas from the 'grass roots'.
8. Strengthen our leadership capability.
9. Get better at celebrating our successes and explaining our failures.
10. Make greater use of other appropriate information to help assess the cost and effectiveness of what we do.

Progress

- Established a Strategy Board to allow a focus on wider strategic issues
- Trained senior officers (Collaborative Architects) to work in new ways in order to generate ideas and identify solutions to help the council meet the strategic priorities
- Maintained our Legal Services as an economical service with a net cost of £6.02 per 1000 population. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Benchmarking Comparator Report 2015 confirmed that we remained in the lower quartile.
- Co-designed and funded the Emotional Health Academy with health sector representatives and schools
- Built a strong partnership with health, schools and other partners through the Healthy School post, funded by Public Health, and located and managed within the Education Service
- Successfully implemented the first phase of the Better Care Fund Programme, promoting greater integration of local health and social care services to offer better support for the most vulnerable.
- Produced a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in partnership with the other Berkshire authorities identifying our local housing need

Our Approach: Become an Even More Effective Council

Progress

- Procured a new social care case management system to support our social care workforce in working in a more effective way. Updated our service request system (known as ELMS Enquiry Logging and Management System) to make it more customer friendly and responsive, in addition to more efficient demand management
- Developed quality management systems within the Enforcement Group (Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Waste) which received ISO 9001 (quality management standard) accreditation
- Strengthened leadership capabilities within our schools.
- Improved outcomes for vulnerable families, through the innovative West Berkshire's Turnaround Families Programme (Troubled Families initiative). The programme has been successful, exceeding national expectations
- Introduced a new Care Quality (CQ1) procedure to allow anybody to report concerns about any adult social care service provider so that we can focus our support and scrutiny on providers perceived below required standards.

Updates

The key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same.

Refreshed Key Things We Plan to do by Priority for Improvement

Improve Educational Attainment

1. Continue to develop our work with schools to improve outcomes for all children and young people.
2. Invest £70m in our schools.
3. Implement the refreshed West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy for 2015-17
4. Increase safety, health and wellbeing support for children and young people in schools.
5. Ensure a good start for every child.
6. Increase the percentage of school rated "Good" or "Better" through developing outstanding leaders and governors in our schools

Close the Educational Attainment Gap

1. Our disadvantaged children will have better results and will be closer to the results of other children

Enable the Completion of More Affordable Housing

1. Pursue options to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing in the district.

Deliver or Enable Key Infrastructure Improvements

1. Invest £17m in our roads.
2. Seek to develop new partnerships with the private sector and local communities to enhance local infrastructure.
3. Keep our Community Infrastructure Levy policy under review.
4. Invest £5.2m in flood prevention schemes.
5. Support and develop Flood Forums.
6. Implement the Superfast Broadband Programme for Berkshire and West Berkshire.

Support Communities to do More to Help Themselves

1. Accelerate the delivery of local services for local communities by local communities.
2. Work with local communities to help people live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives and improve the health of the poorest fastest.
3. Work with communities to enhance existing and develop new volunteering activities
4. Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people.
5. Investigate self-service provision and alternative methods of working to support continuation of access to libraries
6. Ensure the continuation of opportunities to participate in leisure activities.
7. Develop opportunities to engage with West Berkshire heritage
8. Support local communities in developing community plans, delivering key local projects and progressing with their Neighbourhood Development Plans
9. Grow community conversations via Brilliant West Berkshire: Building Community Together partnership working
10. Further support youth employment and employee career development through apprenticeships and a graduate scheme

Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

1. Ensure that it is easy for local people to refer their safeguarding concerns to us.
2. Where services are independently inspected they are rated at least 'good' and peer reviews of safeguarding rated highly.
3. Work in partnership with health, education, Police and voluntary and community sector organisations to improve safeguarding.
4. Sustain recruitment of qualified and experienced social workers and improve their access to more advanced/recent research intelligence and training for further professional development
5. Implement an effective quality assurance programme for safeguarding services for children and young people
6. Continue to focus on improving our Children's Services, aiming to have the improvement notice withdrawn.
7. Continue to implement the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' approach by working with people to achieve their stated outcomes from the safeguarding process.
8. Improve our approach to 'hearing the voice of the child' within the services and in the way we make our decisions

Become an Even More Effective Council

1. Continue to deliver our core services to the agreed standard.
2. Retain and build on our strengths.
3. Reshape what we do and how we do it so that we can continue to live within our means.
4. Improve our partnership working especially with Health.
5. Develop a modern and flexible workforce where staff are recognised and valued.
6. Senior management will spend more time on strategic rather than operational issues.
7. Encourage more flexibility and innovation amongst our staff and foster ideas from the 'grass roots'.
8. Strengthen our leadership capability.
9. Get better at celebrating our successes and explaining our failures.
10. Make greater use of other appropriate information to help assess the cost and effectiveness of what we do.

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Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Name of policy, strategy or function:	Council Strategy 2015 - 2019
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	
Owner of item being assessed:	West Berkshire Council
Name of assessor:	Catalin Bogos
Date of assessment:	29/03/2016

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	No
Strategy	Yes	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Is changing	No
Service	No		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	The aim of the Strategy is to set out the aims and priorities for improvement that will be the focus of the council over the next four years. Aims: A. Better educated communities. B. A stronger local economy. C. Protect and support those who need it. D. Maintain a high quality of life within our communities. These aims are supported by the overarching approach to 'Become an even more effective council'.
Objectives:	The Council Strategy is the highest level plan produced to clarify the strategic direction of the council for medium term and to inform more detailed planning at service and individual level.
Outcomes:	The outcomes detailed in the strategy refer to improvements in the following areas: 1. Improve educational attainment.

	<p>2. Close the educational attainment gap.</p> <p>3. Enable the completion of more affordable housing.</p> <p>4. Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy.</p> <p>5. Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.</p> <p>6. Support communities to do more for themselves.</p>
Benefits:	<p>The primary beneficiaries are the residents in West Berkshire by being informed of the areas the council will focus on to improve the services they receive.</p> <p>Council officers and partner organisations will be able to detail their plans based on the strategic direction set by the Council Strategy.</p>

2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
All residents within West Berkshire	The expected effect is that areas that require the most improvement receive the necessary focus of activity and resources.	Council Strategy 2015-2019 Responses to the consultation on the Council Strategy 2015-2019.

Further Comments relating to the item:

There will be a positive benefit to certain protected groups such as the elderly, disabled, children particularly those from more challenging socio economic backgrounds.

The activities to deliver the strategy will be provided within the existing policy framework and will be provided by the individual service areas. The services will consider the measures and the impact of implementing the specific actions and conduct specific Equality Impact Assessments when required.

3. Result

Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?

No

Please provide an explanation for your answer:

Full Council has considered at their annual meeting on the 19th May 2015 the feedback received following public consultation on the aims and priorities for

improvement that are included/maintained into the updated Council Strategy 2016 – 2020.	
Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: No adverse impact is expected.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	no
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
Stage Two not required:	

Name: Catalin Bogos

Date: 29/03/2016

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.

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Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20

Committee considering report:	Council on 19 May 2016
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Roger Croft
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	6 May 2016
Report Author:	Melanie Ellis
Forward Plan Ref:	C2977

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a rolling three year strategy which is built to ensure that the financial resources, both revenue and capital, are available to deliver the Council Strategy. The MTFS should be read in conjunction with the Revenue Budget 2016/17, Capital Strategy 2016 to 2021 and Investment and Borrowing Strategy reports.
- 1.2 The aim of the MTFS is to:
- (1) Allocate our available resources focussing on those determined as most critical in supporting our priorities and statutory responsibilities
 - (2) Determine the level of service we will realistically be able to provide
 - (3) Ensure that capital investment is affordable
 - (4) Ensure that the Council has sufficient levels of reserves.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Council approves and adopts the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** The MTFS allocates £330 million of Council revenue resources over the next three years and allocates £33.7 million of Council capital resources over the next five years.
The revenue funding gap is forecast to reach £22.4m by 2019/20.
- 3.2 **Policy:** The MTFS is aligned directly to the Council Strategy 2016-2020 and the Capital Strategy 2016-2021.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** The Council's establishment is funded from the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme. Any reductions in budget could impact on personnel.

3.4 **Legal:**

3.5 **Risk Management:** The MTFS is designed to minimise the financial risks to the delivery of the Council Strategy by providing a clear picture of the resources available and allowing the Council to focus on its priorities.

3.6 **Property:** The proposed Capital Programme will provide for maintenance and improvements to a number of existing Council buildings. The level of funding available for the proposed programme is partly dependent on final decisions still to be made about the disposal of some Council land and buildings.

3.7 **Other:** None

4. Other options considered

4.1 None.

5. Executive Summary

- 5.1 Over the last seven years, West Berkshire Council has had to find revenue savings of over £50m, which has been achieved through finding efficiencies, staff reductions and transforming services.
- 5.2 The Chancellor delivered the Autumn Statement and Spending Review 2015 on 25 November 2015, covering the period up to 2019/20. It announced a 53% cut in Government Funding to local authorities from 2016/17 to 2019/20. The Spending Review included proposals for 100% retention of business rates by 2020, phasing out of the Revenue Support Grant, the opportunity to raise Council Tax by up to 2% over the existing threshold to cover adult social care costs, the continuation of the Public Health grant ring-fencing for a further two years, phasing out of local authority schools and New Homes Bonus reform.
- 5.3 The settlement figures for 2016/17 to 2019/20 were finalised on 8th February 2016, and the settlement for West Berkshire was much worse than expected. In 2016/17 we will receive 44% less in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) than in 2015/16, equating to a loss of £7.6m. This is the third largest cut to RSG of all Unitary Authorities in England. Although we had planned for RSG to be cut by 25% year on year, the cuts to RSG are being applied much faster than expected. By the end of this MTFs in 2019/20 we will no longer receive any RSG.
- 5.4 As part of the settlement, Government has assumed that local authorities will increase their Band D council tax by 1.75% per year (CPI forecast) throughout the period to 2019/20. Government has also assumed that all eligible local authorities will take up the adult social care 2% precept in each year to 2019/20. Government has therefore assumed that our income from council tax will rise by 3.75% each year, and has reduced our RSG grant funding accordingly.
- 5.5 In responding to the consultation on the settlement Government announced that a transitional grant will be made available to be paid in each of the first two years of the settlement. West Berkshire will receive additional transitional grant funding from central government of £1.39m in 2016/17 and £1.37m in 2017/18. It has been agreed that the transitional funding should be used in order to respond to the concerns of the residents of West Berkshire and that any funding allocated should be on the basis of that service transitioning to a new model of operation over the course of the next two years.
- 5.6 This MTFs is based on an assumption of no increases in Council Tax for the next three years. This assumption together with the forecast levels of funding available over the period of the MTFs, together with provision for any required budgetary increases means that the forecast funding gap is £22.4m between 2017/18 and 2019/20.
- 5.7 Capital funding is covered in detail in the Capital Strategy 2016 to 2021. The annual increase in the Council's revenue budget to accommodate borrowing to fund the Capital Programme is £500k per year from 2017/18. The level of Council funded programme is planned to average £10m in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to support investment in Superfast Broadband, ICT and to meet the pressure on primary school pupil numbers. From 2018/19 onwards, the ongoing level of new Council funded capital is expected to continue at approximately £6m per year.

- 5.8 As part of the budget setting process, the General Fund and Earmarked Reserves are reviewed in detail. The General Fund is at a low level and as such there is minimal planned use of reserves over the MTFS period. The use of reserves is a one off solution and must be used prudently to ensure it does not undermine longer term budget sustainability.
- 5.9 The Council Strategy acknowledges that the reduction in government funding means that a more radical reshaping of the Council is now required. This needs to be driven by a review of what the Council has and wishes to do itself and a consideration of what might be best done by others, or possibly not done at all.
- 5.10 It is important that the Council maximises the generation of income. The main income source is Council Tax, at over two thirds of our income. Our grant funding is now based on our ability to raise Council Tax and on the assumption that we raise by CPI (currently 1.75%) each year. Any reduction in income raised, will have a direct affect on the savings required and ultimately on the services the Council provides. With our assumptions around not raising Council Tax over the period of this MTFS, a further £22.4m of savings or other income will need to be generated between 2017/18 and 2019/20.
- 5.11 The Council will undertake to maximise all efficiencies from across its service areas. This work has been ongoing over the last seven years contributing almost half of the £50m savings taken out of our budgets so far. Services will continue to look for efficiencies and in order to do this, it is important that all comparative costs are understood. We will compare ourselves to other local authorities and look to learn from those who have a lower cost base. Income generating sources and fees and charges will be reviewed as part of our benchmarking work, comparing ourselves nationally and with similar authorities.
- 5.12 The Council will continue to review what it does and look at statutory provision. The Council has had to disinvest from many areas over the last few years and this will continue to be reviewed. Where disinvestment is the only option, the Council will aim to work with partners and other providers to minimise the impact.
- 5.13 Transformation programmes are in place across the Council and will continue to focus on identifying savings through continuing to deliver services differently.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Local Government has been one of the areas of the public sector that has seen the highest reductions in government spending, and it is clear this will continue for at least the next three years. In light of the ongoing funding reductions, the Council will continue to make changes to service delivery whilst remaining in line with the Council Strategy and local priorities.
- 6.2 The Council has ensured that despite the funding cuts it has a robust financial structure on which to base its long term decisions and to prioritise available resources. Budgets have been reviewed to ensure each service has the appropriate level of budget to deliver the service expected, and budgets will continue to be reviewed as part of the financial process. Capital investment will continue to ensure that core assets are maintained and protected. Reserves have been reviewed to ensure there are sufficient reserves for the Council to deliver services and take appropriate risks in amending service delivery models without impacting on the financial viability of the organisation.

- 6.3 The Council has a track record of strong financial management. Historically budgets have been delivered without significant over or under spends. The Council's ability to manage within significant financial challenge is vital to its continuing success in delivering the Council Strategy. The Council is in a very difficult place financially and is facing a savings or other income requirement over the medium term of £22.4m. This is being addressed by looking at a range of strategies including new ways of delivering services, working in partnerships, increasing our income and continuing to drive efficiencies in order to help preserve service provision.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A - Supporting Information
- 7.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 7.3 Appendix C – Medium Term Financial Plan – Assumptions

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Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20

– Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

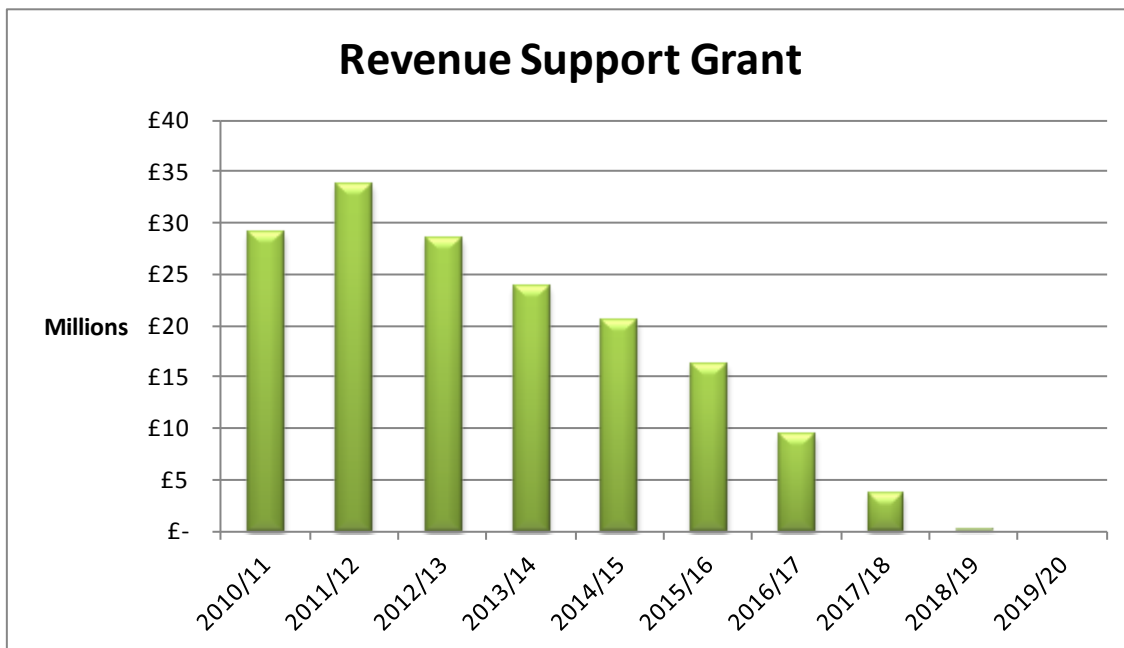
- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a rolling three year strategy which is built to ensure that the financial resources, both revenue and capital, are available to deliver the Council Strategy. The MTFS should be read in conjunction with the Revenue Budget 2016/17, Capital Strategy and Investment and Borrowing Strategy reports.
- 1.2 The aim of the MTFS is to:
- (1) Allocate our available resources focussing on those determined as most critical in supporting our priorities and statutory responsibilities
 - (2) Determine the level of service we will realistically be able to provide
 - (3) Ensure that capital investment is affordable
 - (4) Ensure that the Council has sufficient levels of reserves.
- 1.3 Over the last seven years, West Berkshire Council has had to find over £50m of revenue savings, which has been achieved through finding efficiencies, staff reductions and transforming services. This level of savings was required as a result of a number of factors:
- (1) Since 2010, Council funding from Central Government has significantly reduced as part of the deficit reduction programme.
 - (2) Since 2013/14, the Council has been exposed to the volatility of our local business rate generation. This represents both an opportunity to benefit from growth, but also a risk. Since the introduction of local business rate retention, growth has stagnated and a number of large appeals have reduced the Council's income.
 - (3) The Care Act 2014 came into force in April 2015, introducing the most significant changes to social care legislation for 60 years. Despite the Government stating they would meet the costs of the Care Act in full, the Council has been left to cover an annual funding gap of £3m.
 - (4) The Council's costs rise by about 2% each year to perform exactly the same functions with no new demands. There have also been new cost pressures such as increased demands on children's placements, social worker recruitment, demand for social care and demand for services such as waste management.
 - (5) Over two thirds of the Council's income comes from Council Tax, which has seen no increases in four out of the last six years.

2. Spending Review 2015

- 2.1 The Chancellor delivered the Autumn Statement and Spending Review 2015 on 25 November 2015. This covers the period up to 2019/20, and includes a 53% cut in Government Funding to local authorities from 2016/17 to 2019/20, which will see the local government budget fall from £11.5 billion to £5.4 billion by 2020. However, with more locally generated income from council tax and business rates, Government claims that by 2020 local government will be spending the same in cash terms as it does today.
- 2.2 The Spending Review included proposals for further major transformation of local government funding, confirming that the Government will move to the retention of 100% of business rates by 2020 and the phasing out of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). In return, additional responsibilities will be devolved to local authorities.
- 2.3 Local authorities have been given the opportunity to raise council tax by up to 2% above the existing threshold with funds ring-fenced to pay for adult social care. This could raise £2 billion a year nationally by 2019-20. The Government has restated its commitment to Dilnot reforms with funding in 2019-20 for councils to implement the changes. The cap on reasonable care costs and extension of means tested support will then be introduced and funded from April 2020. The Better Care Fund will continue, rising to an extra £1.5 billion by 2019-20, aiming to achieve full health and social care integration across the country by 2020. A plan will be in place by 2017.
- 2.4 Public Health investment will be cut but the ring-fence on spending will be maintained in 2016-17 and 2017-18. There will be consultation on funding this from business rates in future.
- 2.5 The Government aims to help every school become an academy to make local authority schools a thing of the past and save £660m Education Services Grant.
- 2.6 There will be a consultation on New Homes Bonus reform, including incentivising communities to support additional homes and reducing the length of payments from six years to four. The consultation will include a Government preferred option for savings of at least £800 million, which can be used for social care.
- 2.7 Councils will be encouraged to draw on reserves to pay for reforms.

3. Local Government Settlement 2016-17 and an offer to councils for future years

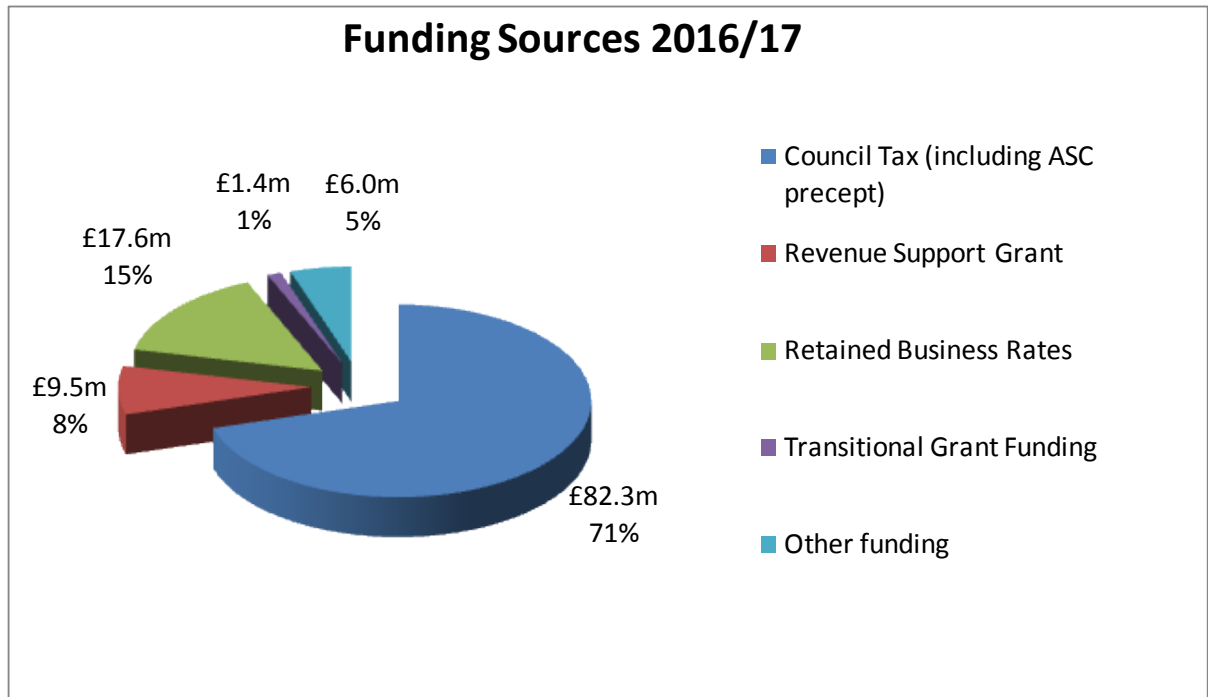
- 3.1 The final settlement figures were issued on 8th February 2016 and the settlement for West Berkshire was much worse than expected. In 2016/17 we will receive 44% less in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) than in 2015/16, equating to a loss of £7.6m. This is the third largest cut to RSG of all Unitary Authorities in England. Although we had planned for RSG to be cut by 25% year on year, the cuts to RSG are being applied much faster than expected.
- 3.2 By the end of this MTFs in 2019/20 we will no longer receive any RSG, and will also be charged an additional tariff on our business rates in order to meet the overall reductions to local government funding set in the Spending Review. The grant allocations are shown in the following chart.



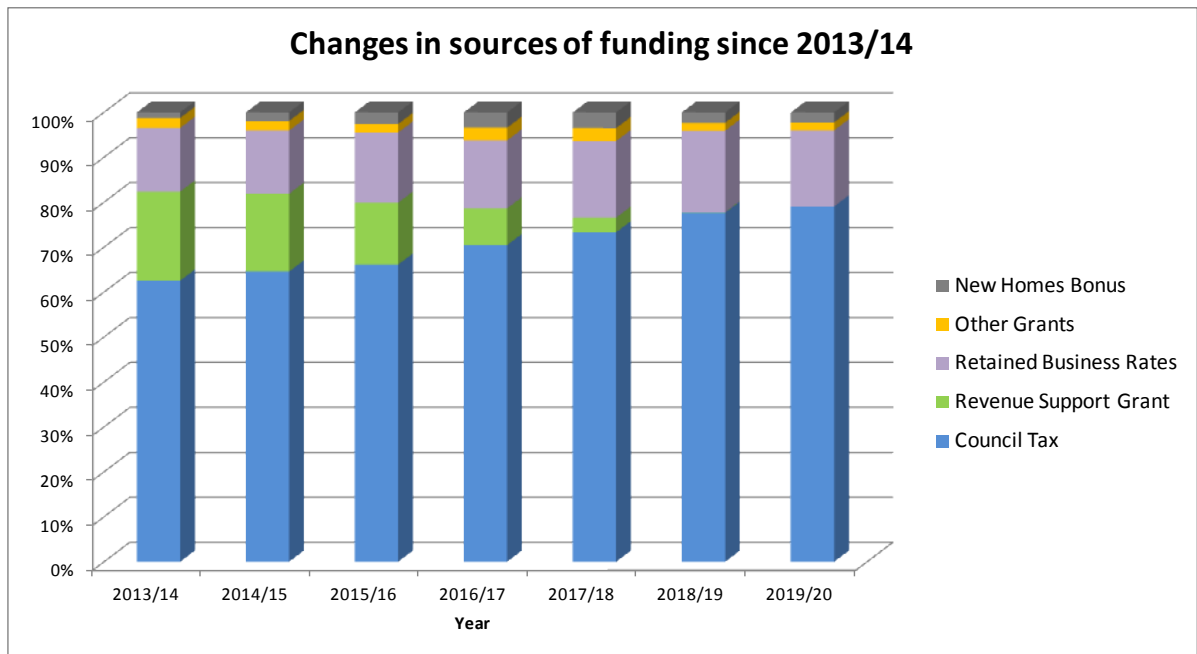
- 3.3 The government has introduced without warning, a new formula for distribution of council funding. West Berkshire loses from this formula because it is based on assumptions about our ability to raise Council Tax income. Government has assumed that local authorities will increase their Band D council tax by 1.75% per year (CPI forecast) throughout the period to 2019/20. Government has also assumed that all eligible local authorities will take up the adult social care 2% precept in each year to 2019/20. Government has therefore assumed that our income from council tax will rise by 3.75% each year, and has reduced our RSG grant funding accordingly.
- 3.4 Our Education Services Grant (ESG) has been cut as a result of the General Funding Rate for schools being reduced from £87 to £77 per pupil. This has cost us £180k in 2016/17. The Government is consulting on including the ESG as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant from 2017/18 which would see us lose this funding stream with schools choosing either to buy back the services from the local authority or to buy from private providers. By 2022 every school is expected to become an Academy.
- 3.5 The New Homes Bonus funding is below our previous expectations as a result of proposed reforms, and this is forecast to fall by £1.5m in 2018/19 and a further £100k in 2019/20.
- 3.6 As part of finalising the settlement, Government announced that a transitional grant will be made available to be paid in each of the first two years of the settlement. West Berkshire will receive additional transitional grant funding from central government of £1.39m in 2016/17 and £1.37m in 2017/18. It has been agreed that the transitional funding should be used in order to respond to the concerns of the residents of West Berkshire and that any funding allocated should be on the basis of that service transitioning to a new model of operation over the course of the next two years.

4. Revenue Funding

4.1 The 2016/17 Revenue Budget is funded from a number of sources as shown in the following chart:



4.2 The following chart shows the changes in the Council's funding between 2013/14 and our expected funding in 2019/20.



4.3 The green block is Revenue Support Grant which will be zero by 2019/20. This funding stream will have to be replaced by a combination of Council Tax and Retained Business Rates.

4.4 This MTFs is based on an assumption of no increases in Council Tax for the next three years. Income from Council Tax is expected to increase over the period as a

result of growth in the tax base. This increase is forecast to be 0.9% in 2016/17 and then 1.2% each year, or approximately 750 new Band D equivalent properties. The collection rate is based on our historic collection of 99.7%. Council Tax is our largest source of funding at 71% amounting to £82.3m in 2016/17.

- 4.5 The RSG will fall to zero over the period of this MTFS as per the four year settlement figures shown in the following table.

West Berkshire Council Revenue Support Grant	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
RSG	17.11	9.53	3.70	0.12	0
Percentage reduction		44%	61%	97%	100%

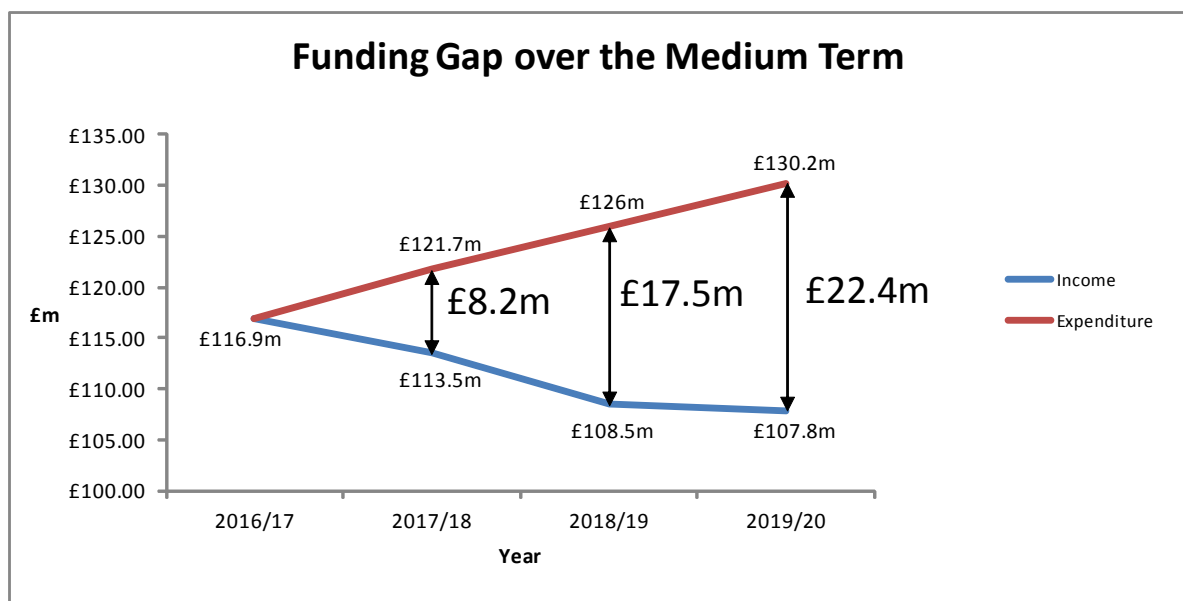
- 4.6 Retained Business Rates represents our share of the actual business rate collected in West Berkshire. The introduction of business rate retention meant that from April 2013 a significant part of our budget became dependent on the amount of business rates collected in West Berkshire. The business rate retention reform created a need for councils to receive new, previously uncollected, information to enable sufficiently robust financial planning, such as data about upcoming appeal decisions, the value of business rate income and the impact of business rate avoidance. Most of this information had previously been collected by the Valuation Office (VO) and provided to Central Government, as councils had no direct stake in business rate collection.
- 4.7 Currently councils have limited ability to counteract risk in relation to appeals and avoidance, and this is especially the case for councils dependent on a small number of large businesses. Whilst councils did not previously bear any risk from successful appeals, they are now liable for half of the cost, including any backdating liability, which in some cases may go back to 2005 or earlier. Appeals have had a significant impact on West Berkshire which has resulted in a loss of nearly £3m from back dated appeals and an ongoing loss of circa £850k per year.
- 4.8 The risks outlined above created a challenge to medium term financial planning with regards to growth forecasts and levels of appeals. The total Business Rates collection in West Berkshire for 2016/17 is forecast to be £87m, of which we retain £43m, after payments to Central Government known as the ‘central share’ (50%) and the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (1%). Out of this £43m we pay a tariff to Central Government of £23m and after levies and recovery of any deficit, West Berkshire Council is expected to retain £17.6m. The central share is used by Government to fund the needs-based Revenue Support Grant.
- 4.9 The Local Government Settlement announced the move to 100% retention of business rates by local authorities by 2019/20 but details are still unknown. It is expected that any increase in the proportion we retain will come with additional responsibilities.
- 4.10 Other non-ringfenced funding consists of New Homes Bonus grant, Education Services grant and other grants. These funding streams are forecast to fall from £5.9m in 2016/17 to £4.3m in 2019/20.
- 4.11 Department of Health funding via the Better Care Fund is to be spent locally on health and care with the aim of achieving closer integration and improve outcomes for patients and service users and carers. In 2016/17 the fund will be allocated to

local areas where it will be put into pooled budgets under Section 75 joint governance arrangements between CCGs and councils. A condition of accessing the money is that the CCGs and councils must jointly agree plans for how the money will be spent, and these plans must meet certain requirements. In addition to this the Department of Health is providing grants to meet some of the new burdens arising from the Care Act but this does not include the additional eligibility cost of £3m the Council is currently having to accommodate despite previous reassurances from the Department of Health that these additional costs would be funded and discussions on this matter are still continuing.

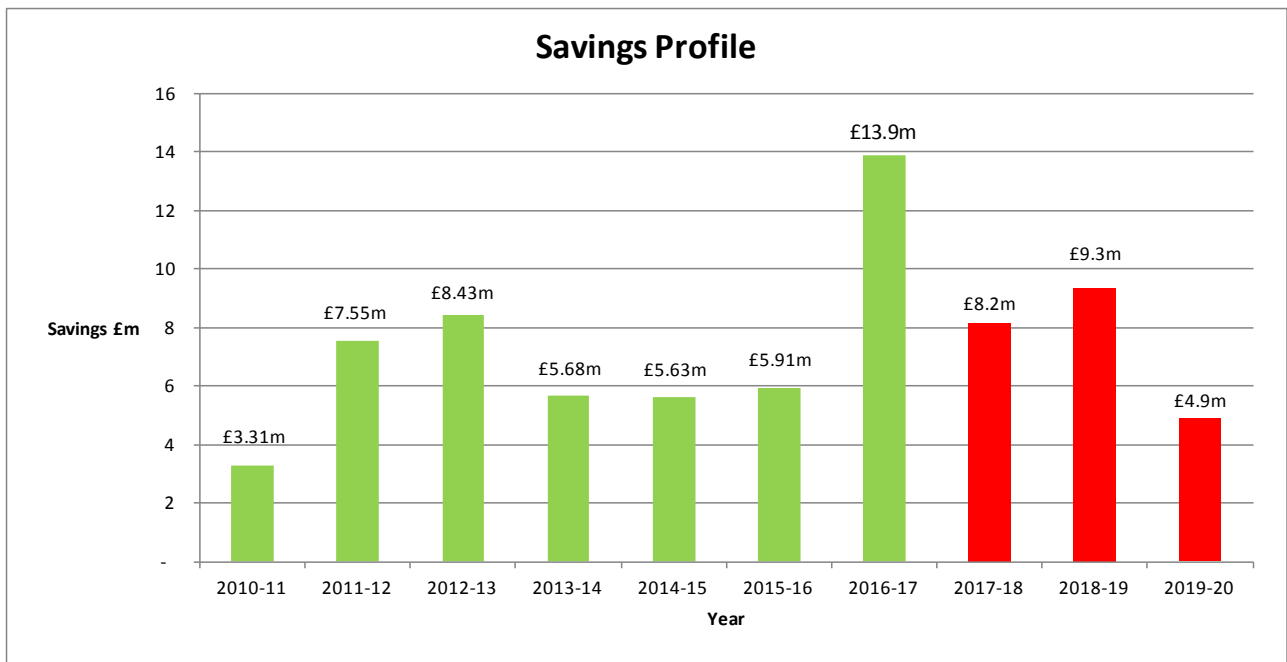
- 4.12 The Government has announced savings in public health spending averaging annual real terms savings of 3.9% over the next five years and that the grant is to remain ring-fenced for a further two years in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

5. Funding Gap

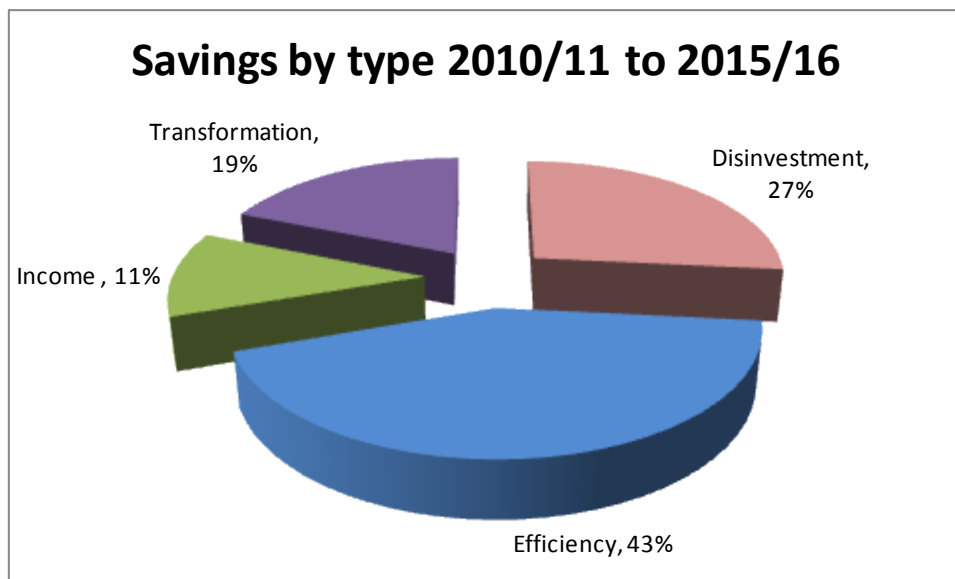
- 5.1 The forecast levels of funding available over the period of the MTFs, together with provision for any required budgetary increases means that the forecast funding gap is £22.4m between 2017/18 and 2019/20, excluding any transitional funding. The following chart shows how the funding gap would grow over the medium term if savings or other income were not identified.



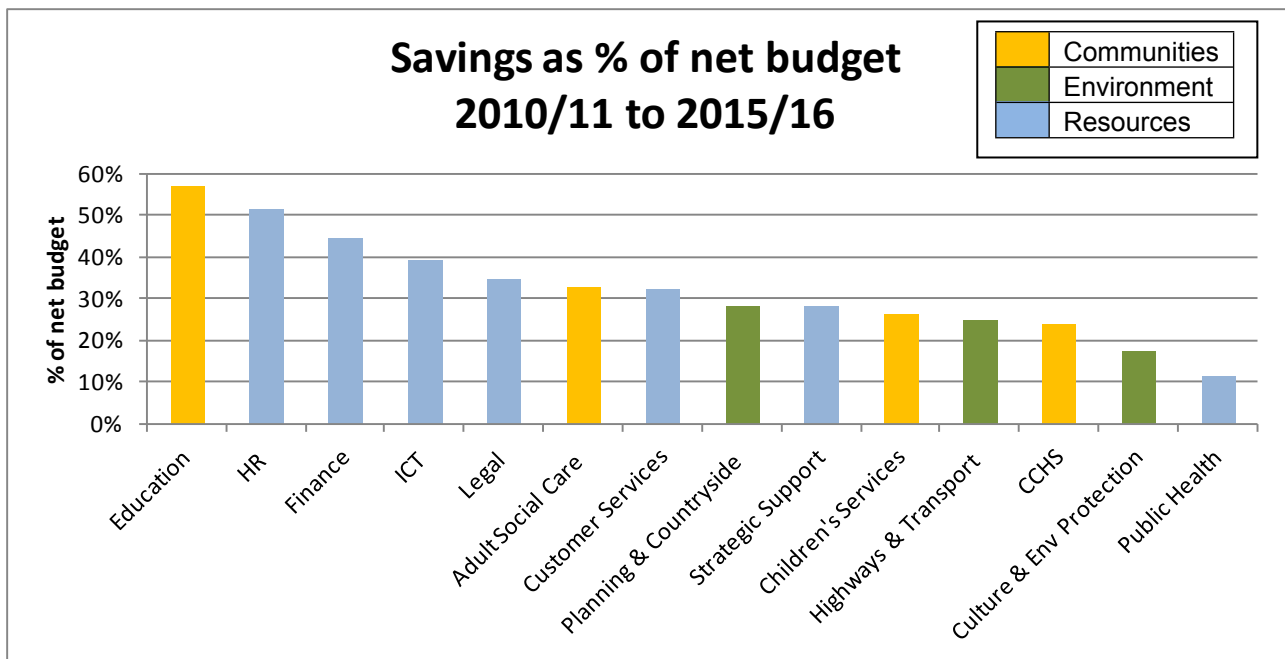
- 5.2 A savings programme is being developed that addresses the forecast funding gap over the medium term. The savings profile over the previous seven years and for the next three years is shown in the following chart:



5.3 Over the past few years, the savings programmes have focussed largely on becoming more efficient at what we do and reducing the Council’s administrative functions. The following graph shows the savings by type over the last six years.



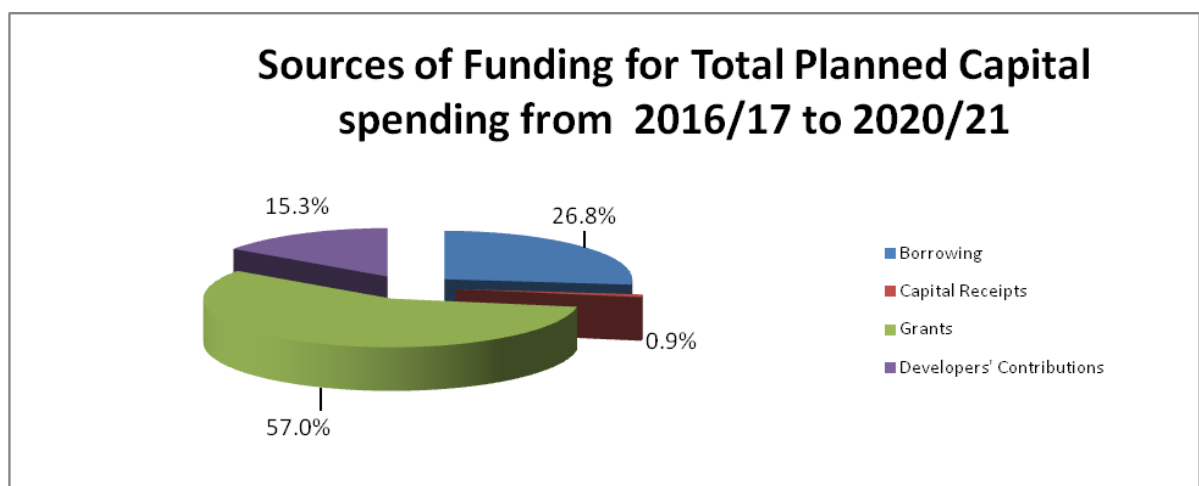
5.4 The services that this has impacted are shown in the chart below, as the percentage of savings made by service as compared to their net budget.



5.5 It is becoming increasingly difficult to continue to provide the wide range of Council services at the same level. The savings programme for 2016/17 is guided by the Council Strategy and priorities and the Manifesto commitments, and the Council has aimed to protect those priority areas where it can. Whilst efficiencies are still a priority, they are not enough to cover the savings requirements. The Council is therefore looking at new ways of delivering services, working in partnerships, increasing our income, value for money using benchmarking, a more commercial approach, better contracts and procurement and seeking contributions from other organisations, in order to help preserve service provision.

6. Capital Programme

6.1 Capital funding is covered in detail in the Capital Strategy 2016 to 2021. The size of the Capital Programme is determined by the amount which the Council can afford to borrow together with other sources of capital funding including capital receipts, government grants and developers' contributions. A breakdown of the expected sources of funding for the Capital Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 is shown in the following chart:



- 6.2 An increase of £450k has been built into the Council’s revenue budget for 2016/17 to accommodate borrowing to fund the Capital Programme. Annual increases of £500k per year will be required from 2017/18 onwards. The estimated cost of borrowing is based on the assumption that the Bank of England base rate will increase by 0.5% each year from 2016/17 to 2019/20.
- 6.3 The level of the Council funded programme is planned to average £10m in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to support investment in Superfast Broadband, Council ICT and to help meet the pressure on primary school pupil numbers. From 2018/19 onwards the ongoing level of new Council funded capital is expected to continue at approximately £6m per year.

7. Reserves

- 7.1 The main reserve that the Council holds is the General Fund which is comprised of the ‘General Fund’ and the ‘Medium Term Financial Volatility Reserve’ (MTFVR). In addition, Earmarked Reserves are held for future restructuring costs and specific future liabilities.
- 7.2 As part of the budget setting process, the General Fund and Earmarked Reserves are reviewed in detail. The General Fund is at a low level as a result of supporting the revenue budget in 2015/16. As such there is minimal planned use of reserves over the MTFS period. However, due to the financial pressures the Council is under, there are also no resources available to replenish the reserves to a more prudent level. The use of reserves is a one off solution and must be used prudently to ensure it does not undermine longer term budget sustainability. Estimated usable reserves are shown in the following table:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Usable Reserves estimate at year end	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Funds:			
General Fund	6,438	5,470	5,470
Medium Term Financial Volatility Reserve	1,530	1,031	1,031
Total General Fund	7,968	6,501	6,501
Earmarked Reserves	12,036	10,149	8,428
Total Revenue Reserves	20,004	16,650	14,929

8. Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 8.1 The Council’s three year MTFS aims to ensure that our available resources are aligned with the vision, aims and priorities identified in the Council Strategy 2016 to 2020. The Council Strategy acknowledges that the reduction in government funding means that a more radical reshaping of the Council is now required. This needs to be driven by a review of what the Council has and wishes to do itself and a consideration of what might be best done by others, or possibly not done at all.
- 8.2 It is important that the Council maximises the generation of income. The main income source is Council Tax, at over two thirds of our income. Our grant funding is now based on our ability to raise Council Tax and on the Government assumption that we raise by CPI (currently 1.75%) each year. Any reduction in income raised, will have a direct affect on the savings required and ultimately on the services the Council provides. With our

assumptions around not raising Council Tax over the period of this MTFS, a further £22.4m of savings or other income will need to be generated between 2017/18 and 2019/20.

- 8.3 The Council will undertake to maximise all efficiencies from across its service areas. This work has been ongoing over the last seven years contributing almost half of the £50m savings taken out of our budgets so far. Services will continue to look for efficiencies and in order to do this, it is important that all comparative costs are understood. We will compare ourselves to other local authorities and look to learn from those who have a lower cost base. Income generating sources and fees and charges will be reviewed as part of our benchmarking work, comparing ourselves nationally and with similar authorities.
- 8.4 The Council will continue to review what it does and look at statutory provision. The Council has had to disinvest from many areas over the last few years and this will continue to be reviewed. Where disinvestment is the only option, the Council will aim to work with partners and other providers to minimise the impact.
- 8.5 Transformation programmes are in place across the Council and will continue to focus on identifying savings through continuing to deliver services differently. In line with the Care Act (2014) the Council's Adult Social Care service is completing a major programme of change that will allow a greater a focus on prevention and early intervention. By working with people earlier we know that we can enable them to live independently for longer, delivering more innovative, person centred outcomes and reduce reliance on long term services.

9. Supporting Information

- 9.1 The three year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is shown in the following table, with further explanation behind each item in Appendix C.

2016/17	Line ref	Medium Term Financial Plan	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
£m			£m	£m	£m
82.28	1	Council Tax income	83.27	84.27	85.28
9.53	2a	Revenue Support Grant	3.70	0.12	0.00
1.39	2b	Transitional Grant Funding	1.37	0.00	0.00
0.07	2c	Other Non-Ringfenced Grants	0.06	0.05	0.04
87.41	3a	<i>Business Rates Collected</i>	89.16	90.94	92.76
-69.76	3b	<i>Business Rates sent to Central Government</i>	-69.82	-71.25	-74.48
17.65	3c	Retained Business Rates	19.34	19.69	18.28
1.84	4	Education Services Grant (ESG)	1.84	1.84	1.84
3.95	5	New Homes Bonus	3.95	2.50	2.40
-1.01	6	Council Tax Collection Fund deficit (-)/ surplus	0.00	0.00	0.00
1.17	7	Use of Capital Receipt	0.00	0.00	0.00
116.88	8	Funds available	113.54	108.47	107.84
111.93	9a	Opening Directorate Budget	107.72	103.93	98.36
0.00	9b	Opening budget adjustments	-0.76	0.00	0.00
2.30	10	Base budget growth	1.37	1.37	1.37
0.38	11	Contract inflation	0.90	0.90	0.90
3.89	12	Unavoidable service pressures	1.50	1.50	1.50
1.74	13	Other risks	0.00	0.00	0.00
-13.90	14	Requirement for savings or other income	-8.17	-9.34	-4.90
1.39	15	Transitional funding	1.37	0.00	0.00
107.72	16	Directorate budget requirement	103.93	98.36	97.23
9.10	17	Levies & capital financing costs	9.60	10.10	10.60
0.00	18	Use of reserves	0.00	0.00	0.00
0.05	19	CTSS support for Parishes	0.00	0.00	0.00
116.88	20	Budget requirement	113.54	108.47	107.84

10. Proposals

10.1 To approve the MTFS, subject to final changes.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Local Government has been one of the areas of the public sector that has seen the highest reductions in government spending, and it is clear this will continue for at least the next three years. In light of the ongoing funding reductions, the Council will continue to make changes to service delivery whilst remaining in line with the Council Strategy and local priorities.

11.2 The Council has ensured that despite the funding cuts it has a robust financial structure on which to base its long term decisions and to prioritise available resources. Budgets have been reviewed to ensure each service has the appropriate level of budget to deliver the service expected, and budgets will continue to be reviewed as part of the financial process. Capital investment will continue to ensure that core assets are maintained and protected. Reserves have been reviewed to ensure there are sufficient reserves for the Council to deliver services and take appropriate risks in amending service delivery models without impacting on the financial viability of the organisation.

11.3 The Council has a track record of strong financial management. Historically budgets have been delivered without significant over or under spends. The Council's ability to manage within significant financial challenge is vital to its continuing success in

delivering the Council Strategy. The Council is in a very difficult place financially and is facing a further savings or other income requirement over the medium term of £22.4m. This is being addressed by looking at a range of strategies including new ways of delivering services, working in partnerships, increasing our income and continuing to drive efficiencies, in order to help preserve service provision.

12. Consultation and Engagement

12.1 Consultation will take place where appropriate on the individual savings proposals for future years.

Background Papers:

Capital Strategy 2016-2021, Council Strategy 2015-2019, Investment and Borrowing Strategy, Revenue Budget 2016/17.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Wards affected:

All

Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim:

MEC – Become an even more effective Council

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priorities:

SLE2 – Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy

MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council

Officer details:

Name: Andy Walker
Job Title: Head of Finance
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Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Name of policy, strategy or function:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	13.11.15
Owner of item being assessed:	Andy Walker
Name of assessor:	Andy Walker
Date of assessment:	12.11.15

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	Yes
Strategy	Yes	Already exists and is being reviewed	No
Function	No	Is changing	No
Service	No		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To ensure the Council has a financial strategy for the next three years
Objectives:	
Outcomes:	
Benefits:	

2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this. (Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group	What might be the effect?	Information to support this

Affected		
Further Comments relating to the item:		

3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
Stage Two not required:	Not required

Name: Andy Walker

Date:12.11.15

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.

Appendix C

Medium Term Financial Plan – Assumptions

1) Council Tax

The MTFs assumes a Council Tax freeze for each year of the three year period. Taxbase growth assumptions are 0.9% in 2016/17 and 1.2% per annum for the remaining years of the MTFs.

2) a) Revenue Support Grant (RSG) figures have been received for a four year settlement.

b) Transitional grant funding has been awarded in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

c) Other Non-Ringfenced Grants are expected to be received during the financial year and will be used to support the Council budget.

3) Retained Business Rates

The performance of the national and local economy in maintaining and growing the number and size of businesses in the local area will be important. For 2017/18 onwards, any increases have been assumed to be in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI).

4) Education Services Grant (ESG)

This figure represents a Government Grant in respect of Local Education Authority (LEA) support service functions to schools.

5) New Homes Bonus

This is monies received from Central Government (equivalent to the Council Tax received on a band D property) for every net new additional property in the district. The Government created this scheme to incentivise planning authorities to help promote new properties being built.

6) Council Tax Collection Fund

This is the surplus or deficit from the previous year's Collection Fund. The Collection Fund is a ring-fenced account for Council Tax collected. Any variation compared to the expected Council Tax collected is pass-ported into the next financial year.

7) Use of Capital Receipt

As part of the Local Government Spending Review, the Government has provided councils with the flexibility to use capital receipts to fund transformation and restructuring of services in order to achieve efficiencies and revenue cost savings.

8) Funds Available

The total non-ringfenced funds available for setting the Council's budget.

9) Opening Directorate Budget

This is the opening budget before new costs are built in and savings taken out.

10) Base Budget Growth

This is the adjustments to the Council's core costs; primarily pay inflation 1% and incremental pay awards (approx £510k pa). Pension provision is assumed to increase by 0.7% per annum from 2017/18 in order to fund the actuarial valuation.

11) Contract Inflation

This line represents all inflation on Council contracts that are inflation linked.

12) Unavoidable service pressures

Any additional investments required for new costs; for example due to additional demand in social care.

13) Other Risks

The Council is facing a number of risk items that will arise but cannot yet be quantified including introduction of the National Living Wage (2016/17), part year impact of delays to implementing savings, recruitment delay of permanent social workers and increased demand for services.

14) Requirement for savings or other income

This is the total savings or additional income that will have to be found in order to ensure a balanced budget.

15) Transitional funding

This has been made available by Government as part of the Local Government Settlement. It is available for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

16) Directorate Budget Requirement

The closing base budget for the Directorates.

17) Levies and capital financing costs

Budget for payments to the Environment Agency, Magistrates courts, interest paid and received on Treasury Management (Investment) activity and, primarily, the revenue costs of paying for long term capital borrowing to fund the Council's Capital Programme.

18) Use of reserves

This is any planned use of reserves to support the revenue budget.

19) CTSS support for Parishes

This is reducing transitional funding to assist Parish Councils in dealing with the impact of the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) on their local precepts.

20) Budget requirement

The total budget for the year.

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“Getting to Good”: A model for improving service delivery and building sustainable service development within Children's Social Care frontline Teams

Committee considering report:	Council on 19 May 2016
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	5 March 2016
Report Author:	Dr Mac Heath, Head of Children & Family Services
Forward Plan Ref:	C3116

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report serves to inform on the progress of the Children and Family Services since their Ofsted Inspection of March 2015 and sets out a framework to build a 'Good' and sustainable frontline Children's Social Care Service.
- 1.2 It references the core activities of decision-making and management oversight and sets out the principles for an improved work plan and capacity to deliver further service improvement with the aim of achieving a 'Good' Ofsted Inspection rating.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The report recommends the infrastructure for the Children's Social Care frontline services and recommends the establishment of a Looked After Children's Team and builds capacity for a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It identifies the workload pressures and provides information on the preferred approach to building a strong Children's Social Care Service.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** 1) The financial commitment invested into Children and Family Services is sufficient to achieve the structure outlined in this paper. There are no additional financial investments requested.
- 3.2 **Policy:** None.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** 1) There has been a review of the children's social care operating model benchmarked against national, statistical neighbour and demand data. Internal performance management and quality assurance processes have been put in place and are demonstrating increased change implementation.
2) Staffing challenges including the use of significant agency capacity do continue, albeit at a reduced rate. However,

permanent staff can be under pressure to absorb unrealistic workloads within the current frontline teams infrastructure which impacts on the stability of the workforce and the quality of the work undertaken.

- 3) There has been no consistent model applied to the frontline teams’ resourcing. The requirement of the learning and development of strategic oversight, effective case management, children’s commissioning and sufficient frontline management capacity have all been necessary to address this.
- 4) Following a review of the current infrastructure and delivery capacity this report recommends the need to confirm staffing levels across the frontline social work teams, including the Contact, Assessment and Advice Service, Locality Teams and the Disabled Children’s Team. It includes the need to secure appropriate capacity in the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service and to establish the Principal Social Worker role.
- 5) The posts required to secure the appropriate staffing levels into the current establishment include:

TEAM	ROLE	Total cost	Total Budget
Contact Advice & Assessment	1 ATM	£46,110	£46,110
	4 SW	£38,020	£152,080
	0.5 BSO	£25,360	£12,680
Looked After Children’s Team	1 TM	£56,030	£56,030
	3 SW	£38,020	£114,060
Children & Families	1 PSW	£64,810	£64,810
Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service	1 IRO	£57,420	£57,420
Disabled Children’s Team	1 SW	£38,020	£38,020
Training & Development			£10,000
Total	12.5fte		£ 551,210

- 6) All of these positions are currently covered by agency arrangements, except for the 0.5 Business Support Officer which is required for the development of a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub.

3.4 **Legal:** None

3.5 **Risk Management:** 1) The improvement work undertaken over the last six months has allowed for a more confident forecasting of activity and allowed more informed projections to be made in relation to referral rates and caseload levels, but, as remains for all Children’s Services, the volatility of demand, levels of risks and the impact vulnerability of any changes in legislation, policy or wider

influences continue to offer challenges when projecting service needs.

- 2) This paper sets out a structure that assists in mitigating issues of risk with more manageable workloads and clearer management accountability.

3.6 Property:

- 1) It will continue to be important to ensure the social care frontline teams are within working environments appropriate to the nature of their work. Over the next year it is likely that a minimum level of internal modification will be required to incorporate the delivery of a MASH in order to co-locate police colleagues within a secure room, but this should not significantly impact on property or financial commitments.

3.7 Other:

- 1) The recommendations outlined build on the Improvement work undertaken over the last six months with the DFE Improvement Advisers and Ofsted, with the aim to secure a ‘Good’ Ofsted Judgement for West Berkshire Children’s Services.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 “Good” Local Authorities (as evidenced in their Ofsted reports, national data sets and presentations) share the following key factors: reasonable caseloads, realistic levels of management capacity and oversight, permanent social worker workforce with the skill set required to deliver “Good”, a secure decision making infrastructure, Quality Assurance and a commissioning infrastructure to oversee service development and business application to placements when required. In addition, partnership working is secure and the threshold pathway from early help to statutory social work intervention is clearly understood by all.

It is therefore proposed that the model outlined is necessary for West Berkshire to continue to deliver Children’s Services within the authority and show the necessary improvements for the children, young people and families with whom they work.

5. Executive Summary

5.1 The core activities of decision-making and management oversight are fundamental to ensuring safe social care practice within our frontline Children’s Social Care Teams. It was evident from our Ofsted Inspection and subsequent ‘Inadequate’ rating there was insufficient capacity within the workforce to meet workload volumes. While this has been addressed this paper seeks the endorsement to the changes required and proposes a service that puts West Berks in a position to build a ‘Good’ Children’s Services and address issues raised in the Ofsted Inspection undertaken in 2015.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Good quality Children and Families social work is not yet consistently secured or sustainable to fully address challenges within the current infrastructure. This proposed approach will ensure a sufficiency and stability to address this and put the service in an improved position to deliver ‘Good’ Children’s Services.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A - Supporting Information

7.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

“Getting to Good”: A model for improving service delivery and building sustainable service development within Children's Social Care frontline Teams – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 West Berkshire Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in March 2015. Although some examples of good practice were found, they remained concerned about drift and delay in a number of cases, particularly within the frontline social work teams. They identified the teams of concern as the Contact, Advice and Assessment Service and the two Localities Teams. The service was clear that it had significant challenges to improve timeliness and quality of social work practice and reduce drift and delay in care planning.
- 1.2 Since the Inspection the service has been progressing a development and improvement path, specifically to address those issues highlighted by Ofsted as inadequate or requiring improvement, and to deliver the Council's agreed priority of securing "Good" Children's Services in the future. Delivering the required standard of children and family social work expected within statutory, legislative and national frameworks requires a level of resourcing, infrastructure and governance that enables effective responses and secures good outcomes for children and young people, set within the principles of best value and public accountability. It has been increasingly clear through the improvement journey of the last six months that the service needs to continue to prioritise social work practice and standards and ensure appropriate resources and financial management to address concerns.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 The Ofsted Framework outlines the following judgement criteria for a 'Good' judgement to be secured.

"In a 'Good' local authority:

- Children and young people are protected, the risks to them are identified and managed through timely decisions and the help provided reduces the risk of, or actual harm to them.
- Children and young people looked after, those returning home and those moving to or living in permanent placements outside of their immediate birth family have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.¹ Children and young people are helped to live in permanent homes or families without unnecessary delay. The development of safe, stable and secure relationships with adults is central to planning for their futures and this supports the development of secure attachments that persist over time and wherever they are living.

¹ Children Act 1989, section 17; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17.

- Young people leaving care or who have left care receive help and support tailored to their individual needs and comparable with that which their peers would receive from a reasonable parent. They are provided with opportunities, support and help to enable them to move successfully to adulthood.
- Leadership, management and governance arrangements deliver strong, strategic local leadership that measurably improves outcomes for vulnerable children. The local authority works with partners to plan and deliver early help, to protect children and young people, to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged and it acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care.
- There is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services and there are sufficient resources to meet the needs of children and young people in the local authority area. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is consistently effective as both the lead agency for the protection and care of children and as a corporate parent."

2.2 The Children and Families frontline social work teams have not been able to deliver a service that consistently meets the criteria for ‘Good’. In addition to capacity issues, opportunities to work in partnership with other services around the most vulnerable children and families have been under developed and engagement with the Brilliant West Berkshire programme for Building Community Cohesion is yet to fully realise its potential.

2.3 The frontline social work teams have struggled in achieving consistency in timely interventions that are proportionate to the presenting needs. This can result in drift, delay in the work as they endeavour to respond to the most risky situations as a priority, and although significant progress has been made in these areas this is not yet robust enough to consistently meet the required standard. Further, the current deployment of the frontline teams does not always allow for reasonable caseloads.

2.4 To deliver a ‘Good’ service, all of the above has to be underpinned by a realistic and appropriate level of resourcing in the frontline operational teams, inclusive of qualified social workers and Team Managers. This is required to ensure that all cases have an allocated worker with the appropriate level of experience and skills that can respond timely and effectively to presenting risks and needs. Managers must have capacity to deliver reflective supervision, timely and robust managerial oversight and Service Managers must support the oversight, throughput and increasing sustainability of the Service.

2.5 In addition the service requires an infrastructure that:

- Provides robust governance
- Provides professional challenge
- Enables the service and individual's professional development
- Creates a learning culture

- Has a robust recruitment and retention strategy
- Has a secure quality assurance framework that can demonstrate a positive impact on practice and outcomes
- Demonstrates the achievement of good outcomes

2.6 ‘Good organisations take account of the recommendations made by The Social Work Reform Board Health Check that promoted five key areas which should underpin all healthy children’s services organisations. Each of these five areas makes a significant contribution to the development and delivery of good services which in turn links to staff morale, recruitment and retention.

2.7 The five areas within the framework are:

- Effective Workload Management (managing workloads and vacancies)
- Proactive Workflow Management (strong processes and effective tracking of cases)
- Right Tools (including IT, mobile working, access to research)
- Healthy Workplace (frequent and high quality supervision, accessibility of managers)
- Effective Service Delivery (effective feedback mechanisms)

2.8 These key factors should continue to be subject to review and reported on for Children and Family Services to secure a view from the workforce and quickly identify challenges and blockers that may prevent service development.

2.9 The custodian of this activity is usually the role of the Principal Social Worker as recommended by Eileen Munro. This role advocates the workforce’s view to managers as well as challenging the workforce about practice, performance and quality standards.

2.10 Underlying these core requirements should be a clear governance infrastructure supported through Strategy, Policy and Procedures that reflect statutory and legislative requirements underpinning social work practice in particular. Investment has recently been agreed for Tri.X (an online child protection policies and procedures) which will significantly contribute to this.

2.11 Social workers in “Good” Local Authorities are clear about the model of intervention they are applying and it is consistent. They have access to an early help offer and a range of direct services that are supported and managed through commissioning activity that secures cost effectiveness and best value principles when sourcing support for the most vulnerable children and young people in the community.

2.12 “Good” Local Authorities can respond to change effectively and quickly and enable children, young people and their families to help themselves, help each other and receive help when there is no other option. They do this through tangible interventions that make a difference in people’s lives, reducing risk and meeting need at the right time from the right resource.

- 2.13 “Good” Local Authorities also demonstrate effective partnerships that work collaboratively without silos.
- 2.14 West Berkshire's Children and Family Services have an opportunity to embrace this review and secure a service development plan that links to the Council's Prevention and Developing Community Resilience approach, alongside the existing well recognised and robustly applied, local threshold into children's social care.
- 2.15 There should be a transparent journey of the child from early help to statutory intervention, where necessary, that can be described and understood by all partners, children, young people and their families. This should allow travel in both directions along this pathway as the intention should always be to maintain the lightest touch intervention consistent with protecting children and supporting families.
- 2.16 The building of the post-Ofsted Service Development Plan will help secure the actions required to meet the Council's priority of a children's service judged to be “Good” by Ofsted and to be financially sound.

3. Current Service Provision

- 3.1 The current workload model in children’s social care statutory teams is delivered by the:
- Contact, Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS)
 - Localities Teams, West Central and East
 - Leaving Care Team (LCT)
 - Disabled Children’s Team (DCT) (located within the Education Service)
 - The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service (QAAS), (located within the Prevention and Developing Community Resilience Service) is a core Social Care Service with a scrutiny function, particularly for child protection and looked after children cases.
- 3.2 The teams are responsible for all new referrals and children, young people and their families requiring a social work intervention. They are overseeing children and young people, either assessing their circumstances, providing a child in need package, a child protection intervention and /or a Looked After intervention including securing permanence and adoption.
- 3.3 CAAS have responded to 2084 enquiries (ytd – Jan 2016). This is all information sent in to the “front door” requiring oversight by a social work practitioner to decide if there is a requirement for a social work intervention at that time, or if another intervention is appropriate, e.g. giving professional advice to partners, families and friends.
- Of these contacts, approximately 20% would be expected to be progressed through to a referral to children’s social care.
 - To date, 1129 referrals have been subject to a full children’s social work single assessment. This high number of Single Assessments has been due to the

additional number of assessments requiring completion to move us from our position of inadequate. Single Assessments should usually be completed within 45 working days (though there are always some exceptions).

- The number of open cases within the CAAS at any one time does fluctuate but the average is 235.
- The average number of caseloads in the Locality Teams, including children in need, child protection, looked after and court proceedings has been as high as 25 cases per qualified worker.
- The average caseload in the Leaving Care Team stands at approximately 24 cases per worker.

3.4 Frontline social work is also undertaken within the Disabled Children’s Team. This includes assessment, child in need, child protection and looked after children. Their caseload has reached an average of 21 open children at any one time. Whilst Ofsted noted good practice within this team, their specialism is crucially linked to the Special Educational Needs reforms and their social work capacity and resources should be considered alongside the other core teams given the practice and services they are delivering.

4. Current Teams Operational work

4.1 The Contact, Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS) has responsibility for;

- All new contacts
- All new referrals,
- All new single assessments
- Child protection enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989
- Complex Strategy meetings
- Development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: a partnership “front door” where colleagues collaborate and make decisions together about the best approach to assist or intervene. This is a Thames Valley Police priority and is being rolled out across Berkshire alongside national policy.
- 16/17 year old “Southwark judgement” assessments where young people are presenting as homeless in the first instance and the onus is upon the Local Authority to accommodate as a Looked After Child if family and friends options are exhausted.
- Initial intervention with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in line with our statutory duties to assess their status and make plans for securing the most appropriate interventions.
- Assessing the circumstances of “No Recourse to Public Funds” presenting families, where there are children within the family who may be deemed in need or in need of protection.

- Managing the step up / step down process from services and teams working alongside children, young people and their families.
- Receiving step up cases from early intervention and prevention services.
- Currently the Help For Families Team (an early intervention service) sits alongside CAAS and requires line management and oversight
- All of this statutory activity has expected timescales ranging from 24 hours to six months which require managerial oversight and ongoing decision making.
- An average of 31 Single Assessments are allocated in any one week, including immediate response to child protection enquiries and complex presenting needs.

4.2 Caseloads include many of the activities noted above all with competing timescales and demands ranging from one hour to six months dependent upon the statutory duties, urgency and levels of risk and need presented. Child protection matters require a same day response and often have to result in meetings with police and visits to families, children and partner agencies on the same day to secure a safe plan whilst assessments are undertaken.

4.3 If a child becomes looked after as a result of significant harm, often their placement requires identification the same day and workers have to establish their medical and emotional needs very quickly. Placement searches impact on workers’ time and transporting children and young people to placements is also undertaken by the workers in the team.

4.4 Court appearances are often required and some meetings have competing demands including child protection conferences, reviews and multi agency information sharing forums to gather assessment input.

4.5 We know the cases in CAAS meet our thresholds appropriately, as assessed by the recent DfE Advisors, and are usually requiring a response to mitigate risk and ensure children and young people’s safety. They are often complex and demanding matters that demand a high level of focus, timeliness and skills to ensure children and young people’s situations are secured.

4.6 The current core capacity of the team does not enable throughput to be consistently and effectively managed, monitored or challenged and over the last three months this has only been achieved through posts in excess of the establishment being utilised.

4.7 To date, social workers have struggled to complete these assessments in a timely manner that enables quality, as they have no respite from the daily duty requirements of the service. Work is frequently demand-led and cannot always be predicted. It is therefore crucial that social workers in this team have capacity to complete the assessments allocated to them. This is usually achieved through a rota when workers can have at least one working week in between duty turnaround.

4.8 All decisions made within this service are required to have management oversight and an Ofsted expectation is that a manager signs them all off as approved or otherwise. These decisions are required initially on the day the information is

received and subsequently at key points dependent upon presenting circumstances and the statutory requirement set for that activity.

4.9 The current core management capacity is not fully sufficient to reasonably expect timeliness and consistency across the team and again has required agency staff above the level of the establishment to address this.

4.10 The front door of the service is crucial to act as a robust gatekeeper applying a consistent approach to thresholds, stepping cases down to early help, responding in a timely way to avoid escalation into localities teams and looked after children’s status.

5. The main transfer points for the CAAS are:

- First child in need meeting on completion of the Single Assessment
- First core group post Initial Child Protection Conference.
- First hearing post initiation of care proceedings.
- First Looked after Children’s Review in Section 20 arrangements.
- Step down to Help for Families Team

5.1 If the cases require a continuing social work service they are transferred into the Disabled Children’s Team and Localities Teams.

6. There are currently two Localities Teams whose core workload includes:

- Children in Need plans and meetings.
- Updated Single Assessments.
- Private Fostering Assessments.
- Receiving in Child Protection Conferences from out of area.
- Section 37 Court Welfare reports which are commissioned by the Court when they require assessment of a child or young person’s circumstances as a result of concerns about potential risk of harm being raised through private law proceedings.
- Children subject to child protection plans.
- Strategy Meetings if an open case escalates to child protection.
- Initial Child Protection Conferences.
- Review Child Protection Conferences.
- Core Groups
- Legal Planning Meetings.

- Instigating Care Proceedings.
- Managing Police Protection and emergency protection orders when required.
- Managing Care Proceedings to their conclusion.
- Initial Assessments for siblings of children already open to the FST service.
- Permanence planning including adoption.
- Viability Assessments and Regulation 24 Assessments, are required to assess relatives circumstances when they have been identified as a main carer for a child or young person due to issues of significant harm in their parents care.
- Child Permanence reports/Adoption
- Looked after Children Care Planning.
- Looked After Children Reviews.
- Children and young people subject to dual processes whilst care plans are agreed and risk mitigated, e.g. subject to child protection plans and Looked After Children status.
- All Looked After Children.

6.1 Within the current team infrastructure, timeliness and effective throughput continue to be challenged leading to a risk of drift and delay and to quality and performance being compromised.

7. Leaving Care Team

7.1 The Leaving Care Team, working with young people aged 16-24 yrs, includes:

- Social work interventions for care leavers; our most vulnerable young people
- Personal Advisor statutory interventions
- Pathway plans
- Risk Assessments
- Preparing for and brokering young peoples’ transition into adulthood
- Staying Put Policy to strengthen permanency arrangements

8. Disabled Children’s Team

- In addition to the Locality Teams, the Disabled Children’s Team also provides assessment and oversight of all short break packages and work within Education Services to ensure good support for those children and young people with Educational, Health and Social Care needs.

9. The strengths and challenges of this model are:

9.1 Strengths:

- Reduced points of transfer and likely change of social worker during care proceedings. This assumes a low staffing turnover rate.
- One team oversees the decision making during the assessment period and care proceedings.
- Development of workers’ skills across a wide range of safeguarding and child protection core activities is possible. This assumes they have the experience and professional capacity to deliver as individuals, e.g. there are some extraordinary practitioners that want to, and can, manage this workload but they are significantly in the minority and we should not usually expect newly qualified social workers to practice at this level initially.
- Developing skills and expertise relating to children in need, child protection, court proceedings and permanence planning is focussed in one part of the service. This assumes reasonable caseloads are consistently applied to all posts.

9.2 Challenges:

- Management capacity in CAAS and the Localities is thin in relation to the amount of work they must have oversight of.
- Likelihood of rehabilitation for Looked After Children may be reduced given the focus of Localities on child protection cases and court proceedings. This can be to the detriment of looked after children and their families.
- The capacity for necessary reflective supervision and timely oversight and throughput is reduced given the demand, volume and complexities of the workload involved.
- CAAS and Localities are trying to manage competing statutory requirements at the same time.
- Teams are less likely to be able to prioritise child in need cases to ensure throughput and prevent them escalating into child protection or LAC status.
- This structure is less likely to enable staff development because of the competing demands on their time.
- Assistant team managers and senior social workers not being able to have the consistent capacity to support managers with supervision, mentoring and team development as a result of high and complex caseloads.
- Lack of equity across the service in relation to pressures on individual staff and team managers.

- Risk that the focus of Team Managers is on performance rather than quality in Localities Teams is more likely, given the numbers of complex cases requiring their oversight.
- Auditing is likely to demonstrate concern about lack of attention to detail if capacity pressures on workers and the managers isn’t sustainably addressed, e.g. supervision notes, case recording, visit recording and RAISE updates.
- Locality Team Managers could be under pressure to audit and quality assure a disproportionate amount of work currently in relation to other teams.
- Team Managers are may be expected to have a disproportionate knowledge base related to their current team’s responsibilities.
- Locality Team Managers are evidencing high levels of additional hours across the service and annual leave is often being carried over.
- Change of team, worker and managerial oversight once care plans have been finalised for children and young people can impact and result in drift and delay.
- Developing skills and expertise across the service is not always best managed if there are limited opportunities for learning and experience
- Travelling distances to undertake statutory visits to children are challenged given the numbers of young people that are Looked After do not live within 20 miles of the Council’s boundaries which impacts on all workers’ time and capacity.
- Implementing permanence plans and rehabilitation plans provides complex caseload with significant amounts of competing statutory requirements.
- Whilst the Leaving Care Team has been implemented there is still work to do to secure robust pathway plans that begin at 15 years of age. With a complex workload the Locality Teams cannot always prioritise this piece of work.
- Care Proceedings and their initiation are at risk of delay, contributing to drift for children and young people.
- Rehabilitation work is not always prioritised whilst child protection matters are taking precedence.
- There can be a lack of focus on children in need cases and therefore better clarity of our Early Help Offer in ensuring targeted support where necessary needs to be fully established.

9.3 The Locality Safeguarding Teams and Disabled Children’s Team can be involved from 24 hours to ten years in some instances. Managing this complexity within the current model does not consistently foster improvement in a timely way to the ambition set for the service.

9.4 This model may dilute good care planning and challenge the system with child in need cases that if addressed and prioritised, could result in step down and community interventions being accessed. This allows the social work staff to

concentrate on effective interventions that make a difference and reduce the likelihood of children and young people requiring statutory intervention.

10. Options for Consideration

10.1 Effective workload Management

10.2 The recommendation following consultation with teams, management and reviewing the Ofsted report is to create a discrete Looked After Children’s Team. This will result in the Looked After Children work being reassigned to a specific team and releasing the Locality Safeguarding Teams from this activity to concentrate on children in need and children in need of protection.

10.3 There will be an expectation that the Looked After Children’s Team will require resourcing, training and skills development and that some staff will need to move into the new service from the Locality Teams.

10.4 The culture of all the teams’ approaches will also need to establish clearly that rehabilitation should always be a consideration in planning for any children at all stages of the process.

11. Operating Model Principles to be applied:

11.1 One case equates to one child at any one time.

- Any caseload will take account of the individual worker’s experience, learning needs and capability.
- Throughput of cases will be effectively managed at each stage. (See Transfer Protocol and LSCB Procedures)
- There will be no unallocated cases in the service and any case identified as unallocated will be addressed within 24 hours.
- Permanence options will always be secured in a timely manner
- Court proceedings will be completed in a timely manner unless directed otherwise by the courts
- Family Support Workers will not be allocated assessments.
- Maternity leave vacancies will be covered.
- Long term sickness absences will be covered.
- Newly qualified social workers will have a protected caseload that does not exceed ten children and young people prior to their placement in the frontline social work teams (six months after joining the Local Authority). This takes into account training days, academic learning days, increased supervision requirements including casework management fortnightly and separate professional development supervision and time for their portfolio building.

- Learning and Development opportunities for all staff will be identified. Two to three hours of specific time for all staff will be set aside each month for Learning and Development opportunities.
- Turnover of staff will be subject to monthly monitoring.
- Managerial capacity will equate to one supervisor to 6/8 supervisees (headcount, not FTE).
- Caseloads will vary dependent upon team function and statutory requirements.,
- CAAS triage will develop into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- CAAS Assessment social workers will have caseloads from between 16 children and 20 children at any one time.
- Locality Safeguarding Teams approximately 18 children at any one time.
- Looked After Children approximately 14 children at any one time.
- Leaving Care from 18 children up to 25 children.
- Disabled Children's Team approximately 18 children at any one time.
- In addition to social work capacity the teams will require business support; each team will have Business Support Officers that have clear roles and functions in their area of the Service.

11.2 The Social Work Reform Board recommendations, encourage flexibility in workload management, the importance of learning and development time to underpin the individuals’ developing practice and capacity for reflective supervision. These are all key to effective workload management.

11.3 Increased (sustainable) capacity in social work frontline teams, increases the likelihood of developing the practitioner’s abilities, retaining experienced workers and enhancing the service’s ability to develop a learning culture, based on evidence based practice and reflective supervision. Workers enhanced ability to engage in direct with work with children, young people and their families is shown to increase the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes.

11.4 Effective capacity to deliver good workload management will also reduce the likelihood of drift, secure consistent decision making and enhance the ability of the workforce to engage with families collaboratively.

12. Proposals

12.1 West Berkshire is committed to ensuring workload management is effective, sustainable and safe for all the principles outlined above.

12.2 To assist clarity there will need to be a slight change in names to cover Teams and Services. Contact Advice and Assessment Service will remain, Localities will become Localities Safeguarding Teams and the new team will begin as Looked After Children Team (LACT).

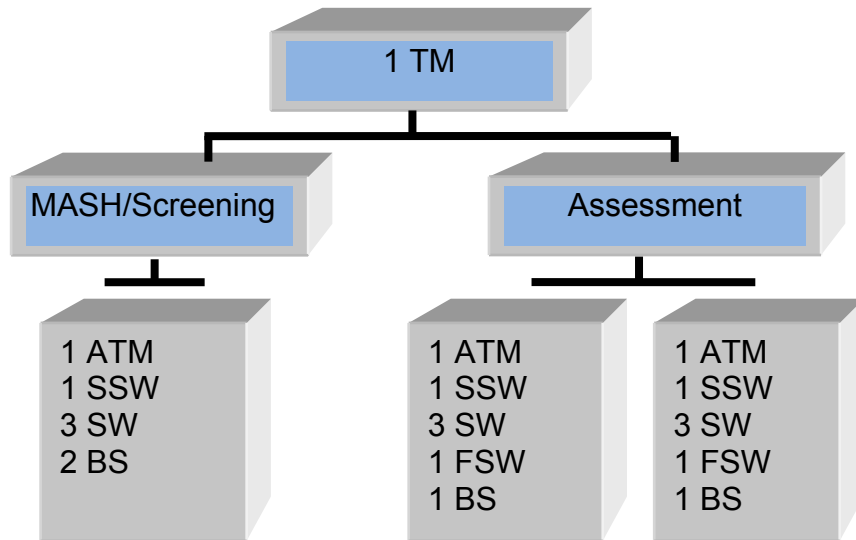
- 12.3 We plan to consult with Looked After Children, to establish what they think the Looked After Children Team should be called in the future and the Leaving Care Team will remain the same pending a consultation with young people through the Children in Care Council (CiCC) participation group.
- 12.4 The Disabled Children's Team (DCT) will retain its current functions..
- 12.5 The Service is recommending the establishment of the Principal Social Worker role. The Principal Social Worker will offer opportunities for reflective supervision activities, oversight of particularly complex cases, building the quality of practice and will have delegated responsibilities in the Managers’ absence. They will respond to new national and statutory initiatives and ensure the service is statutorily compliant and responding to service users’ feedback and recommendations. They will also work alongside the Head of Service and Children and Families Leadership Team to secure a learning environment that takes accountability for quality, practice and securing good outcomes, whilst holding a level of service responsibility.
- 12.6 Team Managers will have overall supervisory accountabilities for the team but in addition will resume their responsibilities for staffing, capability and competence measures, performance management and quality assurance across the team. They will also contribute more robustly to the strategic vision and its delivery across the service.
- 12.7 The following charts outline the proposals and team structures. They have been calculated on the volume of cases across the service and challenges within each team, and projected referral rates going forward.
- 12.8 It takes into account the significant work that has been taking place across the service over the last six months in revisiting thresholds, progressing work from its delayed state and improving services from the position judged as “inadequate” during the Ofsted Inspection of March 2015.

Chart 1

Contact, Advice and Assessment Service

Posts	CAAS Current	CAAS proposed
Team Manager	1	1
Assistant Team Manager	2	3
Senior Social Worker Case Holder	3	3
Social Worker	5	9
Family Support Workers	2	2
Business support	3.5	4

12.9 The team is separated into a front door, taking all new information and two assessment teams to undertake the work required when children and young people meet a social care threshold.



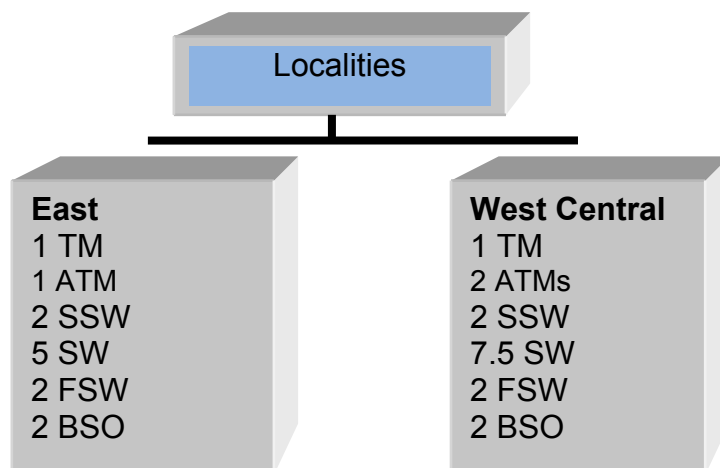
12.10 On current volumes, each CAAS worker would be allocated approximately 16 – 20 cases per qualified social worker

Chart 2

East and West Central Locality Safeguarding Teams

Posts	Localities East	Localities Central/West	Localities proposed
Team Manager	1	1	2
Assistant Team Manager	1	2	3
Senior social workers	3	2	4
SW	5	8	12.5
FSW	3	5	4
Business Support	3	3	4

12.11 Two separate Locality Safeguarding Teams will deliver children in need of protection and children in need of intervention Services. The teams will reduce in size in order for a Looked After Team to be created. It is a reduction on current establishment due to the redirection of resources to create a Looked After Children’s Team.



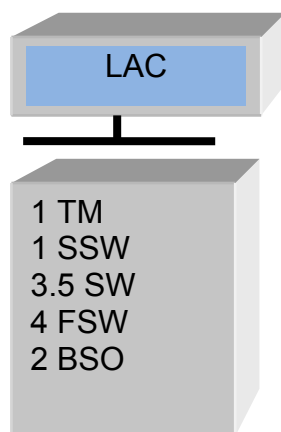
12.12 On current volumes each Locality worker, on the removal of LAC cases would be allocated approximately 18 cases per qualified social worker.

Chart 3

Looked After Children’s Team

Posts	LAC proposed
Team Manager	1
Senior social worker case holder	1
Social worker	3.5
Family support worker	4
Business Support workers	2

12.13 There will be one Looked After Children’s Team undertaking all work related to looked after children subsequent to the final hearing of the Care Proceedings. This Team will ensure improved focus on permanency, life journey work and mitigate social work changes.



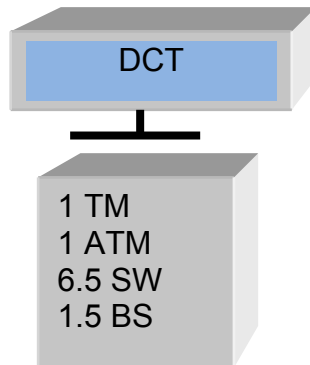
12.14 On current volumes, each LAC worker would be allocated approximately 14 cases per qualified social worker.

Chart 4

Disabled Children’s Team

Posts	DCT Current	DCT proposed
Team Manager	1	1
Assistant team Manager	1	1
Social Worker	5.5	6.5
Business support	1.5	1.5

12.15 Due to the volume with DCT, one further social worker is required in order to address caseloads and although this sits outside of Children and Family Services and within the Education Service. An additional post is required to ensure good social work practice.



12.16 On current volumes, each DCT worker would be allocated approximately 18 cases per qualified social worker.

12.17 In light of the additional volume it is proposed that there is also one further Independent Reviewing Officer post within the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service to meet the demand of Child Protection and Looked After Children cases and a Principal Social Worker post to enhance the support across the service and assist the recruitment and retention of our qualified social care workforce.

12.18 The IRO’s currently hold an average caseload of 78 against a recommended caseload of between 60-65 cases. This additional post will allow caseloads to be within acceptable levels and ensure opportunity for the Service to fulfil its quality assurance function.

12.19 The Leaving Care Team currently holds an average caseload of 24 cases per allocated worker. This is considered to be within the parameters of an acceptable caseload, albeit at the higher end, but with the introduction of a LAC Team, it is hoped that, in time, this volume will reduce

12.20 Leaving Care Team resourcing will remain as it is currently but will require review as the influence of the increased capacity elsewhere secure permanence and decisions more effectively. This should result in a decrease in social work interventions at the “leaving care” stage and manageable numbers of looked after children that may require a leaving care service.

12.21 All teams will require support and challenge from an infrastructure that demands their application to legislative and statutory guidance to secure a “Good” Ofsted rating.

13. Governance

13.1 The Ofsted framework for the Inspection of Children’s Services focuses on the provision of social care services, from early years’ provision, safeguarding, looked after children and leaving care, and adoption. For these services to deliver effective

responses to social needs in the local authority area, clear governance arrangements including policy and procedures have to be in place.

- 13.2 Unfortunately whilst the underpinning legislation tends to remain static, updates to legislation, statutory guidance, Ofsted expectations and national pressures including issues such as child sexual exploitation require response and service development to ensure practice is updated and secured.
- 13.3 In order to deliver effective Children’s Social Care, it is therefore necessary that key procedures are in place and Tri.X arrangements are embedded with the Service ensuring compliance with these procedures.
- 13.4 These documents are required under Legislation, Statutory Guidance or in order to meet National Minimum Standards. These documents require annual review and presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Such an arrangement ensures corporate oversight, ownership and accountability.

14. Procedures

- 14.1 In addition there will be procedures or strategies requiring joint agreement due to inter-disciplinary working. These may be signed off at Health and Wellbeing Board or at Local Safeguarding Children Board. This will include:
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
 - Commissioning Strategy
 - Interagency Safeguarding Procedures including: the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child’s safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention; training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
 - Recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
 - LADO: investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
 - Safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
 - Cooperation with neighbouring children’s services authorities and their Board partners;
 - Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
 - Early Help Strategy
 - Serious Case Review procedure
 - Child Death Overview procedure
 - Information Sharing Framework
- 14.2 Authorities requiring significant improvement need to engage staff in a shared commitment to improvement and an agreement to delivering services in a consistent way which will ensure that service users respond positively.

- 14.3 Such procedures can be fairly prescriptive initially but once staff are delivering consistent services, there is an opportunity to introduce creativity and innovative practices and to minimise the prescriptive nature of the procedures.
- 14.4 Procedures implemented will be consistent with the declared values principles of the “Brilliant West Berkshire” programme.

15. Learning and development

- 15.1 Learning and Development lacks a single point of contact across children's services to deliver the complex career progression model and a robust recruitment and retention package.
- 15.2 Learning and development opportunities for newly qualified workers have benefitted from significant investment and this will secure a competent workforce for the future.
- 15.3 There is not yet a consistent approach to the identification of learning needs through appraisal or a subsequent training and development needs analysis to inform the courses required for the next financial year e.g. training needs analysis and further work is required to embed this into the service.
- 15.4 Courses are delivered across West Berkshire, inhouse ad hoc training and the Safeguarding Board makes some provision; corporate training is available to all. To ensure the best social workers for our children and young people we must take a strategic view of the need for bespoke learning and development model to meet this need.
- 15.5 Learning and development strategic oversight is required to secure the culture of the organisation and ensure it is sustainable and work will be progressed through the Principal Social Worker role and the secondment of a Senior Social Worker to assist in this review.

16. Staffing

- 16.1 The model above reflects the links that need to be established to secure a high challenge and high support environment that encourages learning, responsiveness to change and sustainability.
- 16.2 The proposed workload infrastructure has the capacity to create a learning culture that enables social workers to make a difference, grow in their professional capabilities and be securely challenged if and when competence issues may arise. It will create significant opportunities for the service to establish an increasing permanent workforce and sustainable approach to social work in the future.
- 16.3 It will enable social workers to ‘make a difference’: Most social workers have a very high level of commitment to their work. They are motivated by contact with families and the difference that they can make to the lives of young people. Loss of job satisfaction is one of the major reasons why social workers leave their profession.
- 16.4 Services that can structure themselves in a way that maximises worker time with families and are therefore likely to be more productive as well as making themselves very attractive as an employer.

16.5 High quality supervision and opportunities for staff development are highly valued by staff within children’s services and help to mitigate the stresses and pressures of their work. Perceptions of support from both supervisor and peers are a strong predictor of an intention to remain within an organisation. Low support is related to the intention to leave.

17. Role of the Principal Social Worker

17.1 A key recommendation from the Munro Review 2011 placed an expectation on Local Authorities to appoint a designated Principal Social Worker. This role can report directly to the Director of Children’s Services but line management is usually delegated to the Assistant Director (Head of Service). Their role is to act as custodian of practice and be the voice of the frontline workforce within strategic environments.

17.2 In authorities judged as “Good” they play a key role in any improvement or service development journey and should be undertaking an annual health check of the frontline social work teams. There is a national group that meets regularly with the lead social worker Isabella Trowler in Westminster and regional groups are also in place.

17.3 This role is crucial and should be secured permanently within the next six months. This also provides another stage in the career progression framework. The role has been a supernumerary post within Children and Family Services in West Berks but should be a established position to strengthen the social care improvement journey.

18. Conclusion

18.1 In West Berkshire, core activities of decision making, care planning, management oversight and timely assessments are improving and these will continue to address any delay in care planning. However, good quality social work practice is not consistently secured or sustainable within the current resources and infrastructure, and this additional resource and organisational change will ensure a sufficiency and sustainability to address the challenges outlined and put the service in an improved position to deliver ‘Good’ Children’s Services.

19. Consultation and Engagement

19.1 Consultation has taken place across the Managers and staff in the frontline teams, alongside consultation with our DfE Improvement Advisers relating to caseloads and capacity and with the Heads of Service for the Disabled Children’s Team and Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval



Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aims:

X P&S – Protect and support those who need it

X MEC – Become an even more effective Council

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priorities:

- X P&S1 – Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**
 - X HQL1 – Support communities to do more to help themselves**
 - X MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council**
-

Officer details:

Name: Dr Mac Heath
Job Title: Head of Children and Family Services
Tel No: 01635 519735
E-mail Address: Mac.Heath@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Name of policy, strategy or function:	Delivery of frontline Children’s Social Care Services
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	04/01/2016
Owner of item being assessed:	Mac Heath
Name of assessor:	Mac Heath
Date of assessment:	04/01/2016

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	Yes
Strategy	Yes	Already exists and is being reviewed	No
Function	No	Is changing	Yes
Service	Yes		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To ensure Children’s frontline social care teams are appropriately recorded and fit for purpose to deliver a ‘Good’ Service.
Objectives:	To provide good, timely and safe Children’s Social Care Services.
Outcomes:	To strengthen service delivery and improve outcomes for children and their families.
Benefits:	To safeguard children, improve their opportunities and help Children and Families realise their potential.

<p>2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</p> <p>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender)</p>

Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Children & families who have reached the threshold of requiring Children’s Social Care intervention.	An improved response and service to those children and families supported through the Children’s Social Care Service.	Datazone alongside national and local benchmarking indicators.
Further Comments relating to the item:		
In order to achieve ‘Good’ Children’s Services, investment is necessary to address the increase in workload and address concerns raised within the Ofsted Inspection 2015.		

3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	Yes
Please provide an explanation for your answer: The service provides a range of safeguarding and support functions and works with the most vulnerable and ‘at risk’ families within our Community.	
Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: It is considered improved investment will have a positive impact on those with whom we are working.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
Stage Two not required:	✓

Name: Dr Mac Heath

Date: 04/01/2016

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Committee considering report:	Council on 19 May 2016
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	11 March 2016
Report Author:	Andy Day, Head of Strategic Support
Forward Plan Ref:	C3103

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report proposes changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel to provide a robust framework that upholds the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation carrying out its responsibilities towards children and young people in care including care leavers.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel's governance be amended to include new membership and new terms of reference as set out in Appendix "B".

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** There are no financial implications associated with this change of governance arrangement.
- 3.2 **Policy:** The changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel will help to support the Council existing policies around Looked After Children.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** N/A
- 3.4 **Legal:** The new governance arrangements will meet the requirements of the Children's Act 1989.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** N/A
- 3.6 **Property:** N/A
- 3.7 **Other:** N/A

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 Corporate parenting is a statutory function of the Council. The leadership and commitment of Elected Members in their role as Corporate Parents is of critical importance in achieving good outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 4.2 The Ofsted inspection of Children's Services undertaken in March 2015 provided an overall judgement that Children Services in West Berkshire were inadequate. The inspection concluded, amongst other things, that the characteristics of good leadership were not in place but that the local authority had recognised this and were taking action to address this.
- 4.3 One of the comments made by the Ofsted inspection team was that there was a need to "ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel and children in Council care consistently contributed to improved outcomes for looked after children".
- 4.4 A review of the current Corporate Parenting Panel arrangements has taken place and this report recommends proposals for strengthening those arrangements to ensure robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children (LAC) in the district.
- 4.5 The review has therefore looked at membership, objectives, scrutiny mechanisms that are in place, performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms in order to provide a robust governance structure for the future.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This report proposes changes to the governance arrangements of the Corporate Parenting Panel in order to strengthen and provide a robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children in the district.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix A - Supporting Information
- 6.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Corporate Parenting Panel – Supporting Information

1 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Corporate parenting is a statutory function of the Council. The leadership and commitment of Elected Members in their role as Corporate Parents is of critical importance to the Council in achieving good outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 1.2 The Ofsted inspection of Children's Services undertaken in March 2015 provided an overall judgement that Children Services in West Berkshire was inadequate. The inspection concluded, amongst other things, that the characteristics of good leadership were not in place but acknowledged that the local authority had recognised this and were taking steps to address this.
- 1.3 One of the comments made by the Ofsted inspection team was that there was a need to "ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel and Children in Care Council consistently contributed to improved outcomes for looked after children".
- 1.4 A review of the current Corporate Parenting Panel arrangements has taken place and this report recommends proposals for strengthening those arrangements to ensure robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children (LAC) in the district.
- 1.5 The review has therefore looked at membership, objectives, scrutiny mechanisms that are in place, performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms in order to provide a robust governance structure for the future.

2 Key Changes

- 2.1 When the Corporate Parenting Panel was first introduced it was done so on the basis of a having a small and defined membership of Elected Members and other partners. Given that all Elected Members have Corporate Parenting responsibilities it was later decided that the membership should be extended to all Elected Members.
- 2.2 In the event this change did not have the desired effect of strengthening the role and involvement of Members and this was something which was subsequently identified in the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services.

3 Options for Consideration

- 3.1 The option of doing nothing to review the current model of Corporate Parenting for West Berkshire was discounted given the Ofsted inspection.
- 3.2 The aim of the Corporate Parenting Panel is to ensure that Local Authorities meet their duties under the relevant legislation and statutory guidance that require Local Authorities to provide for, safeguard and promote the welfare of Children in Care, act

corporately in relation to this role and ensure that all Members are aware of, and contribute to, their responsibilities in this area.

- 3.3 The Corporate Parenting Panel acts to assist the Council in continuing to fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children who are looked after and leaving care and provide the strategic direction to ensure that they are effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.
- 3.4 The Panel has a responsibility to monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of services for children who are looked after delivered by Corporate Parents; the council, partner agencies and commissioned services; to ensure that every child and young person looked after is supported to be safe, happy, healthy and to achieve their full potential. In addition, it has a key role in listening to the voice of children and young people looked after and leaving care.

4 Proposals

- 4.1 The proposal is to develop a new governance framework for the Corporate Parenting Panel that strengthens those arrangements to ensure robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children in the district. The review has therefore sought to address a number of issues and propose new aims, objectives, scrutiny mechanisms, performance monitoring, membership and reporting mechanisms.

5 Aims

- 5.1 The aim of the Corporate Parenting Panel is to ensure that the Council and its partners are carrying out their responsibilities towards the children and young people in their care including care leavers.
- 5.2 To uphold the statutory responsibilities as defined by law and our moral responsibilities as defined in the West Berkshire Pledge to Looked After Children.

6 Objectives

- 6.1 The key objectives of the Corporate Parenting Panel are to:
1. Ensure West Berkshire has a Looked After Children's strategy which links its priorities to The Pledge made to our Children in Care and aligns with the Council's overall primary Aims.
 2. Scrutinise key performance indicators to help inform the Council's effectiveness as a corporate parent and when necessary give effective challenge to ensure positive outcomes for our children.
 3. Improve the life chances of children and young people in care in line with their peers.
 4. Ensure the voice and views of our children and young people in care are heard either through attendance at Corporate Parenting Panels or in Children in Care Council meetings by the Panel Chair or other Panel members both elected and partners by their attendance.
 5. Ensure children have the opportunity to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to present key topics in order to seek the support of Members.

6. Review the Council's Pledge to children and young people in care and leaving care on an annual basis to ensure its focus is retained on the needs of our children.
7. Ensure effective communication between Panel members, the wider group of corporate parents, the Children in Care Council and our Looked After Children population alongside their parents/carers.
8. Consider arrangements for Panel member information and training.
9. Make recommendations to the Council's Executive Committee as and when appropriate regarding matters to do with children and young people in Care.

7 Scrutiny Mechanisms

- 7.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel will make use of the following scrutiny mechanisms to assist with maintaining and improving the standards of services for children and young people who are in the care of West Berkshire Council.
- 7.2 Including the examination of the following key statutory performance measures:
 - LAC health assessments
 - LAC dental checks
 - LAC access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
 - LAC reviews held on time
 - LAC educational attainment
 - Numbers of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and adoptions
 - Adoption timescales
 - LAC placement stability
 - LAC placements out of area/>20 miles
 - LAC in non-family based settings
 - Complete of Pathway Plans
 - Completed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs)
 - Average SDQ score
- 7.3 Analyse and understand data relating to our looked after children and compare these findings to National Averages to ensure we are as a minimum comparable but aspire to be better
- 7.4 Use of anonymised case studies to highlight key national or local policy and practice issues Furthermore, approve on an annual basis the Statement of Purpose for Castle Gate.
- 7.5 Service Users should also be encouraged to attend the Panel.

8 Performance Monitoring

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Panel take a broad approach to monitoring the Council's performance. This will help to build knowledge and understanding of the wide range of issues involved. The panel is in place to satisfy themselves that the Service:

1. Provides Looked After Children and their parents with opportunities to express their views and feed these into service developments and improvements.
2. Has taken steps to secure a range of care placements which deliver care and support and develop children and young people's cultural, religious and linguistic heritage.
3. Provides feedback from statutory inspections and that they are acknowledged and acted upon.
4. Ensures looked after children's health needs are addressed.
5. Makes sure looked after children are supported to achieve their full potential educationally.
6. Ensures looked after children have access a range of cultural and leisure activities.
7. Ensures looked after children are prepared for leaving care and are supported thereafter.
8. Uses the National Care Standards as a basis for scrutiny of services through Panel Members involvement in a sample of reviews and working groups.
9. Monitoring should also pick up on any areas of concern identified through discussions at Panel with children and young people, carers and staff as part of the research work of the Panel.

9 Membership

9.1 The Panel shall comprise of 9 Members, which should include the following:

- Lead Elected Member for Children and Family Services (Chairman)
- Shadow Lead Elected Member for Children and Family Services
- Foster Carer representative
- Health representative
- Educational partner
- 4 additional District Councillors
- 2 substitute District Councillors

9.2 Members of the Panel will be required to attend appropriate training and be subject to a check by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Arrangements will be made by the Panel for the direct and indirect involvement of looked after children and young people.

9.3 Nominations for individuals to represent Foster Carers, Health and Education will be sought from the appropriate organisations.

10 Officer Attendance at Panel

10.1 Attendance will be by appropriate senior Council Officers and statutory partners and will include the:-

- Director of Children Services
- Head of Children & Family Services
- Children & Family Services Manager for Looked After Children
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Other officers and partners as necessary.

11 Reporting Mechanisms

- 11.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel to meet, as a minimum, every three months.
- 11.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel, along with the Life Chances Team, will hold an annual event to celebrate our children and young people in care successes.
- 11.3 The Panel will have no direct decision-making powers but will make recommendations to the service and the Executive where appropriate.
- 11.4 The Chair will publish a quarterly newsletter to keep all Corporate Parent's updated on key issues, trends and support needs for our children.
- 11.5 The Panel will submit an Annual Report to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and Full Council on its work for the year.

12 Training

- 12.1 As part of developing this new governance framework it is also proposed that the scope and detail of the mandatory training for Members be reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and fully reflects the responsibilities that Members have as corporate parents.
- 12.2 In addition, it is considered to be important that officers also fully understand the implications on them as corporate parents. It is therefore suggested that an online training module in relation to corporate parenting responsibilities be added to the corporate list of online mandatory training for officers.

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 In response to the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services held in March 2015, it is considered appropriate to review the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel. This report proposes a new governance structure that strengthens and provides a robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children in the district.

14 Consultation and Engagement

- 14.1 This report is in response to an Ofsted inspection which recommended changes to the governance around Looked after Children. It is not proposed to undertake formal consultation with stakeholders over governance changes although Ofsted will be advised of the changes proposed in this report as will the appropriate partners.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No: X

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

X

Wards affected: All

Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aims:

X BEC – Better educated communities

X P&S – Protect and support those who need it

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

X P&S1 – Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Officer details:

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Job Title: Head of Strategic Support

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Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Name of policy, strategy or function:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	
Owner of item being assessed:	Andy Day
Name of assessor:	Andy Day
Date of assessment:	12 February 2016

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	Yes	Is changing	Ye
Service	No		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To review the governance arrangements of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that they are fit for purpose going forwards.
Objectives:	To create a governance framework which is robust and one which challenges and improves the outcomes for Looked after Children in the district.
Outcomes:	To improve the outcome for Looked after Children in the District.
Benefits:	Improved governance will ensure that the Looked after Children in the district get the support that they deserve and are entitled to.

<p>2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</p> <p>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race,</p>

Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Young People in care	The purpose of reviewing and proposing changes to the governance framework for the Corporate Parenting Panel is to improve the lives of our Looked after Children.	
Further Comments relating to the item:		

3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: The changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel are aimed at improving the outcomes for our Looked after Children.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
Stage Two not required:	

Name:

Date: