

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2016

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

Also Present: Sean Anderson (Head of Customer Services), John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Legal Services Manager), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Gary Lugg (Head of Planning & Countryside), Bryan Lyttle (Planning & Transport Policy Manager), Shiraz Sheikh (Principal Solicitor), Jim Sweeting (Sports and Leisure Manager) and Jon Winstanley (Projects Manager - Highways & Transport), Robert Alexander (Group Executive (Conservatives)), Honorary Alderman Brian Bedwell (Honorary Alderman), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Honorary Alderman Royce Longton (Honorary Alderman), Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles (Honorary Alderman) and Jude Thomas (Member Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Richard Crumly, Honorary Alderman Geoff Findlay, Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Nick Goodes, Councillor Manohar Gopal, Councillor Paul Hewer, Councillor Gordon Lundie, Honorary Alderman Joe Mooney, Councillor Graham Pask and Councillor Emma Webster

PART I

45. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman stated that West Berkshire Council was saddened to learn of the death of former District Councillor Alma Beck. Mrs Beck, who was the wife of Councillor Jeff Beck, had served as a district councillor for three years between 2000 and 2003 representing Turnpike Ward. He commented that she was a lovely lady who he greatly admired.

The Chairman asked the Council to observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect and an opportunity to reflect on the life of Alma.

The Chairman reported that between himself, the Vice-Chairman and Councillor Peter Argyle they had attended 48 events since the last Council meeting.

In particular he highlighted the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, being presented to HRH the Duke of Gloucester, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire Awards, the inauguration of the Right Reverend Dr Steven Croft the 43rd Bishop of Oxford' a ceremonial service of the Crown Court, the Winterbourne Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Beenham Wind Orchestra Cartoon Capers Concert. The opening of new school buildings at The Willows and Spurcroft Schools, Remembrance Sunday Services, The KS4 Awards Evening at St Bartholomew's School, Newbury College Graduation and Further Education Awards, the Road Death Memorial Service at Thame, the switching on of Hungerford Christmas Lights and the Rosemary Appeal and League of Friends carol Service.

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The Chairman also announced that a Special Council meeting would take place on the 07 February 2017 to discuss the Library Service Review.

46. **Presentation of the West Berkshire Community Champion Awards (C3096)**

The Chairman announced that the West Berkshire Council Community Champion Awards were launched in September 2014. In addition to the pre-existing Junior Citizen Award, three new awards were created: the Community Group of the Year; Volunteer of the Year; and the Lifetime Achievement Award. An excellent response had been received in three categories in 2016 and the standard of the nominations was very high. He was very disappointed to announce that the authority did not receive any nominations for the Pat Eastop Junior Citizen award.

A judging panel of independent representatives met to consider the nominations and he thanked them for their contribution to the awards. Councillor Webb also thanked all the nominators. He felt that it was very encouraging to hear of the contributions that volunteers made in the community as, increasingly, volunteers would play a greater part in the provision of public services and it was important that their contributions were acknowledged.

The Chairman announced that there would be two winners of the Volunteer of the Year Award. The nominations in this category were particularly impressive and therefore the judging panel chose two joint winners.

The first winner was Robert Cox from Hungerford Rugby Club. Rob was nominated by Gary Lugg. Gary explained that Rob had recently taken over the Chairmanship of Hungerford Rugby Club, having been the Juniors' Chairman and driving force for eight years. In this time, he had increased membership from 30 to over 400 young players from Hungerford, Newbury and surrounding villages; overseen the extension of the club facilities, including the clubhouse, car park and additional pitches and set up and run school tournaments. Rob coached twice a week and helped organise additional social activities including tours.

Gary said, "Rob is not a man who seeks the limelight or even thanks for his hard work. He will say that he has played a small part but he has put his heart and soul into rugby, the children and the community."

The panel was particularly impressed by the commitment shown by Rob in the time that he devoted to the club, on a regular basis; the enthusiasm he shared and the clear impact it had had on club numbers and activities. They felt that he was a hugely inspiring and committed leader and that the local community clearly benefitted from his efforts.

The second winner was Lindsey Middlemiss. Lindsey was nominated by James Thomas. She was the founder of West Berkshire Action for Refugees. James explained that Lindsey had played a crucial role in enabling local residents to respond to the refugee crisis and assisting the Council in resettling Syrian refugees in West Berkshire. She used social media to rally support, secured storage space in a local warehouse for donations and organised the first aid convoy to Calais, involving multiple van loads from West Berkshire residents all within six weeks of hearing of the crisis. She had also worked closely with the Council, aiding the resettlement of Syrian families.

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James said, "I'm in awe of her persistence, drive and determination in managing all her commitments; starting with no formal funding or support, her achievements in such a short space of time are remarkable."

The panel commented on the utter devotion shown by Lindsey to the plight of refugees. They felt that she "made things happen" and, as a result, had achieved a huge amount in a relatively short time. They also acknowledged Lindsey's personal commitment in hosting a refugee in her home and felt that her ability to juggle her many responsibilities was inspirational.

The Chairman then announced the winner of the Community Group of the Year. The judging panel was very impressed by the nominations and decided to award a Highly Commended as well as a winner in this category.

The Highly Commended Award for Community Group of the Year went to Pang Valley Flood Forum, nominated by Jon Winstanley.

The Pang Valley Flood Forum was a collaborative group aimed at reducing flood risk throughout the communities in the Pang Valley. Set up in January 2013 as a joint initiative through West Berkshire Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water, the Forum acted as a principal consultation body to the three agencies on flooding and drainage issues in the Pang Valley. It was run entirely by volunteers from the 10 Parishes in the Pang Valley, with representatives from the three agencies attending the quarterly meetings and helped both individual homeowners as well as Parish Councils to achieve improvements in flood resilience.

Jon said, "This is an excellent community led Forum which is used as an example to other parish groups within river catchments with historic flooding problems. They are proactive, resourceful, organised and determined to make a real positive difference to the communities in which they live."

The panel noted the size of the Forum and the fact that it included ten parishes and 30 to 40 volunteers. They felt that the local knowledge of the volunteers together with the Forum's collaborative approach was key to its success and that volunteers themselves were often the unsung heroes, helping reduce the impact of what could be a devastating situation and therefore wished to Highly Commend their efforts.

The winner of this category, however, was Thames Valley Kings nominated by Jacqueline Scoins-Cass. The Thames Valley Kings were a wheelchair basketball club based in Berkshire. As Berkshire's only competitive wheelchair basketball club, they hosted regular training sessions at Kennet Leisure Centre in Thatcham. Founded in 2004, the club provided an opportunity for those with and without physical disabilities, within the Thames Valley area, to participate in sport within a fun and friendly environment. The club was run entirely by volunteers and although, initially a rehabilitation and recreational activity for spinal cord injured patients, the Kings considered 'inclusivity' as the heart of the club and welcomed anyone with or without a disability.

The panel was particularly impressed by how the club had evolved to have both a regional and national presence and the professional approach of the club in working with other organisations in order to maximise opportunities for club members and the wider community. They felt the enthusiasm of those within the club was evident and acknowledged the role the club played in helping people through a potentially very

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difficult time. They were also very impressed by the fact that the club ethos brought together people, with and without a disability, on equal terms.

The final award was the Lifetime Achievement Award. Once again, the judging panel was very impressed by the nominations and decided to award a Highly Commended as well as a winner in this category too.

The Highly Commended Award for Lifetime Achievement 2016 went to Jill Gent, nominated by Steve Price.

Jill Gent had been Chairman of Beedon Parish Council for 20 years, community supporter, organiser, fund raiser and trustee of two village charities. She had been involved in many village campaigns including road improvements, time capsule installation and village hall renovation. Steve said that this was, "all done quietly in the background, with no wish for publicity; a true stalwart of the Parish Council, another voluntary activity."

The panel commented on Jill's many years of service to Beedon Parish and the diversity of the projects that she had been involved in. They also noted her personal generosity for the benefit of the local community.

The winner of the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award was Mary Bedwell from Holybrook. Mary received three separate nominations from Pamela Kirkpatrick, Clive Littlewood and Robin Rimmington.

Mary was a Holybrook Parish Councillor, having served for many years with six of these as Chairman. She was instrumental in the introduction of the Holybrook Family and Community Festival, which had now been taking place for over 10 years. Mary also ran an Over 60s Lunch Club and worked with the Community Forum. Additionally, she served on the local GP's committee.

Her nominators said, "Mary has dedicated many years to serving the Parish of Holybrook, both as Chairman and councillor. The local community is incredibly lucky to have a Chairman who gives so much time, dedication and, most importantly of all, heart, to serve them. It would be impossible to describe how much effort Mary puts into her work and all of this is in consideration of her age....."

The panel was impressed with the extent of Mary's service to the Holybrook Parish; the hours dedicated, over many years, to ensuring that residents receive a professional service from the council. They also noted her work with the wider community including schools and community groups and her running of the Over 60s Lunch Club and significant involvement in the Holybrook Festival. The three nominations spoke of her professionalism, kindness and commitment to the local community and that she was an inspiration to all.

The Chairman thanked all those that had taken the time to attend the meeting.

47. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 September 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of the following amendment: **Page 17, Item 38 Short Breaks for Disabled Children, penultimate paragraph, 7th line** it to be recorded that Councillor Fredrickson had suggested that

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Members also needed to be mindful of the protected characteristics of persons affected by the decision.

The Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on the 22 November 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Quentin Webb and Sheila Ellison declared an interest in Agenda Item 15 (Proposed Main Modifications to the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document), and reported that, as their interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest, they would be leaving the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

Councillors Carol Jackson-Doerge, Alan Macro and Jeanette Clifford declared an interest in Agenda Item 15 (Proposed Main Modifications to the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document), but reported that, as their interest was personal or an other registrable interest not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

The Monitoring Officer announced that in respect of Agenda Item 17 (Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18) all Members present 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.

Councillor Tim Metcalfe declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 (Activity Team West Berkshire Fees and Charges 2017/18), and reported that, as his interest was an other registrable interest, he would be leaving the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

Councillor Roger Croft declared an interest in Agenda Item 19 (Leisure Centre Fees and Charges 2017), but reported that, as his interest was personal or an other registrable interest but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

49. **Petitions**

There were no petitions submitted to this meeting.

50. **Public Questions**

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

(a) **Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs submitted by Mr Richard Marsh.**

A question standing in the name of Mr Richard Marsh, which was submitted after the agenda was published but in accordance with constitutional requirements, on the subject of the impact of increased traffic movements on Stoney Lane should the Coley Farm Site in the HSA DPD be developed was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs.

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51. **Membership of Committees**

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

Shadow Executive

Councillor Lee Dillon had been appointed as the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group (with effect from the 21 November 2016). Councillor Alan Macro would fulfil the role of Deputy Leader.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC)

Councillor Lee Dillon has replaced Councillor Alan Macro on the OSMC. Councillor Macro had been appointed as a substitute to this Committee.

Councillor Roger Croft, as Leader of the Conservative Group, thanked Councillor Alan Macro for the integrity and professionalism he had shown when he was the Leader of the Opposition. He also welcomed Councillor Lee Dillon as the new Leader of the Opposition.

52. **Licensing Committee**

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

53. **Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Personnel Committee had met on 21 October 2016.

54. **Governance and Ethics Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Audit Committee had met on 28 November 2016.

55. **District Planning Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the District Planning Committee had met on 28 September 2016.

56. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had met on 06 December 2016.

57. **Joint Public Protection Partnership (C3158)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the creation of a Joint Committee to deliver shared service arrangements between West Berkshire, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest Councils to deliver Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing functions. The new arrangement would be known as the Public Protection Partnership (PPP).

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Marcus Franks and seconded by Councillor Keith Chopping:

“Insofar as the functions and arrangements are for the Council it resolves that the Council:

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Authorises the arrangements set out in the report including the creation of a Joint Committee with Wokingham Borough Council and Bracknell Forest Council through the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) with effect from the 9th January 2017.

1. Delegates authority to the Head of Legal Services, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Head of Culture and Environmental Protection, to finalise the terms of the PPP as set out in the draft Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) between the three Councils and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments to the terms of the draft Agreement which are necessary to reach final agreement but do not materially affect the intent and substance of the Agreement.
2. Authorises the Joint Committee to determine policy, strategy and oversee the performance monitoring and management of the new PPP and have the powers set out in the terms of reference contained in Schedule 1 of the draft Inter Authority Agreement.
3. Authorises the Head of Culture and Environmental Protection and Public Protection Service Managers (Currently known as Trading Standards and Building Control Manager and Environmental Health and Licensing Manager) to receive a delegation of Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing functions from Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council and to exercise those functions jointly with West Berkshire District Council functions under the strategy direction and oversight of the Joint Committee.
4. Agrees that the proposed agreement authorises West Berkshire District Council to institute and defend proceedings on behalf of Wokingham and Bracknell. This does not preclude the other authorities from taking their own legal actions.
5. Receives a TUPE transfer of the staff of Bracknell Forest Council currently providing the Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing functions on the terms set out in the draft Inter Authority Agreement and authorise any relevant pensions and employment implications.
6. Appoints the Head of Culture and Environmental Protection as the Council's Lead Officer to manage the Councils arrangements under the Agreement on the Council's behalf and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary variations to the Agreement as may be required from time to time in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
7. Appoints Councillor Emma Webster to represent the Council on the Joint Committee. The Executive previously approved the appointment of Councillor Marcus Franks as its Member on the Joint Committee and Councillor Dominic Boeck as substitute Member
8. Authorises the Joint Committee and the Head of Culture and Environmental Protection to enter into arrangements with other local authorities, shared services or other bodies for the provision of Trading Standards, Licensing or Environmental Health Services, up to the limits permitted within the Council's Contract Rules (pursuant to the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970, sections 111 and 113 Local Government Act 1972 and other enabling legislation”.

Councillor Marcus Franks in introducing the item explained that the Council had an existing shared service with Wokingham Borough Council to deliver Trading Standards, Environment Health and Licensing functions. The service had proved to be so successful that it had been replicated in other parts of the country and generated around £200k of savings per annum for the Council.

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In 2015 Bracknell Forest Borough Council had approached the authority about joining the shared service and therefore this proposal was being considered by all three of the local authorities. If accepted the shared arrangement would be in place from the 09 January 2017. The report also sought authority to appoint Councillor Emma Webster as the Council's representative on the Joint Committee. Councillor Marcus Franks had already been appointed by the Executive as their representative and Councillor Dominic Boeck had been appointed as a named substitute.

Councillor Franks noted that the Council's existing scrutiny arrangements would be applied to the Joint Committee and each authority would be able to call items in. This process would be expanded on in due course.

He thanked all the Officers that were involved in this process which would generate an additional £120k of savings in 2017/18.

Councillor Alan Macro welcomed the report but wished to add a caveat about membership. He noted that all three of the authorities were run by Conservative Administrations and he felt that it would be useful to have representation from the Liberal Democrat Group on the Joint Committee.

Councillor Keith Chopping commented that he felt that it was a sensible approach to add Bracknell Forest Borough Council to this already successful partnership. Financially the partnership had already generated significant savings.

Councillor Franks noted that the Joint Committee was not subject to proportional representation and he therefore could not accede to Councillor Macro's suggestion. The papers for the Joint Committee would be available on the Council's website and observers would be welcome to attend the meetings.

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

58. Proposed Main Modifications to the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD) (C3188)

(Councillor Quentin Webb declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda item 15 by virtue of the fact that he owned a home in Hermitage Green and there was a proposal to change a settlement boundary that would affect his property. As his interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest he determined to leave the meeting, stood down as Chairman for this item and took no part in the debate or voting on the matter).

(Councillor Sheila Ellison declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda item 15 by virtue of the fact that she owned land within one of the proposed changes to a settlement boundary. As her interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest she determined to leave the meeting, and took no part in the debate or voting on the matter).

(Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge declared a personal interest in Agenda item 15 by virtue of the fact that she lived within the parish of Burgfield which was referenced in the report. As her interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interest she determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillor Alan Macro declared a personal interest in Agenda item 15 by virtue of the fact that he lived opposite one of the sites. As his interest was personal and not a

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disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interest he determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

(Councillor Quentin Webb left the meeting at 7.46pm and returned at 8.00pm)

(Councillor Sheila Ellison left the meeting at 7.46pm and returned at 8.00pm)

(Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge in the Chair for this item.)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) concerning the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD), the updated Sustainability Appraisal Report and updated Habitats Regulations Assessment. The report sought authority to approve these for publication for a seven week period of public consultation as a regulatory stage of the DPD process.

(Councillor Tony Linden left the meeting at 7.47pm and returned at 7.53pm)

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Alan Law:
That the Council:

1. "Publishes the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document in accordance with Section 20 (7c) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) for a seven week period of consultation.
2. Publishes the accompanying updated SA/SEA Report and updated Habitats Regulations Assessment in accordance with Section 20 (7c) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) for a seven week period of consultation where they relate to the Proposed Main Modifications.
3. Delegates authority to the Head of Planning and Countryside in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to agree any non-material supporting documentation and any other non-material refinements to the wording of the DPD before consultation."

Councillor Hilary Cole stated this long process had started in January 2014. The DPD had been submitted to the Secretary of State in April 2016 and examination hearing sessions were held in June and July 2016 to discuss a number of issues the Inspector wanted to clarify. The Council made a formal request, under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, for the Inspector to recommend Main Modifications to the DPD in September 2016. During the hearings the Council was asked to undertake some additional work on a number of issues and this work was completed in August 2016 and was submitted to the Inspector in September 2016.

The Main Modifications were set out in Appendix Ci to the report. The modifications were designed to make the DPD sound. Councillor Hilary Cole stated that it was important to note that the inspector had not requested that any sites be added to the DPD nor had he requested that any be removed. She noted that the inspector had read and accepted most of the arguments put forward by the Council.

Councillor Hilary Cole commended Officers for the sterling work that they had undertaken in preparing the HSA DPD. She also thanked her predecessor Councillor Alan Law for all the work that he had done.

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This report sought authority for the Council to go out to a seven week consultation on the modifications and stressed that the consultation was not an opportunity to revisit issues that had not been amended. It had been agreed to extend the consultation for an additional week as it was being issued over the Christmas period. While the timing was unfortunate it was important to progress this issue as soon as possible to ensure that the Council remained a planning lead authority.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that in November 2015 the Liberal Democrat Group had voted against the DPD due to the concerns that they had about sites in Greenham, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale but that they would support this proposal as it sought permission to consult the community.

Councillor Garth Simpson stated that Cold Ash Parish Council were not satisfied with the process as they felt that their views had been ignored. The village was hemmed in by its topography and traffic was the number one concern for residents. They would however respond again to this consultation.

Councillor Alan Law reminded Members that the selected sites had been submitted a year ago and that the Inspector had not added or deleted any of them. While the housing sites were important there were also new policies pertaining to managing houses in the countryside and new parking requirements. Both of these policies had been endorsed by the Inspector.

Councillor Law commented that Officers, Members and residents should be congratulated on their persistence with this length process that had initially been started in 2005. This was a Government mandated process and he felt that it was important that a message was sent back to them, especially to the Department for Communities and Local Government, to trust local authorities to streamline their own processes. He felt that they should get rid of these expensive and time consuming hearings and allow Councils to get on with developing their plans.

Councillor Hilary Cole stated that she disputed Councillor Simpson's assertion that parish councils were not consulted. An extensive consultation exercise had been undertaken with parish councils in January 2014. She accepted that the authority might however have disagreed with some of the views of parish councils.

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

(Councillor Webb back in the Chair.)

59. **Neighbourhood Planning (C3198)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 16) which informed Members of the Neighbourhood Planning Process and set out the proposed approval process for the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Graham Bridgman:

That the Council:

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1. “delegates the designation of Neighbourhood areas to the Head of Planning and that the Scheme of Delegation be updated to allow the designation of a Neighbourhood Area to be approved by the Head of Planning.
2. Following the examination, but prior to the referendum taking place. Council are asked to approve the Neighbourhood Plan progresses to referendum and agreed to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan into the development plan if there is a successful ‘yes’ vote at the referendum.”

Councillor Hilary Cole in introducing the report requested that three corrections be made to the recommendations. Two of these corrections pertained to the correction of the job title of the relevant Head of Service (Head of Planning and Countryside) and the other was to clarify the recommendation. They should therefore read:

That the Council:

“approves the process for approving Neighbourhood Plans as set out in the report.”

- (1) The designation of Neighbourhood areas is delegated to the Head of Planning and Countryside.

- a) The Scheme of Delegation is updated to allow the designation of a Neighbourhood Area to be approved by the Head of Planning and Countryside.

- (2) Following the examination, but prior to the referendum taking place, Council are asked to approve the Neighbourhood Plan progresses to referendum and agreed to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan into the development plan if there is a successful ‘yes’ vote at the referendum. “

AMENDMENT: Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Graham Bridgman:

That a third recommendation be inserted which stated that the Council:

- “(3) Delegates authority to the Head of Planning and Countryside to make minor amendments in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the purpose of clarity.”

Councillor Hilary Cole noted that West Berkshire Council was committed to working with Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood Groups to develop Neighbourhood Plans. Central Government required the Council to respond to requests in a prompt manner and this document sought to formalise those arrangements. The report proposed a constitutional change to delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Countryside to allow them to designate Neighbourhood Areas thereby negating the need to hold a Special Council meeting to do so. The amendment sought authority to make any minor amendments to the process to aid clarity and this would be undertaken in consultation with the Portfolio Holder responsible for planning.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that his Group supported the amendment. He stated that it would be beneficial if Members were able to call in decisions made by the Head of Planning and Countryside. He suggested that decisions that were called-in be discussed by the District Planning Committee. This change would align this process with that followed for planning applications.

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

Councillor Dillon stated that he was supportive of the proposals as they set out clear timelines. He stated that the sample Service Level Agreement was a simple and effective document which he thought communities would find useful. He hoped that communities would be able to use the document to lobby their town or parish council to get a Neighbourhood Plan adopted.

Councillor Bridgman commented that the adoption of Neighbourhood Development Plans would ensure that the Council moved from a planning led authority to a community planning led authority and he welcomed any proposals to smooth the process for communities.

Councillor Hilary Cole thanked Members for their support of this proposal.

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

60. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 (C3171)**

(All Members present had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote on this item)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 17) concerning the scope for changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18. The review of the scheme was a statutory responsibility and, in addition it was necessary to identify the scope for cost reduction in the light of budget pressures.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor James Fredrickson and seconded by Councillor Anthony Chadley:

That the Council:

“Notes the various options contained within this report and selects a preferred option.”

(Councillors James Podger and Ian Morrin left the meeting at 8.17pm)

Councillor James Fredrickson in introducing the report noted that the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) in 2013. This was a local scheme but one of the requirements was that pensioners and claimants deemed to be vulnerable could not be any worse off under the CTS than they were under CTB. Councillor Fredrickson noted that CTB had been fully funded by government grants but this was no longer the case. Funding for CTS had reduced since 2013/14 and now formed part of the Revenue Support Grant and could no longer be identified as a separate income stream.

The Council had considered its own scheme, looked at what other authorities were doing and had then undertaken a consultation process on proposed changes with affected parties. A total of 71 responses were received.

Councillor Fredrickson commented that in considering schemes from other Councils it had become apparent that other authorities had opted to redefine the ‘vulnerable group’. The Council had looked at this option (options 18 and 19) and decided that it had no intention to make the vulnerable group smaller and had therefore discounted these options despite the fact that they could generate £240k of savings.

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Councillor Fredrickson commented that West Berkshire was very fortunate to have a very low unemployment rate. It was therefore felt that it was right to look at the options pertaining to working age claimants as they had the ability to change their income levels. He therefore proposed that Members support the adoption of option 17 (30% deduction from liability, capped at Band C, minimum award £10 per week, capital limit of £6k and tapering 30%).

Councillor Lee Dillon was pleased that the Council had decided not to redefine the vulnerable group and he could see the logic behind reducing the capital limit. He felt that the comments made by the CAB that *'Many residents on JSA and workers on low pay can barely afford the current 10% contribution so how will they afford an increase on the same income? The WBC proposed increases in contribution to 25% and 30% are respectively 2.5 and 3 times what residents are paying currently which are unreasonable percentage increases compared to JSA incomes'* were well made and that some people would not be able to influence the level of income they received.

Councillor Dillon noted that around 370 claimants who had previously been required to pay £3 per week would now be required to pay £10 per week. While £7 per week (a 233% increase) would not be a lot of money for some people it could have a significant impact on some of these claimants and their families. There might also be a knock on effect on the Council's collection rates.

Councillor Alan Macro commented that the changes were designed to encourage claimants to increase their earnings but by increasing the taper rate this would act as a disincentive to increase income.

Councillor Chadley commented that around 2000 affected residents were issued with a copy of the survey and there was also widespread publicity around the consultation. The response was not huge (71 responses and in 15 cases the respondents did not answer any of the specific questions asked). There appeared to be a general acceptance that changes were needed and only around a third of the respondents disagreed with this proposal.

The Council was continuing to protect the most vulnerable residents but the policy was designed to encourage those with the ability to work to do so. West Berkshire had a low number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants and the number of job opportunities exceeded the number of working age residents. In addition there were a large number of residents in the district that commuted to other areas for employment. In response to comments made by Councillor Dillon Councillor Chadley noted that it would not be possible to predict collection rates until the data was collected but reminded him that the Council had some of the best collection rates around.

Councillor Fredrickson commented that there had been a lot of discussion around the £10 threshold. It was a small amount and it might be preferable to increase the threshold for administrative purposes. He reminded Members that the Council had decided not to consult on options 18 and 19 despite the increased savings that these proposals could generate. It was not possible to predict collection rates but across the years these had remained broadly static.

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

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61. Activity Team West Berkshire Fees and Charges 2017/18 (C3098)

(Councillor Tim Metcalfe declared an other registrable interest in Agenda item 18 by virtue of the fact that he was a trustee of Adventure Dolphin Charity . As his interest was an other registrable interest he determined to leave the meeting and took no part in the debate or voting on the matter).

(Councillor Tim Metcalfe left the meeting at 8.25pm and returned at 8.27pm.)

(Councillor Howard Bairstow left the meeting at 8.25pm and returned at 8.27pm.)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 18) concerning the fees and charges for the 2017/18 Activity Team West Berkshire programme in order to enable the service to competitively advertise and promote activities and maximise advanced books and income.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Hilary Cole:

That the Council:

“approves the proposed maximum Fees and Charges for the Activity Team West Berkshire’s programme and the hire of equipment and resources for 2017/18 as set out in appendix C.”

Councillor Graham Jones in introducing the report stated that a 1.6% increase was being proposed. This was in line with inflation. The proposed increase would allow the centre to remain competitive in the market, remain an attractive offer to local groups and organisations while developing new markets and would counter inflationary increases in costs incurred by the team end and maximise advanced bookings and income.

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

62. Leisure Centre Fees and Charges 2017 (C3099)

(Councillor Roger Croft declared a personal interest in Agenda item 19 by virtue of the fact that he was the president of the Newbury District Swimming Club who were one of the major users of the Leisure Centres. As his interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest he determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 19) concerning the contractual requirement for an annual price review for 2017 for the leisure contractor to come into effect from 1st January 2017.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Hilary Cole.

That the Council:

“approves the proposed increase in Fees and Charges as outlined for the leisure management contract”.

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Councillor Graham Jones in introducing the report drew Members attention to the typographical error in relation to the date in paragraphs 5.2 and 6.1 of the summary report and 4.2 of Appendix A which should refer to 2017/18 and not 2016/17. Councillor Jones stated that the average price increase was at 1.6% which was in line with inflation. Prices had however been rounded up to the nearest 10p. This would ensure that the pricing at the centres would remain competitive.

(Councillor Tony Linden left the meeting at 8.28pm and returned at 8.29pm.)

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

63. **Proposed Member Development Programme - 2017/18 (C3097)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 20) concerning the proposed Member Development Programme for 2017/18.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor James Fredrickson and seconded by Councillor Paul Bryant:

That the Council:

“agrees the proposed Member Development Programme for 2017/18.”

Councillor James Fredrickson in introducing the report explained that the Member Development Group had met on the 21 September 2016 to discuss the programme and make a recommendation to Council for approval. He felt that the sessions provided a valuable opportunity to advise Members of changes to legislation, policy and practice etc. The group had also looked at various options to make it easier for Members to attend sessions and it had been decided that following a trial the evening sessions would revert to a 6.30pm start. The daytime repeat sessions would also be retained. Other options including live streaming sessions were also being trialled.

Councillor Alan Macro, as a member of the Member Development Group, welcomed the trialling of live streaming sessions which would mean that Councillors that lived further away would not have to come to Newbury for the training.

Councillor Paul Bryant, who was also a member of the Member Development Group, thanked Members that had attended the wide range of sessions over the past year. He stated that the majority of the sessions had been very well received and he thanked Members for their feedback. He commented that Members tended to prefer the sessions that were delivered by Council employees as they had a better understanding of local practices. He commented that a couple of strategic sessions around transport and waste had also been incorporated in the programme for the forthcoming year. He encouraged Members that did not usually attend the training sessions to attend these useful and enjoyable opportunities for engagement and learning.

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

64. **2017/18 West Berkshire Council Timetable of Public Meetings (C3197)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 21) concerning the timetable of meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year.

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

That the Council:

“approves the timetable of public meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year”.

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Councillor Roger Croft in introducing the report explained that the number of meetings took into account the volume of business demands. Early adoption would allow time for the Members to ensure that the meetings were in their diaries before the Municipal Year started.

Councillor Alan Macro stated that there had been very few Scrutiny meetings and he encouraged the Administration to ensure that these meetings took place.

Councillor Croft stated that he supported the appropriate use of more regular scrutiny meetings.

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

65. Notices of Motion

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda item 22 refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon relating to transitional funding.

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

That the Council:

“agrees to award transitional funding to the Short Breaks programme for the 2017/18 financial year to the value of £170,000.

This will ensure that voluntary organisations have a longer time period to consider their strategy to combat the reduction of Council funding in the longer term and for this Council to consider other ways to secure the provision of or to fund short breaks.”

The Chairman explained that in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.9.13 the Council would not debate the Motion that evening and it would be referred to the Executive meeting on the 22 December 2016 for discussion. A report would then be brought back to the 02 March 2017 Council meeting for consideration.

The reason that this procedure had to be followed was due to the fact that this Motion, concerned the allocation of transitional funding which had been secured by the Council. Any Motion which materially increased expenditure had to stand adjourned without discussion to the next meeting of the Executive, with a report back to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

66. Members' Questions

There were no Member questions submitted.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.44 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature