

**EXECUTIVE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**  
**THURSDAY, 13 JUNE 2019**

**Councillors Present:** Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Jeff Cant, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Rick Jones and Richard Somner

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Sarah Clarke (Head of Legal and Strategic Support), Tess Ethelston (Group Executive (Cons)), Olivia Lewis (Group Executive (Lib Dem)), Gabrielle Mancini (Economic Development Officer), Andy Sharp (Executive Director (People)), Andy Walker (Head of Finance and Property), Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor James Cole, Councillor Carlyne Culver, Councillor Lee Dillon), Councillor Owen Jeffery, Councillor Alan Law, Councillor David Marsh, Councillor Steve Masters, Councillor Erik Pattenden, Jo Reeves (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Garth Simpson and Councillor Martha Vickers

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Councillor Alan Macro and Councillor Howard Woollaston

**PART I**

**8. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2019 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

**9. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**10. Public Questions**

There were no public questions submitted.

**11. Petitions**

Mrs Lesley McEwan presented a petition containing 296 signatures relating to the junction of Beenham Lane with the A4.

Mrs McEwan reported that residents of Beenham were reliant on cars as the area was not well served by public transport. Most journeys involved using the A4 and the junction with Beenham Lane. The junction was poorly marked and difficult to use. There had been many near misses and the Council should take action to make the junction safer. There was precedence of the Council taking action to improve other junctions in the area.

The petition was referred to the Head of Transport and Countryside for a response.

**12. Response to OSMC Recommendations on ASC Overspend (EX3708)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning a response to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) following their review of the report into the 2018/19 overspend in Adult Social Care (ASC). The review of the report into the ASC overspend undertaken by OSMC on the 26th February 2019 provided a very useful opportunity to further explore a number of issues, some specific to Adult Social Care (ASC) but others that impacted across the Council.

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Councillor Jeff Cant introduced the report which had been triggered in response to the significant ASC overspend which emerged in 2018/19. The Executive was receptive of the OSMC's recommendations and would make some changes to the budget process.

Councillor Graham Bridgman explained that a large number of recommendations had been adopted from the report produced by the Chief Executive and the Audit Manager and the OSMC report recommended a further three. In addition to the response outlined at paragraph 5.2, there would be monthly scrutiny of the ASC budget by officers and the Portfolio Holder. In respect of the response at paragraph 5.3, Long Term Services, Short Term Services and salaries now had robust modelling in place, this covered 97% of the budget. In respect of the response to the third recommendation, Councillor Bridgman did not wish to pre-empt the view of the new Executive Director (Resources) who might have a view.

Councillor Owen Jeffery noted that the OSMC had considered the report in February 2019 and asked what progress there had been six months on. Councillor Cant advised that the information would be available at the end of July once the quarter one budget monitoring report had been completed.

Councillor Jeffery asked what spending was comprised in the 3% of the ASC budget which was not modelled. Councillor Bridgman believed it was administrative costs but would confirm in a written response.

Councillor Lee Dillon welcomed the scrutiny of the ASC budget that would be undertaken by officers and the Portfolio Holder but asked if elected Members could collectively scrutinise the outcome of the review at OSMC or a Full Council meeting. Councillor Dillon suggested that the Council could consider zero based budgeting in future budget builds and noted that some Conservative Members were likely to support this. Further, he was disappointed that there was not a commitment to rebase the entire budget every four years and asked for a political view. Councillor Cant advised that zero based budgeting along with other approaches would be considered and the Executive were eager to link performance outcomes with budgets. Councillor Bridgman echoed this comment and noted that ASC was a demand led budget and it was hoped that the improved model would be more robust.

**RESOLVED** that the suggested responses to each of the 3 recommendations of the OSMC, as shown at paragraphs 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, be approved.

**Reason for the decision:** To set out a response to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) following their review of the report into the 2018/19 overspend in Adult Social Care (ASC).

**Other options considered:** None

### 13. **2018/19 Revenue Financial Performance: Provisional Outturn (EX3564)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the provisional revenue outturn for 2018/19. Councillor Cant presented the report which explained that the Council had faced a potential overspend of £3.3m in 2018/19 and had responded to this with a Council wide mitigation programme, and it had proven necessary to make use of service specific risk reserves. After these actions, the final position would result in £81k being returned to reserves. Areas of ongoing overspend and unmet savings had been addressed as part of the 2019/20 budget build.

Councillor Lynne Doherty noted that it was an important report and demonstrated the impact of demand led budgets. As the former Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, she could attest to the national trend of increasing demand on Children's Social Care but gave a reassurance that the use of the Family Safeguarding model in West

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Berkshire enabled good management of that demand. A national solution was required and the Executive awaited the Social Care Green Paper. West Berkshire provided a good standard of social care but it came at a rising cost.

Councillor Graham Bridgman agreed a national debate was required regarding the ongoing funding of Adult Social Care. He expressed the view that it was unfair to expect other services to pick up the tab when there was a legal and moral duty on the Council to provide social care. Social care staff had borne the brunt of the budget pressures while other parts of the Council had slowed down. Careful matrices had been used to manage risk funding. Councillor Bridgman commended all Council officers for their work over the past year and reiterated that a national debate was required as demographic projections indicated that pressures on adult social care would continue to rise.

Councillor Lee Dillon agreed that a national solution was required for Adult Social Care pressures and expressed the view that it should be provided by the National Health Service. He asked how the Executive ensured that savings targets were met, noting that £200k of the Children and Family Services overspend had arisen from an unmet saving. Councillor Cant advised that a detailed meeting had been held earlier that day in order to monitor whether savings were delivered.

Regarding the Transformation Reserve, Councillor Dillon noted that this had been topped up in year and stated that he hoped general reserves remained adequate. Councillor Cant confirmed they were and that the Transformation Reserve existed to enable the Council to become more efficient.

Councillor Carolyne Culver enquired why the Economy and Environment Directorate had been underspent by £450k. Councillor Doherty confirmed that this related to the corporate slowdown.

Councillor Owen Jeffery asked what the budgeting error was which meant that a large overspend arose in-year. Councillor Bridgman referred to a report written by the Chief Executive and Audit Manager considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission at their meeting in February 2019.

**RESOLVED that** the Executive note the report, and in particular the continued challenge of managing pressures in adult social care, which are shared nationally.

**Reason for the decision:** To inform Members of the provisional revenue outturn for 2018/19.

**Other options considered:** N/a – factual report for information.

### 14. **Capital Programme Financial Performance Report: Provisional Outturn 2018/19 (EX3594)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 8) which presented the provisional capital outturn for the Council in respect of financial year 2018/19. It was an ambitious programme and unlike the revenue budget, could be carried forward to future years.

Total capital expenditure in 2018/19 was £81.3 million against the £89.9 million budget, an overall underspend of £8.7 million or 9.7%. Capital Strategy Group on the 9th May had reviewed the outturn in detail and proposed that £8.57 million be carried forward into 2019/20 to enable the continuation of schemes already underway and to help fund any emerging pressures in the capital programme.

Councillor Dominic Boeck reported that the reason for the underspend in the Education capital budget was due to the delays affecting Highwood Copse and Theale Primary Schools.

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Councillor Hilary Cole advised that the underspend in the Development and Planning Service was due to the Council not being able to identify suitable properties in-year for temporary accommodation but she offered reassurance that three properties were planned for purchase in 2019/20. It was important that temporary accommodation was in a location with good access to local services and amenities.

Councillor Lee Dillon asked for more information on the emerging pressures the capital programme would be required to fund. Regarding the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and the Home Repair grant, he asked whether the underspend would have to be returned to the government and whether the Council was doing enough to promote the scheme. The capacity challenges in the Public Protection and Culture Service were noted and Councillor Dillon asked how ambitious projects which aligned with the Council's zero carbon ambitions would be delivered. He also stated that in his view it would be prudent to review the Property Investment Strategy.

Councillor Lynne Doherty agreed that it was timely and appropriate to review the Property Investment Strategy. Regarding the emerging pressures, she believed these were likely to arise from the schools' projects but would confirm in writing.

Councillor Graham Bridgman believed that the DFG underspend would be carried forward by the Council, but would confirm in writing. He added context that the 2019/20 DFG budget was £1.68m so the £167k underspend was only a small proportion.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter shared Councillor Dillon's concerns regarding the Public Protection and Culture team's capacity and confirmed that this would be looked into.

Councillor Dillon noted that there was an overspend of £51k in respect of legal costs associated with the London Road Industrial Estate redevelopment and requested a breakdown of what costs had been anticipated.

Councillor Erik Pattenden asked what had caused the £106k underspend from the culture budget. Councillor Rick Jones advised that he would provide a written answer.

**RESOLVED** that the capital provisional outturn position and the level of budget to be carried forward to 2019/20 should be noted.

Given the political and economic uncertainty at present, the Property Investment Strategy would be reviewed as scheduled.

**Reason for the decision:** to present the provisional capital outturn for the Council in respect of financial year 2018/19.

**Other options considered:** None.

### 15. **Formal response to the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework (EX3747)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 9) which introduced West Berkshire District Council's response to the draft Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework (BLIS).

The BLIS would be a key document for the future of West Berkshire's economy, as well as that of the region, and the framework as published would have a bearing on the Council's own strategies, including the West Berkshire Local Plan to 2036 and the refreshed West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy 2019.

Given this and the fact that the Thames Valley Berkshire (TVB) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), one of the Council's key partners, had asked the Council to formally respond to its consultation, it was recommended that the attached submission was given.

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Councillor Lynne Doherty reported that she had attended a meeting of the LEP and was heartened to discover the work the LEP undertook for the benefit of the Thames Valley and noted the alignment of the LEP's work with the Council's priorities. The consultation was open to all until the 21<sup>st</sup> June and she encouraged those present to submit their own responses.

Councillor Steve Masters advised that Tim Smith, Chief Executive of the LEP, had attended Newbury Town Council to present the Strategy. Councillor Masters was concerned that there was little mention of the benefits of a low carbon economy. Gabrielle Mancini was invited to comment by the Leader who offered reassurance that the LEP would be producing a full Energy Strategy to sit alongside the BLIS.

Councillor Dillon agreed that there was an opportunity to promote economic growth by encouraging West Berkshire's many science and technology companies to design solutions to the carbon challenge. There was some strong language in the letter but not regarding the environment. Residents would disagree with the comment that congestion was not a problem in the area. Councillor Masters suggested that congestion was a risk to economic growth.

Councillor Owen Jeffery asked whether Councillor Cole agreed that it was shame that Network Rail did not electrify the railway line as far as Westbury. Councillor Cole advised that she could neither agree nor disagree but confirmed that the Council had supported electrification.

Councillor Cole thanked all Members for their comments on the Council's response to the BLIS.

**RESOLVED that** West Berkshire District Council responds to the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership's consultation on the draft Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework.

**Reason for the decision to be taken:** to respond to the draft Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy Framework.

**Other options considered:** Not to respond or support the TVB LEP BLIS.

### 16. Members' Questions

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

(a) **Question submitted by Councillor Martha Vickers to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Martha Vickers on the subject of non-essential car user travel to work was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(b) **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of air pollution limit exceedance would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 6.08pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....