

# **EXECUTIVE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**

### **THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2021**

**Councillors Present:** Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Ross Mackinnon, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

**Also Present:** Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance)), Sue Halliwell (Executive Director - Place), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Andy Sharp (Executive Director (People)), Shiraz Sheikh (Legal Services Manager), Councillor Adrian Abbs, Councillor Phil Barnett, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Carlyne Culver, Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Owen Jeffery, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor Steve Masters, Councillor Erik Pattenden, Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Martha Vickers and Councillor Tony Vickers

#### **PART I**

#### **78. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader, subject to the following amendments:

**Item 75 – Members’ Questions** – urgent questions (j) and (k) had been omitted:

- (j) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the supply, take-up and contents of food parcels distributed during the current lockdown to children at West Berkshire schools was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (k) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on whether people who had paid for the Garden and Food Waste Service would receive a rebate while the service was suspended was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

It was also noted that the website links to the full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions needed to be enabled. Further, the published question and answer document for the Executive meeting held on 14 January 2021 only included the public questions and the Member questions needed to be included.

#### **79. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

However, for the purpose of transparency, the Monitoring Officer announced that all Members had been granted a dispensation to participate in the debate in relation to those items concerned with the setting of Council Tax for the District. In particular, those Members with a beneficial interest in land within the Authority’s area which would otherwise be a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

#### **80. 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) The question submitted by Mr Ian Hall on the subject of seeking external or internal advice on the closure of the football pitch would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

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- (b) The question submitted by Mr John Gotelee on the subject of the online business case document for the A339 widening and London Road Industrial Estate access scheme was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (c) The question submitted by Mr John Gotelee on the subject of what could be indicated by an Environmental Impact Assessment for the LRIE was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (d) The question submitted by Mr Darren King on the subject of public meetings to discuss topical issues was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- (e) The question submitted by Mr Gary Puffett on the subject of laying off of staff in the midst of a national health emergency would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.
- (f) The question submitted by Mr Graham Storey on the subject of changes in eligibility to join the housing list was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (g) The question submitted by Mr Thomas Tunney on the subject of proposed redundancies at the Council would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance.
- (h) The question submitted by Mr Mark Beach on the subject of investment in communications and public relations would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.
- (i) The question submitted by Mr Simon Pike on the subject of the Grazeley site was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (j) The question submitted by Mr Simon Pike on the subject of AWE Burghfield and the Grazeley site would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (k) The question submitted by Mr Simon Pike on the subject of consultation on the AWE Detailed Emergency Planning Zone would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (l) The question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of the need to use the Faraday Road football ground as a recreation space was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
- (m) The question submitted by Mr John Stewart on the subject of a redeveloped or a new football ground on the London Road Industrial Estate was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (n) The question submitted by Mr Jason Braidwood on the subject of reopening the Faraday Road football ground for the summer for local youth football was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (o) The question submitted by Mr Jack Harkness on the subject of proposals for the Rugby Club and/or the Diamond field was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
- (p) The question submitted by Mr Paul Morgan on the subject of the current timescales/plans to submit a planning application to build flats on the Newbury Faraday Road football ground was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

### 81. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

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### 82. Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2021/22 (C3980)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code which set out the Council's proposed Investment and Borrowing Strategy for 2021/22.

**RESOLVED that** Council be recommended to adopt the following recommendations:

- (1) To agree and adopt the proposed Investment and Borrowing Strategy for 2021/22;
- (2) To agree and adopt the revised 2021 Property Investment Strategy.

**Other options considered:** Not applicable.

### 83. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 (C3981)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which set out the financial planning assumptions for future years and which were aligned with the Council Strategy to ensure delivery of that strategy. The MTFS highlighted the overarching key issues facing the Council's finances as well the many different scenarios and uncertainties concerning the future revenue streams for the Council in the future.

The Council was able to commence the next four years of the MTFS from a strong financial base and this position together with future projects were set out in the report. The report was seconded by Councillor Lynne Doherty.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that in the discussion on the Medium Term Financial Statement in the previous year he had asked for a retrospective look over the last couple of years to see how accurate the Council had been in its forecasting and modelling. Councillor Ross Mackinnon did recall such a conversation. However, he advised that although the MTFS was a forward looking document he would see what could be done to provide the information that Councillor Brooks had requested.

Councillor Tony Vickers referred to page 62 of the agenda and in particular paragraph 3.4.1. He asked if more detail could be provided for the public in relation to the significant proportion of the Council's budget which was delivered through partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors and how much of the Council's spend it had no control over.

**RESOLVED that** approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be recommended to Council.

**Other options considered:** Option of doing nothing and just focussing on the financial position for the year ahead, but this had been disregarded as it would prevent longer term financial planning and would have a negative impact on the delivery of the Council Strategy.

### 84. Capital Strategy and Programme 2021/22 - 2023/24 (C3982)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 8) concerning the Capital Strategy which covered financial years 2021/22 – 2023/24 together with the supporting funding framework, which provided a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributed to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

The approval route for the Asset Management Strategy (Appendix D to the report) was questioned as being a decision of the Executive or a Council function.

*(Post meeting note: the Asset Management Strategy was confirmed as forming part of the Council's Budget Framework and as such could be put to Council for approval).*

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**RESOLVED** that Council be recommended to adopt the following recommendations:

- (1) That the Capital Strategy and supporting Capital Programme for the period 2021/22 – 2023/24 be approved.
- (2) That the supporting Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (Appendix C) for the period 2021/22 – 2023/24 be approved.
- (3) That the supporting Asset Management Strategy (Appendix D) be approved.
- (4) That the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Policy (Appendix E) for the period 2021/22 be approved.
- (5) That the proposed CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) Bids for inclusion in the Capital programme 2021/22 (Appendix F) be approved.

**Other options considered:** Not applicable.

### 85. **Revenue Budget 2021/22 (C3983)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 9) concerning the 2021-22 Revenue Budget, which proposed a Council Tax requirement of £104.32m, requiring a Council Tax increase of 1.99%. The Council Tax increase would raise £2.04m. The Council was not proposing any use of the Adult Social Care precept and there would therefore not be any increase in the precept. The overall Council Tax increase was intended to balance the financial impact of the pandemic on residents, mitigating the financial pressures they faced, as well as the cost pressures that the Council faced.

The budget detailed the investment for the year ahead to deliver the Council Strategy and support core Council Services. This included investment in Adult Social Care, economic development and prevention work. The budget also allocated revenue funding to deliver the Capital Strategy that had a substantial amount of investment in infrastructure for the year ahead, included savings proposals, other income sources and £3.2m of support from Government for Covid-19 costs. The Council was proposing to support the budget with a £2.2m contribution from reserves; it was rare that the Council would use such a sizeable level of one-off support for the budget but the impact of the pandemic on the current year budget, allied to Government financial support, had led to an expected underspend in the current year that was being proposed to partially be used to support the 2021-22 budget.

This report also proposed the Fees and Charges for 2021-22 as set out in Appendix F and the Parish Expenses as set out in Appendix G and recommended the level of General Reserves as set out in Appendix E.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon in introducing the report highlighted that information on Parish precepts was still awaited, as was the norm at this stage of the financial year. This information would however be incorporated for the debate on the Revenue Budget at the Council meeting on 2 March 2021.

Councillor Mackinnon then drew Members' attention to the consultation and engagement section of the report. This section was incomplete as the consultation process was still ongoing. Further consultation included an online consultation meeting with local businesses and a Facebook Live event taking place on 16 February 2021 where residents could ask questions on the budget.

Councillor Mackinnon next referred to the recommendations of the Licensing Committee from its meeting on 8 February 2021. The response to these recommendations would be considered in time for the Council meeting.

A response would also be provided at the March Council to the Motion presented by Councillor Martha Vickers at the Council meeting in December 2020 regarding the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

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It was confirmed to Councillor Martha Vickers that she would be able to speak in support of her Motion on 2 March 2021.

**RESOLVED that** Council was recommended to resolve as follows:

- (1) That Council approves the 2021-22 Council Tax requirement of £104.32 million, requiring a Council Tax increase of 1.99% with a 0% increase in the Council Tax Precept ring-fenced for adult social care.
- (2) That the Fees and Charges are approved as set out in Appendix F and the appropriate statutory notices be placed where required.
- (3) That the Parish Expenses of £xxx are approved as set out in Appendix G.
- (4) It is proposed to again provide a £150 reduction to Council Tax for claimants receiving Council Tax Reduction falling within a working age category during the 2021-22 financial year. Where the balance to pay for a working age claimant is less than £150, we will credit all the remaining liability through this hardship scheme. The remaining funding from the allocation of £838k will be utilised to support the Collection Fund and consideration of the further impact on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as well as the overall Collection Fund.
- (5) That it be noted that the following amounts for the year 2021-22 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (by the Localism Act 2011):
  - (a) £65,343.65 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 (the number of properties paying council tax).
  - (b) Part of the Council's area as per Appendix K being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates.
- (6) Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021-22 (excluding Parish precepts) is £xxxxxxx.
- (7) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2021-22 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, amended by the Localism Act 2011:-
  - (a) £xxxxxxx 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) £xxxxxxx 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) £xxxxxxx being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above, exceeds the aggregate at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with the Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R).
  - (d) £xxx being the amount at 7(c) above (Item R), all divided by 5(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) £xxxx being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per Appendix K).
  - (f) £1596.41 being the amount at 7(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 7(e) above by the amount at 5(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 relates.
- (8) That it be noted that for the year 2021-22, Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley & The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service have issued

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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 K.

- (9) That the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables in Appendix K as the amounts of Council Tax for 2021-22 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- (10) To consider the motion presented at the Council meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 regarding the Citizen's Advice Bureau and to reject or approve.

**Other options considered:** The budget proposal contains a blend of savings options and Council Tax changes. The Council could go to a Council Tax referendum to put substantially more money into the budget, though this had been rejected due to the quality of Council services that were able to be provided within the existing budget and that the increased burden on local taxpayers could have a negative local economic impact.

### 86. Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2020/21 (EX3911)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the in-year financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets as at Quarter Three of 2020/21.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon advised that usually the Revenue and Capital Quarterly Monitoring reports would be brought together but it had been decided to bring the Revenue report through earlier prior to the Council meeting on 2 March 2021. The Quarter Three forecast was an under spend of £3.4m which was 2.7% of the Council's 2020/21 net revenue budget of £131m. This was mainly due to underspends in the People Directorate of £3.2m – Adult Social Care (£1.8m), Children and Family Services (£1m) and Education (£360k). It was recognised that it was a significant change from the previous quarter. At year end there would be a further reconciliation between the Covid-19 non-ring fenced Government grant where the Council would apportion as much cost and income losses to the Government funding as appropriate which would then mean any under spend would flow into the Council's general reserve. Further discussions on the budget would take place at the Council meeting on 2 March 2021.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that he had tried to understand the difficulties in managing the budget and he felt that people would rather see the Council using the under spend. It was a tragedy that Covid was having a positive impact on the budget particularly in Adult Social Care but Councillor Brooks had mentioned at the last Executive meeting that he could see an overspend of at least £3m being reported at year end. The budget position had changed considerably in a matter of three weeks and he felt that the forecasting needed to improve which was why he wanted to look back at the MTFs outturn for the previous year. Councillor Ross Mackinnon responded that it was not down to inaccurate modelling but the second wave of Covid had had an unfortunate impact on the budget. The MTFs was built over a four year period and Officers and Members would continually monitor the budget position over that period and make any necessary changes to the model.

Councillor Dominic Boeck felt that Councillor Brooks had made some good points but the Council had faced and continued to face uncertainty due to the effects of Covid. Some of the things which had been anticipated to happen over the last year had not actually arisen, such as the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, and therefore there would always be a degree of uncertainty around the process.

Councillor Alan Macro referred to the graph on page 206 of the agenda and the fact that the vertical axis was showing dates rather than numbers. He felt that the number of

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excess deaths had been made worse by the Conservative Government's actions, inactions and the reluctance to impose lockdowns. For every person who died there was a family who was grieving. Councillor Graham Bridgman agreed that the number of deaths in care homes in particular had been tragic but a large majority of the homes were not in the Council's control. In respect of the Government's role he admitted that there had been difficulties and problems at the outset but these had been addressed and that the Government had done well particularly around testing and vaccinations. Every death was a tragedy for both that person's family and the staff who had been treating them and it was not appropriate to lay the blame on the Government in the midst of a pandemic.

Councillor Erik Pattenden referred to the £1m under spend in Children and Family Services and asked what could be done in a short space of time to help address the problems the young people were experiencing in West Berkshire at present. Councillor Dominic Boeck was not sure that it would be possible to use the £1m under spend without defining exactly what projects it would be supporting. It would be a matter for the budget discussion at Council on 2 March.

Councillor Tony Vickers referred to recent e-mails he had received about funding of early years settings and he wondered whether the Council would be in a position to support them. Councillor Dominic Boeck thanked Councillor Vickers for raising this issue and advised that a letter would be going out in the next couple of days to all early years settings advising them of how they could apply for grant funding.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**Other options considered:** None.

### 87. **Potential Redundancies - Strategy and Governance (EX3976)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning a restructure in the Strategy and Governance Department resulting in the creation of 21.5 new posts, including investment into an additional 7.5 posts (one of which was fixed term for 12 months), 14 posts were to be deleted. This resulted in the potential for some redundancies and the report sought authority for redundancy payments to be made if necessary. The overarching purpose of the new structure in Strategy and Governance was to:

- Improve the delivery of services to the Council's customers;
- Enhance and consolidate the council's governance arrangements;
- Deliver more effective digital and transformation solutions that provided better services;
- Continue to provide effective support services to the Council.

Councillor Jo Stewart was pleased to have the opportunity to present this Part I version of the report so that she could give further insight into the reasoning of officers for this restructure.

A reorganisation in any organisation could never be entered into lightly. They were both very time consuming and had an unsettling effect on those involved. A reorganisation was of course most difficult when it involved redundancies. Councillor Stewart did make it clear that not all deleted posts would result in redundancies being made. It was anticipated that some of those officers identified as being at risk of redundancy would be redeployed into a new role.

However, a reorganisation was at times necessary as all organisations needed to grow and adapt with the times, especially to meet the requirements of their customers.

Councillor Stewart then stated that strong and effective governance was vital for any local authority. Therefore, the new roles included bringing in additional legal expertise

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and experience that would work, for example, on ensuring that residents' information remained secure and that key services were able to provide information to residents as soon as possible.

The new structure would also help to deliver transformational initiatives and introduce more effective digitisation solutions that would benefit both officers and residents.

Communication had become of even greater importance than before, as evidenced throughout the pandemic. It was important to build on the work undertaken to date. The new structure would help to deliver the Communication and Engagement Strategy, and find ways to engage more with young people.

The reorganisation also offered career development and career pathways to officers. This was an area highlighted by officers as being a need.

Councillor Stewart advised that she had been questioned on the timing of the restructure during a pandemic. In response to that point she highlighted two particularly key areas.

There was, in some areas of work, a reliance on paper based processes which were very difficult to deliver when it had been necessary to work remotely. This was not sustainable.

Neither should there be an over reliance on individuals. This was not sustainable for either the individual concerned or their colleagues. Greater resilience was needed.

Councillor Stewart concluded by stating she had every confidence in officers to deliver a renewed and reinvigorated structure that would help the Council deliver the transformation needed for the Digital Strategy and the Community and Engagement Strategy in particular.

In seconding the report Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that as Leader of the Council it was her duty to ensure that the valued services provided by the Council to residents continued to improve into the future. This could result in the need to take difficult decisions that impacted on individuals. However, the Council primarily existed to support the communities of West Berkshire with services run in the interest of residents. Services should be delivered in the most effective and efficient ways possible. West Berkshire Council was committed within the Council Strategy to do so and provide sustainable services through innovation and partnerships. It was therefore important to review ways of working and embrace changes and opportunities made possible by technology. Councillor Doherty was pleased that the restructure would help to improve services provided to residents via digital and transformation solutions.

The restructure unfortunately meant that some existing posts would be deleted, but she pointed out that the Council would be following its organisational change policy which meant that dedicated support would be provided to help those at risk of redundancy find suitable redeployment within the Council. The policy provided salary protection for a period of up to 18 months if an officer was redeployed to a post that was a grade lower than their previous role.

Redundancies were a worse-case scenario and she understood the difficulties this created for individuals. However, there were times when a reorganisation was necessary and these proposals were driven by business need.

Councillor Graham Bridgman commented that it was useful to reflect upon the progress being made by the Council. Each of the three Directorates had an Executive Director in place. This enabled the Chief Executive a more strategic role. Service Directors had also been created and it was important to allow those officers the ability to make decisions on the structure of their service in liaison with their Executive Director and the Chief



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Executive. This report was an example of this. The restructure had been through a lengthy consultation process.

It was regrettable that staff could be lost, but the restructure was needed to reflect the needs of the organisation and the needs of residents. He was supportive of the restructure and stated that more people would be employed in the service than before.

Councillor Lee Dillon explained that he was grateful for the briefings he had received from the Service Director on this restructure which were helpful in understanding its aims. He had noted changes to the structure post these briefings.

He agreed that it was for Service Directors to lead on restructures, but this was an area of the Council where Councillors had regular interaction and greater involvement was therefore appropriate.

Greater digitisation of services should be aimed for and it was right that this was part of the restructure. Councillor Dillon recognised however that this was at an early stage and time should be allowed for the new structure to be implemented, but he requested that progress be reviewed in perhaps one year's time to assess if the efficiencies being aimed for were being achieved.

Councillor Carolyne Culver felt that the timing of this proposal was terrible. She acknowledged that new jobs were being created as well as being deleted, but this was at a time when the labour market was poor and Councillor Culver was concerned that should people be made redundant at the end of this process then they could struggle to find work.

She then sought reassurance that existing staff could apply for the newly created jobs and had the necessary skills to do so. If there was a skills gap then would officers be trained to enable them to stay with the Council?

Councillor Stewart acknowledged the point around timing. She was in a position where she was able to emphasise with the difficult circumstance this had put some staff in. However, the timing of a restructure would always be difficult.

Councillor Stewart then confirmed that efforts would be made to fill any skills gaps to enable an officer to apply for a new role. The workforce should be empowered to improve their skills base.

Councillor Culver then referred to paragraph 5.5 of the report which mentioned single points of failure. She requested further information on that and particular areas where this was the case. In response, Councillor Stewart stated that an over reliance on some roles/individuals was not sustainable at this or indeed at any other time. She gave Land Charges as an example of an area of work that was primarily run on a paper based process and stated that the opportunity should be taken to make use of technology to improve the service provided and make it more efficient for residents using sustainable solutions.

Paragraph 5.14 stated that the Council would support staff in being redeployed, but Councillor Culver asked for clarification on whether staff would be compelled to be redeployed into a lower grade role. Would an employee still be entitled to redundancy if they did not take a lower grade role that had been offered to them?

Councillor Stewart offered to respond to this query external to the meeting once she had consulted Human Resources Officers.

Councillor Steve Masters referred to the points made around a lack of resilience. However, he was concerned that this could be a result of previous redundancies and cost

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savings, and therefore the issue of a lack of resilience was perhaps one of the Council's own making.

He highlighted the importance of investing in training for officers to enable them to maintain their role or move up to another role, rather than being redeployed to a lower grade post with only 18 months' salary protection. Posts were being created, but Councillor Masters felt that existing staff should be invested in so they could be redeployed and more done to avoid redundancies.

Councillor Stewart was not easily able to comment on past decisions as being relatively new as a Council Member, a point acknowledged by Councillor Masters. She did however give her understanding that there had been very few redundancies in recent years.

As already stated, resilience would be improved via the restructure and the new posts.

In terms of training, this was a topic she regularly discussed with officers. Officers should be helped to perform their role to the best of their ability and training was an important part of that.

Efforts would continue to be made to redeploy staff at risk of redundancy as soon as possible.

Councillor Dominic Boeck confirmed the point made by Councillor Stewart that there had been very few, if any, redundancies in this part of the Council in recent years. He added his view that it was the right time to take advantage of rapidly changing technology to improve service delivery.

Councillor Masters made the point that reduced resource could have come as a result of departing staff not being replaced rather than from redundancies.

**RESOLVED that** the redundancy payments detailed in the Part II report be authorised.

### **Other options considered:**

Consideration was given to not proceeding with the restructure. This option was ruled out as there was a clear business need to ensure that the new Department could function efficiently and effectively and the existing structure did not support this.

Consideration was also given to delaying the implementation of the restructure. This option was not considered viable due to the need to ensure that the new Department could function efficiently and effectively as noted above, and in order to meet current business need and even more so now in light of the impact and new learnings following Covid-19.

## **88. Members' Questions**

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

- (a) The question submitted by Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of capitalising on the increase in outdoor country exercise on foot around major settlements was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
- (b) The question submitted by Councillor Martha Vickers on the subject of the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
- (c) The question submitted by Councillor Martha Vickers on the subject of problems with dog fouling on streets and open spaces was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

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- (d) The question submitted by Councillor David Marsh on the subject of a debate and decision over the proposed new sports ground at Newbury Rugby Club by full Council was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- (e) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of proposed facilities for the Plan B site of the Diamond Field and the impact on local residents was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
- (f) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of funding and resources for organisations supporting children's physical and mental health was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (g) The question submitted by Councillor Phil Barnett on the subject of the number of extra housing units created by a change in use from office blocks to residential accommodation over the last three years was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.

### 89. Exclusion of Press and Public

**RESOLVED** that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers.

### 90. Potential Redundancies - Strategy & Governance (EX3976)

*(Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)*

*(Paragraph 2 – information identifying an individual)*

*(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person)*

*(Paragraph 4 – information relating to terms proposed in negotiations in labour relation matters)*

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 14) which sought authority for redundancy payments to be made, if necessary, following a restructure in the Strategy and Governance Department.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation as set out in the exempt report be agreed.

#### **Other options considered:**

Consideration was given to not proceeding with the restructure. This option was ruled out as there was a clear business need to ensure that the new Department could function efficiently and effectively and the existing structure did not support this.

Consideration was also given to delaying the implementation of the restructure. This option was not considered viable due to the need to ensure that the new Department could function efficiently and effectively as noted above, and in order to meet current business need and even more so now in light of the impact and new learnings following Covid-19.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.20pm)*

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M.D.', is centered in the upper portion of the page.

**CHAIRMAN**

**Date of Signature**

25 March 2021