

DRAFT

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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 10 JUNE 2021

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

Also Present: Melanie Booth (Group Executive (Lib Dems)), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance)), Sue Halliwell (Executive Director - Place), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Jake Thurman (Group Executive (Cons)), Councillor Adrian Abbs, Councillor Phil Barnett, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Councillor Jeremy Cottam, Councillor Carolyne Culver, Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor Steve Masters, Councillor Erik Pattenden, Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Garth Simpson, Councillor Martha Vickers and Councillor Keith Woodhams

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Royce Longton, Councillor David Marsh and Andy Sharp

PART I

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jeff Brooks declared an interest in Agenda Item 8, and reported that, as his interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest or an other registrable interest, he would take no part in the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

Councillor Tony Vickers declared an interest in Agenda Item 8, but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate.

3. 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 John Gotelee on the subject of the new council house building company was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation.
- (b) The question submitted by John Gotelee on the subject of the environmental impact of LGV's using the A339 was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (c) The question submitted by David Poynter on the subject of a Member pay rise would receive a written response from the Leader of the Council.
- (d) The question submitted by Simon Pike on the subject of publishing the draft Local Plan for Regulation 19 consultation was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.

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- (e) The question submitted by Simon Pike on the subject of a public consultation on proposed changes to settlement boundaries was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (f) The question submitted by Paul Morgan on the subject of whether the costs associated with a possible replacement for the Faraday Road Football ground being apportioned as a cost for the LRIE project was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (g) The question submitted by Jack Harkness on the subject of the location of a new football pitch in Goldwell Park was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- (h) The question submitted by Alan Pearce on the subject of the scope, area and cost of the environmental impact study for the LRIE, was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (i) The question submitted by Alan Pearce on the subject of the drainage system for the redevelopment of the Football Clubhouse at Faraday Road to a car park was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (j) The question submitted by Vaughan Miller on the subject of the view of Sport England regarding the demolition of the Faraday Road Football Ground was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (k) The question submitted by Vaughan Miller on the subject of a progress update on the trial collection of plastic trays, tubs and pots was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- (l) The question submitted by Gary Norman on the subject of the view of Sport England regarding the proposals for the development of the new Sports ground at Monks Lane was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- (m) The question submitted by Nigel Foot on the subject of the percentage of recyclable waste collected from both its kerbside service and at its recycling facilities that was actually recycled in the UK was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- (n) The question submitted by Sarah Slack on the subject of the Government Service Level Agreement Template was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.

4. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

5. **Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy - 2021 Update (EX4054)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6), proposed by Councillor Lynne Doherty, which updated the previous Covid-19 Recovery Strategy, which had been approved in June 2020. Councillor Doherty noted that the update strengthened the Council's focus on addressing inequalities, established seven new priorities, and set out in greater detail the actions moving forward.

Councillor Jo Stewart spoke in support of the report, specifically on the provisions for adult social care, which had been adversely affected by the pandemic, and on mental health and emotional wellbeing, which had been affected by the effects of lockdown, as well as unemployment and grief. The Surviving to Thriving initiative was also highlighted, and Councillors were encouraged to support it and reach out to local groups.

Councillor Alan Macro, noting the mentions of digital technology in the Strategy, highlighted those in the community that lacked the means or confidence to use digital

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technology, and asked that they should continue to have adequate access to services through the conventional routes. Additionally, he raised the challenges to shops and high streets in towns and villages outside of Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford, and asked that they receive the same support offered to the retail sector in the Strategy.

Councillor Doherty responded, agreeing with the need to make resources fully accessible to those who did not have access to digital technology, and highlighted access to affordable superfast broadband and providing digital technology to schools as priorities. On shops, she highlighted the £140,000 available as a 'welcome back' fund for small businesses and that the criteria for accessing that fund would be specifically open to those outside of the larger towns.

Councillor Tony Vickers, referred to the promotion of active lifestyles in the Strategy and asked if the Winter Service Plan could be reviewed to give more priority to footways and cycleways to enable people to use them more. Councillor Doherty responded that £500,000 had been set aside specifically for recovery projects and that bids could be submitted to the Recovery Panel for those improvements. Councillor Somner made a note to follow up.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, noted the focus on new ways of working in the Strategy and asked for assurances that these would not become the way people worked in the future without proper consideration of how services were delivered, and a consultation to confirm that these new practices were preferred. He also asked for the Strategy to be revisited later in the year to reassess the recovery and how it was changing.

Councillor Doherty responded, stating that new ways of working was now part of Councillor Cole's portfolio, and that new ways of working that were brought into place due to Covid-19 would be reviewed in line with residents, and that consulting with residents was part of the Communication and Engagement Strategy. On reviewing the Recovery Strategy, Councillor Doherty believed that the plan needed to be delivered first and foremost, but that it was not set in stone and would respond to the findings of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board and changes in Covid-19 demands, and that it would therefore be revisited and reviewed.

Councillor Erik Pattenden congratulated Councillor Doherty and Councillor Boeck for recognising the inadequacy of the Government's catch-up programme, as each pupil was being offered £50, in comparison to £1,800 in the United States and £2,500 in Sweden, and asked how much the Executive believed each pupil should be offered. Councillor Doherty responded that the catch-up programme was not inadequate, but it did not go far enough, and that rather than looking at per pupil funding, she was looking holistically at how it addressed inequalities across the country and provided targeted support, such as the recovery funding for disabled and SEN students, in an environment in which the pandemic had reduced the information available.

Councillor Pattenden asked about the support for young people, specifically those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and asked what would happen if that support was not actioned. Councillor Doherty replied that the Council had taken note of NEETs and had provided additional resources to help them into employment, and West Berkshire, as a result, had one of the lowest numbers of NEETs in the country.

Councillor Carlyne Culver asked whether the Council would lobby the Government to ensure provision for young people went directly to the schools and teachers rather than to consultants, and paid tribute to local volunteers who assisted local residents during the pandemic. Councillor Doherty responded that Matt Pearce, the Head of Public Health, was building on relations with local volunteers and consulting with them on how the

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Council could better support them. On the tuition programme, Councillor Doherty pledged to speak with schools on the issue.

Councillor Adrian Abbs, following up on the digital technology issue, noted that he had heard both criticism and praise from local residents on access to digital services such as the booking system and asked for more work to be done to address the divide between the 'digital rich' and 'digital poor', and noted that the Council needed to be careful on the decline of service uptake such as recycling due to digital transition. Councillor Doherty responded that recycling rates had held, but agreed with the point about access to digital technology, and offering alternatives to those who were not able to access or use digital platforms.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon seconded the report, noting that the themes in the report and the Recovery Strategy matched the themes in his Economic Development Strategy, and paid tribute to the Council's Officers.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The Strategy set out at Appendix B be approved.
- (2) It be noted that the Strategy had been reflected within the Council Strategy Refresh (2019- 2023) which had been approved by Council on 4th May 2021.
- (3) Any Recovery funding that was made available would be focused on implementing the actions set out in the attached Strategy.

Other options considered: None.

6. Economic Development Strategy Refresh (EX4098)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) proposed by Councillor Ross Mackinnon, introducing the 2021 Refresh of the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and a high level Economic Development Delivery Plan (EDSDP) (both Appendix C). Councillor Mackinnon noted that the overall themes of the EDS were the same as they were when it was first approved in April 2020; people, places, infrastructure and business environment, and these themes were additionally included in the EDSDP. The update primarily concerned changes in priorities and obligations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Lee Dillon noted the increase of unemployment in West Berkshire and the EDS's focus on re-skilling, noting that it was important to get people, specifically young people, back into employment. Councillor Dillon additionally noted that crisis grants to sectors of the community such as the taxi industry were still needed as the plan moved into a new phase. Councillor Mackinnon agreed, and responded that crisis grants were still being given, with £24,000 granted to the taxi industry.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked how the Council measured the success of plans to help and support small businesses, and what it would consider to be a successful outcome. Councillor Brooks additionally raised concerns at action points that sought to explore outcomes rather than intended to achieve them. Councillor Mackinnon stated that the clear actions were in the Delivery Plan. Councillor Brooks additionally asked if the Thatcham Master Plan was underway, as the Town Council was not aware, which Councillor Mackinnon pledged to follow up on.

Councillor Tony Vickers noted that he was pleased Newbury Town Council had a seat at the table with regards to the Newbury Master Plan, but not with their lack of a seat with regards to the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) Plan. Councillor Vickers noted that expansion of Newbury brought with it social repercussions, such as the demolition of both nightclubs, and asked for Economic Recovery Officers to consider social sustainability. Councillor Mackinnon took those points on board, and agreed to discuss the LRIE Board separately.

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Councillor Richard Somner seconded the report, noting that it was right to update the plan now, and that local small businesses were supportive of the actions taken.

RESOLVED that the 2021 Refresh of the Economic Development Strategy and the accompanying high level Delivery Plan be approved.

Other options considered: Not considering the refresh of the Economic Development Strategy Refresh and associated high level Delivery Plan. This option was not recommended given the Council's commitments as outlined in the Council Strategy 2019-23.

7. **Newbury and Crookham Golf Club Land Swap Proposal (EX4074)**

(Councillor Tony Vickers declared a personal interest in Agenda item (8) by virtue of the fact that he was a member of the Newbury and Crookham Commons Commission. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate).

(Councillor Jeff Brooks declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item (8) by virtue of the fact that his son in law was a golf professional at the club. As his interest was personal and prejudicial he left the meeting and took no part in the debate).

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 8), proposed by Councillor Richard Somner, which noted the actions taken to support the request from Newbury and Crookham Golf Club to exchange a piece of land in the Newbury and Crookham Commons for an alternative and equal piece of land owned by the club.

Councillor Tony Vickers thanked Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager, for his work on the proposal and attending three meetings of the Commission.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon seconded the report.

RESOLVED that the Executive noted actions to date, including; informal discussions with the Commission and the more formal consultation as set out in the Act and the results of this. That the Executive noted the intention of the Countryside Service to apply the tests set out within the Act (s18(3)) and to seek the consent of the Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission (the Commission) to bring about the transfer of common land status to the new land.

Other options considered: The Council has no duty in this respect. It can choose not to agree to consider the matter and therefore no other action is required. This has been dismissed by officers as there is a clear ecological benefit in this exchange.

8. **2020/21 Performance Report Quarter Four (EX3886)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 9), proposed by Councillor Howard Woollaston, which provided assurance that the core business and Council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 were being managed effectively.

Councillor Woollaston considered the performance of the Council and its officers to be outstanding, specifically due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, noting that it had adversely affected several performance indicators such as Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections in care homes, collection of business and council tax, and library and leisure centre use. Councillor Woollaston noted that the Revenue and Benefits team had done a magnificent job at distributing Covid grants to businesses, setting up West Berkshire for a rapid economic recovery, and that the number of rough sleepers had been reduced to zero.

Councillor Jo Stewart noted that the Council did not attain its target of 100% of provider services rated 'Good' or better by the CQC, but that Birchwood Care Home had received

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a Good rating. Councillor Stewart commended the care staff within the care homes for their work, especially those at Birchwood which had improved their rating, and noting a quote from the CQC which stated that the care home was the cleanest the inspector had ever reviewed, and the positive response to care home refurbishment.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter highlighted that the recycling service had improved, clearing 51% of household waste recycles, composted and reused, and expressed hope that there would be further improvements in the future.

Councillor Graham Bridgman highlighted the improvement in the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for provider services from Red to Green, and congratulated the care home staff for their work.

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that the Opposition recognised and understood the reasons for the Council failing to reach some targets in light of the Covid pandemic, and noted that in the Exception Reports (Appendix B) for completed assessments there was no statement of what the impacts of missing those targets would be and that there needed to be a strategic approach prioritising customer-facing sectors.

Councillor Alan Macro congratulated Birchwood Care Home on their achievement, and noted that it was a great shame that another care home had been shut down due to residents losing their lives to Covid-19.

Councillor Tony Vickers, making a point on behalf of Councillor Martha Vickers, noted that it was good that Child Protection was mentioned in the report and that the lack of attention due to child abuse and domestic abuse as a result of Covid-19 would be a long-running issue. Councillor Boeck noted that there had been an increase in Child Protection enquiries and that that was a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Doherty added that she was confident the right people were in place to respond to issues such as domestic abuse.

Councillor Vickers enquired as to what was meant by West Berkshire being in the top 25% for principle network (A roads) in need of repair. Councillor Somner responded that 3.0% of roads in need of repair was a very good statistic, and highlighted the fact that weather had caused increased deterioration of the roads.

Councillor Dillon asked when the Local Plan would come to Council considering that it had been delayed. Councillor Somner replied that it would be in October.

Councillor Lynne Doherty seconded the report, and stated that it was important to recognise that the report had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, but that there were numerous positives within it.

RESOLVED that the Executive noted progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas, good results for the majority of the measures relating to the Council's priorities for improvement, and remedial actions taken where performance was below target.

Other options considered: None.

9. **2020/21 Revenue Financial Performance Provisional Outturn (EX3914)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 10), proposed by Councillor Ross Mackinnon, on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets. This report was the provisional outturn position for 2020/21. Councillor Mackinnon noted that the Council had underspent its budget by £4.6 million, with £2 million of that coming from the Adult Social Care service, and £1.2 million from Children and Family Services. Councillor Mackinnon stated that it was to be expected that the budget would not be exact considering the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the Council had not overspent due to

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support from central government, which came to £9.6 million of funding without any ring-fencing. £1.8 million was added to the Council's reserves, and the Council had delivered one of the lowest council tax rises in the country.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked why money accumulated due to the under spend had not started to be reallocated to other places, and for example suggested £500,000 for schools. Councillor Mackinnon pointed to the low council tax increase as a place where those funds had provided some benefit.

Councillor Jo Stewart, in seconding the report, noted that she had requested a full review of the Adult Social Care model, including an independent external review, to reassure residents that the approach taken was the right one.

RESOLVED that:

1. The provisional outturn position of £4.6m under spend be noted. The under spend was 3.5% of the Council's 2020/21 net revenue budget of £131m. From the £4.6m under spend, the impact of Covid on spend against budgets accounted for £3.6m, with business as usual (BAU) accounting for the remaining £1m.
2. It be noted that the under spend would be added to the Council's general reserves, of which £2.8m had already been allocated to support the 2021/22 budget and balance the financial impact of the pandemic on residents with the cost pressures the Council faced. The increase to reserves from the outturn would therefore be £1.8m.
3. The ongoing impact that Covid would have on the 2021/22 budget be noted, particularly in Quarter One, as the Council continued to be supported by external funding and had seen reduced demand for some services.
4. A budget movement of £400k from Finance & Property to Capital Financing be approved. The capital financing and investment income budgets had been reviewed and realigned to reflect market conditions. The move reflected savings against capital financing costs and pressures against investment income.

Other options considered: None.

10. Capital Financial Performance Report - Outturn 2020/21 (EX3915)

The Executive considered the financial performance report (Agenda Item 11), proposed by Councillor Ross Mackinnon, on the under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget. The report presented the provisional outturn position for financial year 2020/21. Councillor Mackinnon noted a reprofiling of £9.9 million due to a delay in implementing the capital programme as a result of the Covid lockdowns.

Councillor Lee Dillon noted the report's mention of the CIL repayment in regards to the Waterside Centre, and noted the importance of maintaining existing capital assets so that they were in a good enough state for charities to utilise.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that nothing had been spent on the noise investigation into the Theale bypass, which had been the subject of a number of complaints, and asked that it be treated as a matter of urgency. Councillor Mackinnon noted that £15,000 had been reprofiled for the investigation and would be brought forward as soon as possible.

Councillor Boeck seconded the report and was pleased that a number of important projects had been completed despite the impact of Covid.

RESOLVED that:

1. The re-profiling of £9.9 million of expenditure from 2020/21 into financial year 2021/22 as recommended and agreed by Capital Strategy Group (CSG) be approved.

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2. The inclusion of the LEP, Local Growth Fund, funded project Theale Rail Station Improvements into the previously approved 2021/22 Capital Programme be approved.
3. The approved capital programme for 2021/22 be revised to include the confirmed funding allocations issued by the Department for Transport in April 2021.
4. The allocation of £250,000 to the Waterside project funded by Community infrastructure Levy be approved.

Other options considered: None.

11. 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 Adrian Abbs on the subject of missed opportunities to implement net zero homes since 2016 was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (b) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of making the Market Street Chamber available to Town/Parish Councils for critical meetings was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- (c) The question submitted by Councillor Jeff Brooks on the subject of the hours of work taken on the two CIL cases which were in dispute was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (d) The question submitted by Councillor Jeff Brooks on the subject of discussions with Readibus to resolve the contractual impasse was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- (e) The question submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of mitigation measures to alleviate traffic congestion from the 2,500 proposed Thatcham NE development was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (f) The question submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of a traffic assessment for Thatcham NE was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (g) The question submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of reducing flooding occurrences on the A4 London Road was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (h) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of areas in West Berkshire regularly monitored for air pollution was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- (i) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of which air pollutants were regularly monitored was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- (j) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of detailed traffic modelling in the Theale area was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (k) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of the Astroturf proposal at the Newbury Rugby Club would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- (l) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of the number of local children living in poverty in the area would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (m) The question submitted by Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of landowners remaining in control of the public domain forming part of major new housing developments was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.

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- (n) The question submitted by Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of progress on the LRIE Master Plan was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (o) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of the replacement of a grass pitch at Faraday Road and how it accorded with Core Strategy policy CS18 would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.
- (p) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of steps taken by the Council to perform a carbon audit to ensure net zero carbon by 2030 remained on target was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- (q) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of avoiding damage to ancient trees etc. in and around the Sandleford proposal was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- (r) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of supporting local taxi companies was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.29pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature