

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2022

Members of the Executive present: Councillors Lynne Doherty (Chairman), Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

Also present: Councillors Jeff Brooks, Erik Pattenden and Tony Vickers

Councillors present remotely: Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Hilary Cole, Ross Mackinnon, Adrian Abbs, Lee Dillon, Alan Macro

Also present: Susan Halliwell (Executive Director - Place) and Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Shiraz Sheikh (Service Lead – Legal and Democratic), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Jake Thurman (Group Executive)

65. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

66. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

67. 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) A question standing in the name of Mr John Gotelee on the subject of what action should be taken by the council when a developer starts work without satisfying conditions was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Countryside.
- B) A question standing in the name of Alan Pearce on the subject of a joint statement issued by West Berkshire Council and Sport England was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- D) A question standing in the name of Mr John Gotelee on the subject of a Plan B should planning permission not be granted for housing at the Faraday Road site was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- E) A question standing in the name of Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of an award of contract to Newbury Sports Hub was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.

68. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

69. West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-23 (EX4143)

The Deputy Leader introduced the report (Agenda Item 6) and welcomed the revision of the definition of domestic abuse introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. He thanked officers for all of their work on the Strategy.

EXECUTIVE - 10 FEBRUARY 2022 - MINUTES

The Deputy Leader reported that the Strategy had been the subject of a local press article that morning and he congratulated the author for highlighting the matter and for writing a gender neutral article.

However issue was taken with the article's claim that 'Domestic Abuse in West Berkshire was much worse than official figures'.

The Deputy Leader explained that the official numbers calculated by the council were lower than national Home Office estimates. It was conceded that, as with any reported crime, figures were potentially higher than reported, however generally was felt to be lower than nationally.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education welcomed the paper and commented that he was pleased that children were at the centre of the Strategy.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader welcomed the Strategy but queried how the Strategy and service could be sustainable if funding wasn't secured long term.

The Deputy Leader commented that government funding was initially for two years but it was anticipated that this would continue.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader queried why the Strategy identified only revenue implications and no capital impact.

The Deputy Leader responded that a delivery plan would be developed out of the Strategy which may then lead to capital implications.

The Deputy Leader agreed to respond in writing to the Liberal Democrat Group Leader in relation to a query relating to the digital service impact caused by the Strategy.

It was further agreed that a written response would be provided in relation to an action plan to tackle the current insufficient units of housing to support domestic abuse victims.

The Deputy Leader agreed to provide a written response to the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care in relation to section 7.4 of the Strategy and in particular the current lack of 'move-on' accommodation and the impact, if any, on victims.

It was explained that delay in bringing the Strategy paper to Executive had been caused by the consultation process and executive cycle. It was not anticipated that the delay would cause any impact in relation to ongoing government funding.

It was suggested by the Liberal Democrat Group Leader that whilst the majority of the paper was gender neutral there were instances where the perpetrator was referred to as 'him'.

It was further suggested that wording at 7.6 of the Strategy did not seem wholly applicable and should be revised, particularly in relation to male victims 'moving away from the city'.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care seconded the Strategy and commented that communication would be key in raising awareness amongst residents of the support proposed within the document.

RESOLVED that the Executive approve the Strategy, as set out in Appendix B.

Other options considered: To revise the current Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-23 to incorporate the support within safe accommodation aspect. This was dismissed due to the nature of requirements under the Act which is very specific whereas the current strategy extends beyond this requirement. Both strategies will be combined in 2023/24

EXECUTIVE - 10 FEBRUARY 2022 - MINUTES

which aligns in with the re-commissioning of the local domestic abuse service in West Berkshire.

70. **Newbury Town Centre Masterplan (EX4166)**

The Leader of the Council proposed, and the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside seconded the report (Agenda Item 7).

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development introduced the report which had been prepared in conjunction with HemingwayDesign consultants. It was reported that there had been extensive engagement with stakeholders throughout creation of the plan, and collaboration both with Newbury Town Council and the BID. It was acknowledged that the indicative costs within the report whilst significant, were also subject to change.

The Leader of the Council expressed pride in the work that had been undertaken and praised the collaboration, welcoming the Chief Executive of Newbury Town Council who was also present at the meeting. The Leader also thanked the BID for facilitating the bounce back of retail in Newbury high street, and HemingwayDesign as great partners to the project.

The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport echoed the Leader's sentiments but urged for more ambition in relation to the proposed pedestrianisation of the town centre and suggested an experimental traffic order with immediate effect. This was supported by a member of the Green Party.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside clarified that historically there had been a split view from residents in relation to pedestrianisation. Consequently he urged caution and reported that traffic monitoring data was currently being collated which would assist with any future decision.

The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate Change and Public Protection welcomed the plan but felt that an opportunity had been missed in relation to green open spaces by the plan's main focus on Victoria Park.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Newbury Town Centre Masterplan and Vision is endorsed by Executive as a strategy to reposition the town centre's offer to ensure it continues to meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors; and
- (b) The delivery of the Masterplan is taken forward in partnership with key stakeholders as opportunities arise.

Other options considered: the original project brief approved in July 2020 envisaged that the Masterplan would form the basis of a draft Supplementary Planning Document which would then proceed to statutory public consultation and adoption. However, the planned submission of the Local Plan Review in 2022 means that this cannot take place until after the new Local Plan is adopted.

The Newbury Town Centre Masterplan and Vision could be rejected by the Council, in which case it would not be taken forward. However, this is likely to result in lost opportunities to secure external funding and public or private sector investment for the town centre, to the detriment of local residents, businesses and visitors.

EXECUTIVE - 10 FEBRUARY 2022 - MINUTES

71. **West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (EX4142)**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside proposed and the Leader of the Council seconded the report (Agenda Item 8).

The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport welcomed the Strategy but commented that the River Enborne had been omitted from the list of main rivers. Further he requested that there be more emphasis on the responsibility of riparian owners.

The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care commented that the Strategy mentioned only 1 flood in 2013-14, when in fact there had been 19 towns and parishes, and 366 properties flooded during that time.

He further commented that the Strategy failed to address issues or suggest a management plan for the Theale and Burghfield areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside agreed to refer matters back to officers and rectify any omissions.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste commended the report and expressed gratitude that West Berkshire Council had been able to strengthen flood defences where needed.

RESOLVED that: subject to inclusion of the amendments noted above the Executive approves the West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2022-2027.

Other options considered: no other options were considered. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 places a duty on West Berkshire Council, as lead Local Flood Authority, to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses.

72. **Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2022-23 (C4124)**

The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader seconded a motion to refer the item straight to Council (Agenda Item 9).

RESOLVED that: the item be taken as part of an en bloc group and referred straight to Council without discussion or debate.

73. **Medium Term Financial Strategy (C4125)**

The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader seconded a motion to refer the item straight to Council (Agenda Item 10).

RESOLVED that: the item be taken as part of an en bloc group and referred straight to Council without discussion or debate.

74. **Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2022/23 to 2026/7 (C4126)**

The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader seconded a motion to refer the item straight to Council (Agenda Item 11).

RESOLVED that: the item be taken as part of an en bloc group and referred straight to Council without discussion or debate.

EXECUTIVE - 10 FEBRUARY 2022 - MINUTES

75. Revenue Budget 2022-23 (C4127)

The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader seconded a motion to refer the item straight to Council (Agenda Item 12).

RESOLVED that: the item be taken as part of an en bloc group and referred straight to Council without discussion or debate.

76. 2021/22 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three (EX4016)

The Leader of the Council proposed the report (Agenda Item 13).

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development introduced the report and noted that there was a projected year end overspend of £40,000.

Further to a query raised by the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Finance and HR, it was clarified that if specific reserves were set aside for a specific risk then if that risk came to pass, it was standard accounting to set the reserve against that risk as and when it occurred, and not wait until Q4.

The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care expressed concern at the long and short term predicted costs of Adult Social Care services.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development acknowledged that whilst government funding was due to cease the following year the adult social care model was under constant review.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care further acknowledged concern at the council's future Adult Social Care budget. It was reported however that experts from the Local Government Association were currently working with the Adult Social Care Director, his team and the finance team to provide some feedback and validation in relation to WBC's Adult Social Care model. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care committed to report back to members on the findings of the exercise, and seconded the report for approval.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the year-end forecast £0.04m overspend, after taking account of provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of budget setting. Without this provision, the forecast would be an overspend of £0.6m.
- Note the ongoing impact that Covid will have on the 2021/22 budget as the Council sees increased demand for some services, but continues to be supported by external funding.
- Approve the transfer of capital financing interest budgets from within individual services to Capital Finance.

Other options considered: None.

77. Members' Questions

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EXECUTIVE - 10 FEBRUARY 2022 - MINUTES

- C) A question standing in the name of Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of on-street EV charging points was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Countryside.
- D) A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of the Sports Hub was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture.
- E) A question standing in the name of Councillor Phil Barnett on the subject of dog waste was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Countryside.
- F) A question standing in the name of Councillor Owen Jeffery on the subject of the timeframe for receiving a written answer to a question was answered by the Leader for the Council.
- G) A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of the Readibus service level agreement was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Countryside.
- H) A question standing in the name of Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of the LRIE development site was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development.
- I) A question standing in the name of Councillor Tony Vickers on the subject of a planning application for the LRIE development site was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development.

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature