

DRAFT

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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2022

Councillors Present: Lynne Doherty (Chairman), Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Ross Mackinnon, Thomas Marino, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: ,

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Susan Halliwell

Councillor(s) Absent:

PART I

13. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2022 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

14. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

15. Public Questions

Councillor Tony Vickers raised a point of order querying whether any decisions made at the meeting would be lawful, given that members of the public had been unable to access the meeting agenda via the Council website.

Shiraz Sheikh responded that the agenda had been issued in a timely manner and made available in hard copy format at the Council offices, ensuring that any decisions made at the meeting were entirely lawful.

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

16. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

17. Adult Social Care Strategy (EX4229)

Councillor Lynne Doherty explained that she had approved a request by Councillor Jo Stewart to make a brief statement prior to proceeding with the remainder of the agenda items.

Councillor Stewart took the opportunity to report to Members the conclusion of the consultation in relation to the future of Notrees Care Home. It was noted that the original recommendation had suggested closure of the home due to the significant investment required to the building and the fact that it provided care for residents with relatively low needs which was a declining area of the market.

Councillor Stewart reported that the consultation had closed and thanked all who had responded. Feedback had been clear that the service was valued by residents, their families and the local community and that closure would be particularly detrimental.

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Councillor Stewart was pleased to announce that officers in Adult Social Care would update their recommendation to non-closure and explore ways to keep the home open.

Councillor Stewart reported that a letter would be sent to residents and their families informing them of the news, and an updated report with revised options and recommendations would be reviewed at Executive in September.

Councillor Doherty thanked Councillor Stewart for the update.

Councillor Stewart introduced and proposed adoption of the Adult Social Care Strategy (Agenda Item 6).

Councillor Vickers commented that he was pleased at the change in recommendation for Notrees Care Home.

Councillor Vickers queried why the report was not subject to 'call-in'. Andy Sharp responded that to delay publication of the Strategy, would delay production of the Delivery Plan. It was noted that there were a number of legislative changes currently taking place that the Strategy incorporated, and that not having a Strategy would weaken the position of the Council to respond to the changes.

Councillor Jeff Brooks commented that whilst he was pleased that Notrees Care Home would remain open, the proposals had caused much anxiety and the Executive should have been more thorough in their research prior to originally announcing its closure.

Councillor Brooks commented that the Strategy lacked detail and appeared to be a 'tick box' exercise.

Councillor Stewart acknowledged that in relation to Notrees Care Home it was not ideal to have put people in that position and that consequently she, and the Adult Social Care Service Director, had visited the home that day to put the residents, their families and staff minds at rest and alleviate concern.

Councillor Stewart commented that it was a shame that all strategies tended to attract the same criticism, when the intention was to try and introduce better services for residents. Councillor Stewart stated that the delivery plan would provide the detail to make the changes and commented that she would be working with the Adult Social Care teams to ensure a strong delivery plan.

Councillor Carolyn Culver drew attention to the 'Build Back Better' section of the Strategy and queried whether there was any indication from central government in relation to problems that it may pose for the Council in terms of cost and having to provide services to more people.

Councillor Culver further queried membership of the Carers Strategy Board, and what was being done to assist unpaid carers in relation to respite care.

Councillor Culver suggested that in association with planning colleagues it would be beneficial to ensure that new build developments included pre-adapted units of housing for the elderly or those with disabilities.

Councillor Stewart commented that Councillor Culver's final point was an interesting suggestion and that she would pursue it further

Andy Sharp reported that the Carers Strategy Board was comprised of carers' organisations and carers themselves, and that he would provide a more detailed written response following the meeting.

Andy Sharp commented that 'Build Back Better' was still evolving, however some government guidance had been received which officers were analysing and reviewing in relation to costs and impact.

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In relation to section 3.10 of the Strategy, Councillor Vickers commented that historically there was a team who used to visit the elderly and disabled and provide 'hands on' guidance in using digital technology. Councillor Vickers queried whether this still occurred.

Andy Sharp commented that it was part of the model of care and support that was currently provided.

Councillor Stewart commented that improving respite care was particularly important and that options were being investigated in relation to proposals for the future of Notrees Care Home.

Councillor Graham Bridgman drew attention to the size of the adult population detailed on page 6 of the Strategy, commenting that the numbers were estimated in mid-2019 and based on the 2011 Census figures. Councillor Bridgman noted that the over 65 population was estimated as 30,568, and that numbers recently published in the 2021 Census had reported a figure of 31,600. This equated to a 3.38% increase between 2011 and 2021. As such, Councillor Bridgman concluded that West Berkshire was an area with a growing over 65 population which would ultimately lead to increased pressure on the Adult Social Care service.

Councillor Bridgman seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that: Executive adopt and publish the Adult Social Care Strategy.

18. **Contract Award for Downlands Sports Centre Expansion Project (EX4199)**

Councillor Ross Mackinnon introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 7), which sought delegated authority to award the contract for expansion works at the Downlands Sports Centre following the tender process.

Councillor Culver requested details of the timetable for the tendering process and planning application, querying whether the tender exercise would be dependent on first obtaining planning permission.

Councillor Mackinnon acknowledged that he did not have the information and so would respond to Councillor Culver following the meeting.

Councillor Howard Woollaston seconded the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Delegate authority to Executive Director - People to award the contract for the Downlands Sports Centre Expansion Project to the successful bidder following a full tender process, in consultation with the Executive Director (Resources) and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- Delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services to finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments to the terms of the agreement which are necessary to reach final agreement but do not materially affect the intent and substance of the agreement.

Other options considered: Permission to go out to tender was sought from Procurement Board. The procurement options were set out in the procurement strategy.

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19. **Contract Award for The Castle at Theale Secondary SEMH/ ASD Provision-Phase 4 Main Works (EX4180)**

Councillor Dominic Boeck introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 8), which sought delegated authority to award the contract for Phase 4 Main Works of The Castle at Theale Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Secondary Provision project following the tender process.

In seconding the report, Councillor Mackinnon commented that the contract would provide essential provision and real enhancement to the services provided for the children at the school.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Delegate authority to the Head of Education Services to award the contract for Phase 4 the Castle at Theale SEMH/ASD Secondary Provision to the successful bidder following a full tender process, in consultation with the Executive Director (Resources) and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- Delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services to finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments to the terms of the agreement which are necessary to reach final agreement but do not materially affect the intent and substance of the agreement.

Other options considered: Permission to go out to tender was sought from Procurement Board. The procurement options were set out in the procurement strategy.

20. **Recovery Strategy - Closure Report (EX4225)**

Councillor Doherty introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 9), which summarised the actions that had occurred to deliver the Covid-19 Recovery Strategy, and notified Members of the intention to move all outstanding work into Business As Usual and be considered as part of the future Council Strategy 2023-27.

Councillor Doherty recognised the significant long term impact that Covid would have on the district, particularly having very sadly caused the death of three hundred and thirty-two residents to date.

Councillor Doherty noted that the Covid-19 Recovery Strategy had received cross-party partnership and unity in recognising the three key areas of focus, namely health, education and the economy.

Councillor Doherty highlighted the help of volunteers in rolling out the vaccine across the county, the fact that four hundred and fifty West Berkshire business had benefitted from £6.42M of Additional Restrictions Grant funding (ARG), and the beneficial impact to health which had been achieved with the 'Get Active' and 'Surviving to Thriving' initiatives in partnership with the Greenham Trust.

Councillor Doherty thanked everybody for their work in making the Covid-19 Recovery Strategy so successful.

Councillor Mackinnon thanked the Revenue and Benefits Team for working so hard to ensure that grant money was awarded to businesses as quickly as possible.

Councillor Stewart commented that there was a small sum of 'Surviving to Thriving' money left should any community group have a project for improving mental health that required additional funding.

Councillor Erik Pattenden queried how well 'catch up' was doing in schools, and what was being done to redress the education that had been missed as a result of Covid.

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Councillor Doherty referred Councillor Pattenden to page 87 of the Agenda pack which detailed the programmes in place to assist, but acknowledged that information was still coming to light as to long term effects, and that it was likely that work would be required for many years to come.

Councillor Boeck commented on a recent press release in relation to Key Stage 2 results which noted that results were generally not as good as pre-pandemic, but that reading scores had improved from past years.

Councillor Culver expressed the Green Group's thanks to all that had worked so hard during lockdown, particularly the volunteers and community groups, and to the Council for all the help given to local businesses.

In relation to the lack of available domiciliary care referred to on page 76 of the agenda pack, Councillor Vickers queried whether it was due to the latest Covid variant or to the lack of competitiveness in the job market.

Andy Sharp reported that it was a national issue as well as being a local problem. He commented that West Berkshire Council had been successful in supporting the market through Covid in comparison to other local authorities, and added that work was underway to try and grow the workforce.

Councillor Bridgman seconded the report, and reflected that whilst there was a move to a 'business as usual approach', Covid had not disappeared and that needed to be reflected to remind the public that people still needed to be aware of the continued, albeit reduced threat.

Councillor Bridgman commented that the community response had been magnificent and that the town and parish involvement and engagement that had been initiated was now being built upon.

RESOLVED that: Executive approve the disbanding of Covid-19 recovery work and move any outstanding work into 'business as usual' and/or form part of the Council Strategy 2023-27.

Other options considered: Council could continue monitoring the Strategy but this has been disregarded as it is substantively completed. The Council could also formulate a new Strategy for the longer term but this is disregarded as this thinking should be built into the wider Council Strategy for 2023-27.

21. **2021/22 Performance Report Quarter Four (EX4003)**

Councillor Marino introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 10), which sought to provide assurance that the core business and Council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 were being managed effectively. Councillor Marino commended all officers for their hard and tireless work.

The report highlighted a number of improvement achievements as well as successes in the delivery of core business services. In cases where performance had fallen below the expected level, information was presented on the remedial action taken and the impact of that action.

Councillor Stewart acknowledged that Adult Social Care had not managed to achieve a 100% success rate in relation to CQC inspections which had been a big disappointment to the team. Councillor Stewart commented that the team had worked hard at Birchwood nursing home to address the concerns that had been highlighted. Councillor Stewart reported that the rise in adult safeguarding enquiries had been as a direct result of the Birchwood nursing home findings.

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Councillor Stewart commended the hard work of the financial assessments team that had worked tirelessly, resulting with only two assessments short of 100% completion.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter noted that in relation to litter, Covid had initially had an impact by forcing a shift in resources from street care to household waste collection. Whilst it was being rectified, Councillor Ardagh-Walter admitted that rates were still not back to expected levels, but was confident that they would be in the near future.

Further, Councillor Ardagh-Walter acknowledged that recycling rates were slightly lower than expected, but suggested that the forthcoming food waste collection service, which was due to start at the end of October, would significantly drive the figures up within two years.

Councillor Ardagh-Walter noted that fly tipping had risen during the pandemic but was now starting to reduce to pre-pandemic numbers. He reported that resources had been added to the fly-tipping enforcement team with the hope that the numbers would reduce further soon.

Councillor Richard Somner acknowledged that there were a number of red RAG rated items within his own Portfolio. He reported that in relation to the Highways department, a number of projects were still suffering from the effects of the pandemic but Councillor Somner re-assured Members and residents that projects had only been delayed and not cancelled.

Councillor Somner reported that he was working with senior executives to look at the structure of the Planning department and how it worked with its customer base, and was hoping for improvements in the near future.

Councillor Brooks commented that the actions lacked updates and current target dates. Councillor Marino acknowledged the comment and agreed to review with officers.

Councillor Vickers commented that the target for repair of 'A' roads seemed quite demanding (page 146). Councillor Somner commented that it was a local target for the area to get into the top 25% nationally and agreed that it was a stringent target.

Councillor Vickers voiced concern over the financial implications update in relation to adopting a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (page 147), that noted 'the eventuality that the project cannot be completed'. Councillor Somner felt that such an outcome would be highly unlikely and did not currently envisage not completing the scheme.

Councillor Vickers queried whether housing benefit claim targets had been reviewed, given the rise in the cost of living and the potential increase in number of claims.

Councillor Mackinnon replied that the target had been challenging, and only just missed. He noted that there had been a 500% increase in grant applications and payments in the previous quarter, and whilst noting the rising cost of living, hoped that performance against the target would improve as applications reduced.

Councillor Vickers queried the remedial target detailed on page 156 that stated that the performance target would be achieved 'going forward'.

Councillor Somner reported that a date could not currently be provided but that work was ongoing and he was happy to discuss the matter further with Councillor Vickers at future meetings of the Planning Advisory Group.

Councillor Vickers queried the reason for ongoing delays to the provision of cycle routes (page 162). Jon Winstanley reported that delays were due to lengthy negotiations with private landowners.

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Councillor Pattenden commented that in relation to the 'percentage of Children in Care where the child has been visited in the past 6 weeks' exception report, the remedial action that the figure was 'expected to gradually return to normal' did not seem particularly ambitious.

Councillor Boeck agreed that the point was well made, but that the service was focusing on the issue and the figure was improving, having increased to 91% the previous month. Councillor Boeck stated that children were not at risk by the target not being achieved.

Councillor Pattenden queried the exception reports detailed on pages 157 and 158, observing that both sets of figures appeared to be getting worse rather than improving.

In relation to the report detailed on page 158, Councillor Boeck reported that there was a process problem and that the figures reflected the manner in which the reporting was done rather than the number of children affected.

RESOLVED that: Executive note the 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.

22. **Statutory Consultation on Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2022**

Councillor Marino, introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 11), and thanked Members for allowing its urgent review. The report reviewed the hackney carriage fare scale in the light of increasing fuel costs, and asked the Executive to consider a variation to the current table of fares which would be consulted on if this was recommended.

Councillor Marino reported that following informal consultation there had been support amongst the trade for both a 5% and 10% fare increase. As a consequence an increase of 8% was proposed.

Councillor Marino clarified that as an amendment to the report, fouling charges of £75 for the interior and £25 for the exterior of the vehicle were also being proposed.

Councillor Bridgman highlighted a required amendment to the fare tables suggesting a change in wording from 'Maximum requirement' to 'Minimum requirement'.

Councillor Marino clarified that should fuel prices reduce, the hackney carriage fares would be adjusted accordingly.

Councillor Somner encouraged the industry to explore alternatives to fuel, so as to avoid rising fuel costs in the future.

Councillor Vickers suggested that the notice of proposed fare changes be clearly displayed to all passengers.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- **NOTES** the existing tariffs which have been in place since 19 November 2021 (Appendix A).
- **CONSIDERS** the reasons for the proposals, the outcome of the recent non-statutory consultation undertaken with the Taxi Trade as set out in Appendix B and the views of the Licensing Committee.
- **RESOLVES** whether or not to make variations to the current table of fares for hackney carriage tariffs based on the proposals set out in Appendix C or Ci to this report.

If the Executive decides to make any changes to the current table of fares they are asked to:

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- **RESOLVE** that the period within which objections to the variation(s) can be made (the statutory consultation) will be the 14 July 2022 to the 28 July 2022 or a longer period determined at the meeting.
- **AGREE** that a public notice (akin to the one set out in Appendix D) will be placed in the Newbury Weekly News and the Reading Chronicle on the 14 July 2022.
- **AGREE** that the consultation will be promoted on the website and a note will be displayed at the Market Street Offices by the 14 July 2022.
- **AGREE** that a copy of the notice should be emailed individually to all West Berkshire licensed Hackney Carriage Proprietors for their comments.
- **NOTE** that if objections are received, and not withdrawn, the Executive at its meeting on the 22 September 2022 will consider the objections and determine whether the varied table of fares shall be modified or not, and set a date when the varied table of fares, with or without modification, will come into operation. The implementation date must be no later than two months after the period for objections closes.
- **NOTE** that if no objections are received, or if the objections are withdrawn, the varied table of fares will come into effect on the day after the statutory consultation closes.
- **NOTE** that the outcome of the statutory consultation and any subsequent decisions of the Executive will be reported back to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee due to take place on the 7 November 2022.

Other options considered:

- Not to make any variations to the tariffs.
- To delay the decision to make any variations until the September Executive meeting.

23. Members' Questions

Councillor Brooks had left the meeting at 6:30pm and so would receive a written response to his question.

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

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature