

# DRAFT

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

## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2022

**Councillors Present in the Council Chamber:** Rick Jones (Chairman), Alan Law (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Steve Ardagh-Walter, Phil Barnett, Jeff Beck, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Jeff Brooks, Jeff Cant, James Cole, Jeremy Cottam, Carolyne Culver, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Clive Hooker, Gareth Hurley, Owen Jeffery, Tony Linden, Royce Longton, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, Thomas Marino, David Marsh, Steve Masters, Geoff Mayes, Andy Moore, Biyi Oloko, Graham Pask, Erik Pattenden, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart, Martha Vickers, Tony Vickers, Andrew Williamson, Keith Woodhams and Howard Woollaston.

**Councillors present remotely:** Councillor Hilary Cole and Councillor Lee Dillon.

**Also present in the Council Chamber:** Honorary Aldermen Paul Bryant and Andrew Rowles, Andy Sharp (Executive Director (People)), Eric Owens (Interim Executive Director (Place)), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director (Resources)), Sarah Clarke (Service Director, Strategy and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Bryan Lyttle (Planning Policy Manager), Elise Kinderman (Team Leader – Minerals and Waste) and Vicki Yull (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

**Also present remotely:** Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive).

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from:** Councillor Nassar Hunt and Councillor Claire Rowles, Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen Keith Chopping, Graham Jones, Mollie Lock, Anthony Stansfeld and Quentin Webb.

## PART I

### 58. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that 19 events had been attended since the last meeting of Council. He and the Vice-Chairman had met with a wide variety of organisations and attended several ceremonies to promote and inform the public about the Council.

The Chairman reported the sad news of the recent death of Mr James Rees, one of the first Independent Members who had worked with the Council for over ten years.

The Chairman concluded by noting the important, complex and sensitive items for discussion on the agenda. He invited Members to focus on completing the business in as professional, constructive and harmonious a manner as possible, not to repeat matters that had already been discussed, and to be respectful of each other during debate.

### 59. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 60. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman acknowledged the advice provided by the Monitoring Officer concerning the fact that living or working in West Berkshire would not automatically give rise to any form of interest for a Member in the recommendations related to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, or the Local Plan Review.

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

Councillors Jeff Brooks, Owen Jeffery and Tom Marino declared an interest in Agenda Item 19. Notices of Motion but reported that, as their interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

### 61. Petitions

Councillor James Cole presented a petition containing 1535 signatures which called upon the Council to adopt a policy of ensuring that the correct amounts of money due were charged for any and all services for which charges were levied, and that reimbursement would be provided to any resident or service user who had been charged in error or had been charged where no charge should have been levied. The Chairman stated that this petition would be reviewed by officers who would confirm to Councillor Cole within ten days what action would be taken on it.

### 62. Public Questions

The Chairman re-ordered the questions as published in the Agenda. The questions were instead considered in the order set out below.

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

- (a) A question standing in the name of Simon Pike on the subject of the conclusions and recommendations of the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for North East Thatcham was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (c) It was agreed that a question standing in the name of Anthony King on the subject of the impact of the Membury Industrial Area on the B4000 / Ermin Street would receive a written response given that he was unable to attend the meeting.
- (e) A question standing in the name of Sam Coppinger on the subject of further B8 development at Membury was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (h) A question standing in the name of Sam Coppinger on the subject of development on the Membury Industrial Estate without a Supplementary Planning Document was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (n) A question standing in the name of Paula Saunderson on the subject of the Local Plan Review was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (b) A question standing in the name of Ruth Steedman on the subject of the rollout of electric vehicle charging points was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (d) A question standing in the name of Graham Storey on the subject of social housing within West Berkshire meeting the Decent Homes Standard was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.
- (f) A question standing in the name of Paul Morgan on the subject of the engagement and involvement with Hemingway Design on the London Road Industrial Estate Project Refresh was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (g) A question standing in the name of Vaughan Miller on the subject of improvements to kerbside recycling collections was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation.
- (j) A question standing in the name of John Gotelee on the subject of plot by plot planning on the London Road Industrial Estate meeting common drainage law was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

- (l) A question standing in the name of Sam Coppinger on the subject of development on the Membury Industrial Estate without a Surface Water Management Plan was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (i) A question standing in the name of Paul Morgan on the subject of a root and branch review to identify savings in the Council's budget was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (k) A question standing in the name of Vaughan Miller on the subject of the proposed stadium not allowing Newbury Football Club to grow beyond Step 4 was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.
- (o) A question standing in the name of Sam Coppinger on the subject of the Local Plan Review was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (m) A question standing in the name of Vaughan Miller on the subject of spend on the Lido and Sports Hub was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.

### 63. Membership of Committees

Council considered a number of changes to committee membership that had been put forward by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lynne Doherty. These proposals were seconded by Councillor Graham Bridgman.

Councillor Alan Macro expressed his disappointment that Councillor Claire Rowles would no longer be involved in the Health Scrutiny Committee. He wished to express his profound gratitude to her for her hard work and involvement since its establishment.

It was put to the vote and duly **RESOLVED** that the following changes would be made:

- Mr Simon Carey to be appointed as an Audit Independent Person on the Governance and Ethics Committee.
- Councillor Alan Law to replace Councillor Claire Rowles as a substitute member on the Governance and Ethics Committee.
- Councillor Graham Pask to replace Councillor Claire Rowles as a member of the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- Councillor Graham Pask to replace Councillor Claire Rowles as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
- Councillor Jeff Beck to replace Councillor Claire Rowles as a member of the Western Area Planning Committee.
- Councillor Garth Simpson to replace Councillor Jeff Beck as a substitute member of the Western Area Planning Committee.
- Councillor Ross Mackinnon to replace Councillor Claire Rowles as a member of the Appeals Panel.
- Councillor Howard Woollaston to replace Councillor Claire Rowles as the Council's representative on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel.

### 64. Motions from Previous Meetings

Members were asked to note the response to a Motion from Councillor Tony Linden regarding Sprinklers which had been tabled at a previous Council meeting. As the Motion had been discussed and responded to by the Executive at its meeting on 3 November 2022, it was not proposed to revisit the discussion on this item at this meeting.

### 65. Licensing Committee

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Licensing Committee had met on 7 November 2022.

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

### 66. **Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Personnel Committee had not met.

### 67. **Governance and Ethics Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 20 October 2022.

### 68. **District Planning Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the District Planning Committee had not met.

### 69. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had not met.

### 70. **Health Scrutiny Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Health Scrutiny Committee had not met.

### 71. **Health and Wellbeing Board**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Health and Wellbeing Board had met on 29 September 2022.

### 72. **Joint Public Protection Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Joint Public Protection Committee had met on 5 October 2022.

### 73. **Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Adoption (C4262)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 17) which presented the final Minerals and Waste Local Plan and sought approval for its adoption.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Richard Somner and seconded by Councillor Graham Pask:

“That Council approves the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Adoption Version) for adoption pursuant to section 23 (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004”.

Councillor Somner introduced the report and reminded Members that the Minerals and Waste Local Plan had been presented to Council on two previous occasions, with the final version for adoption now being considered. He expressed his gratitude to officers for their continued work on developing the plan, responding to the consultation, and responding to the Inspectors comments. This would be the first West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and it provided protection to communities against inappropriate development. Councillor Somner emphasised that this was an important strategic document and would ensure that mineral extraction development and waste management facilities were planned in the most sustainable way, with the least amount of negative effects on the environment and quality of life. He highlighted that a policy on fracking was included in the Plan but that it was not anticipated that fracking would occur in West Berkshire.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that this would replace a couple of Plans regarding minerals and waste that were adopted over thirty years ago. The Plan allocated two new mineral

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

sites, one being just outside Chieveley within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Many years of gravel extraction had resulted in a large proportion of the Kennet Valley being turned into lakes, and Councillor Macro therefore welcomed that only one additional gravel site had been allocated in the Plan. He wished to note that West Berkshire would still be dependent on South Oxfordshire for soft sand, and to other authorities for the disposal of waste, which he felt could be a cause for concern in the future.

Councillor Steve Masters queried whether Councillor Somner, as a private individual, would join any members of the public in campaigning against fracking in West Berkshire should it be proposed for the district in the future.

Councillor Hilary Cole expressed her delight that the Plan had come to a successful conclusion following a lengthy and difficult process. She believed that, with regards to sand and gravel extraction, the industry should be encouraged to consider alternative construction methods given that it was a finite resource.

Councillor Tony Vickers endorsed the comments made by Councillor Hilary Cole and indicated his support for prefabricated offsite building.

Councillor Graham Pask believed there was general agreement that a minimal amount of mineral extraction should occur, and that such items should be recycled as much as possible. He also wished to extend his thanks to officers, and endorsed the Plan to Members for approval.

Councillor Somner concluded the debate by recommending that Council approve the adoption of the Plan.

The Motion was put to the vote and duly **RESOLVED**.

### 74. **West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 Proposed Submission Consultation (C4274)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 18) which presented the main changes to the Local Plan Review and supporting documents following the Regulation 18 consultation, and sought approval to undertake a further public consultation on these documents in accordance with the West Berkshire Statement of Community Involvement and Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Richard Somner and seconded by Councillor Howard Woollaston:

“That Council grant delegated authority to the Executive Director Place to:

- i) Agree any minor typographical and nonmaterial changes to the Proposed Submission Local Plan Review 2022-2039 and supporting documents, (including the approval, prior to publication, of the final:
  - a. Air Quality Study;
  - b. Whole Plan Viability Report;
  - c. Employment Land Review Update;
  - d. Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment;
  - e. Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessments for Individual Sites;
  - f. Settlement Boundary Review; and
  - g. Equality Impact Assessment).
- ii) Publish the Proposed Submission Local Plan Review 2022-2039, and supporting documents for a six week consultation period in accordance with the West Berkshire

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

Statement of Community Involvement and Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

- iii) Following public consultation, consider and summarise the responses received, and submit the Proposed Submission Local Plan Review 2022-2039 and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for independent examination in line with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012”.

Councillor Somner introduced the report and explained how the draft Plan had been shaped following extensive evidence gathering, consultation with the public, neighbouring authorities and land owners in the district, and regular cross party meetings with Councillors. He thanked those who had collaboratively engaged with the process, and in particular the officers who had worked tirelessly to deliver the draft for consultation. Councillor Somner acknowledged the comprehensiveness of the Local Plan documentation included in the agenda pack and thanked the members of the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) who had regularly reviewed the content. He believed it important to emphasise the level of discussion that had taken place between the three political groups at PAG, and also to recognise the many changes to the draft Plan worked through as a result.

Councillor Somner referred to the recognition of the importance of the environment within the draft Plan, along with the impact of climate change and the setting of ambitious standards for suitability and environmental impact. He highlighted some proposals within it which included: the building of new zero carbon homes; infrastructure to support new development and provide additional services for existing communities; encouraging new businesses and job opportunities in the district; the protection of valued assets included in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and important green spaces as well as local fauna, and; a new (but smaller than previously proposed) strategic development site in North East Thatcham providing around 600 affordable housing units. The draft Plan also addressed and resolved major themes identified following significant communication with local stakeholders during the Regulation 18 consultation.

Councillor Somner advised that this was one of a number of critical plans that a Local Authority must have in place, and it established the parameters within which the Council could guide developers and Inspectors to key elements of planning prioritised as essential across the district. He noted that approval immediately gave weight to over 40 development management policies which included: health and well-being; water quality and the maximum amount of water to be used in new dwellings; trees, woodlands and hedgerows; residential space standards; residential amenity, and; sustaining a prosperous rural economy.

In conclusion, Councillor Somner drew attention to the purpose of the report which was to present the main changes to the Local Plan Review and supporting documents following the Regulation 18 consultation, and to seek approval to undertake a further public consultation on these documents in accordance with the West Berkshire Statement of Community Involvement and Regulation 19. He explained that this additional consultation would be undertaken on behalf of the Secretary of State so that the examination could focus on the key issues raised in relation to the submission version of the Local Plan.

**AMENDED MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Adrian Abbs and seconded by Councillor Tony Vickers:

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

“That Council grant delegated authority to the Executive Director Place to:

- i) Agree any minor typographical and nonmaterial changes to the Proposed Submission Local Plan Review 2022-2039 and supporting documents, (including the approval, prior to publication, of the final:
  - a. Air Quality Study;
  - b. Whole Plan Viability Report;
  - c. Employment Land Review Update;
  - d. Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment;
  - e. Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessments for Individual Sites;
  - f. Settlement Boundary Review; and
  - g. Equality Impact Assessment).
- ii) Publish the Proposed Submission Local Plan Review 2022-2039, and supporting documents for a six week consultation period in accordance with the West Berkshire Statement of Community Involvement and Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- iii) Following public consultation, consider and summarise the responses received, and submit the Proposed Submission Local Plan Review 2022-2039 and supporting documents to full Council for approval prior to the Secretary of State for independent examination in line with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012”.

Councillor Graham Bridgman sought clarification on whether the proposed Amendment was allowable under the Regulation 19 procedure, or whether there was any difficulty with it in law, before it was debated. The Chairman confirmed that planning officers had advised that the amendment was acceptable to debate. The Monitoring Officer advised that the most likely future meeting of Council at which this would be considered if delayed would be May 2023, and that planning officers had provided assurance that this delay would not invalidate any of the assessments within the current draft Plan.

Councillor Adrian Abbs proposed the Amendment for what he felt to be self-evident reasons as he believed it was eminently reasonable that something of this import came back to Council for final approval. He wanted breathing room to allow for the more careful consideration of these proposals and to allow the new Executive Director for Place to have commenced in post.

Councillor Tony Vickers wished to echo most of the comments made by Councillor Somner since he agreed there were many positive aspects to the draft Plan resulting from the Regulation 18 consultation responses. However, he noted that his political group believed that greenfield sites should be used for tackling climate change and growing food rather than building large, car dependent housing estates. He expressed disappointment that two large brownfield sites within the Newbury settlement area requiring redevelopment, namely the Kennet Centre and London Road Industrial Estate, had no housing allocation yet could take between 500 and 1000 homes without new infrastructure being needed. As a result of this exclusion, up to 1000 more homes were proposed for North East Thatcham than would otherwise have been built, all on green fields and in car dependent estates.

Councillor Vickers argued that it was unreasonable to expect Members to be confident that all the supporting documents amounted to an adequate evidence base, the foundation upon which the case would rest in the public examination. He remarked that it needed more work and time given that his initial reading of the documents had found minor errors such as a lack of cross referencing, and that the members of PAG had not had their attention drawn to the numerous evolving supporting documents at its most

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

recent meeting. Councillor Vickers confirmed that his political group were not prepared to approve publication until all Members beyond the Executive were confident that it would garner support from developers and the Inspectorate.

Councillor Vickers reiterated that planning officers had worked incredibly hard for many years but suggested they had been under resourced and that the timetable had been rushed by the Executive. He expressed the view that this was a political timetable, set to get the few key policy points of disagreement through to the Secretary of State before the May 2023 election. Councillor Vickers then drew attention to the recently appointed Executive Director for Place, whom he remarked should be the officer with delegated authority to take the Plan through its public examination with the full confidence of the incoming Council and its ruling administration. He further opined that delaying the decision on this matter to the May 2023 Council meeting would not be an issue since the current deadline for the Regulation 22 submission to the Secretary of State was the end of 2023. In doing so, Councillor Vickers believed that the corporate body of Members and Directors in place at that time would have a Local Plan more fit for purpose.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asserted that this Amendment was concerned with ensuring proper due process by having Council take a decision of this magnitude and not delegating it to officers. He observed that distinctions made by officers between minor and more substantive matters raised during consultation were subjective, but that a delayed collective decision by Council in three months' time removed that issue.

Councillor Alan Law sought clarification on his understanding that the Regulation 19 consultation was only for minor changes to the draft Plan, and that anything significant raised would result in the Plan being re-drafted. Mr Eric Owens, the Interim Executive Director for Place, confirmed that this was correct under the recommendations and the delegations proposed within the report. Anything significant would mean that the Plan could not be submitted to the Inspectorate and would then have to be reviewed by officers. The significant issues raised would then be brought to Council for consideration in due course.

Councillor Lee Dillon observed that the Minerals and Waste Plan had just been adopted for approval via a vote of full Council. In support of the comments made by Councillor Brooks, he pointed out that a matter of significance for one person might not be so for the next person, and a small matter in the context of the overall Plan might have an inordinate impact on residents in a Ward. He recognised that the public had the right to lobby Councillors on how to vote but argued that the delegation of this decision to officers removed the democratic accountability of Members. Regardless of the scale of changes required to the draft Plan following consultation, Councillor Dillon made clear his belief that any democratic mandate should come from full Council.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon called for the Amendment to be rejected as he considered it to be purely a delaying tactic to obtain deferral on the decision until after the May 2023 election.

Councillor David Marsh offered the Green Party's point of view about the principle in discussion, which was that far too few important decisions were debated properly or voted on by full Council. This had been a surprise to him upon election, and also to his residents when asking him his voting record. Councillor Marsh speculated as to why a Member of the Council would not want to have the opportunity to take the final decision on the Local Plan, especially since it only caused a relatively short delay of two or three months and gave Members the opportunity to represent their residents.

Councillor Bridgman suggested that Councillors Marsh and Dillon had missed the fact that public consultation had taken place during the Regulation 18 stage, which had fed in



## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

to the documentation presented for consideration at this meeting. In his view, it was not correct to amend the Motion in order to bring it back to full Council after the Regulation 19 stage, because any substantial proposals decided by the Inspector as necessary would have to be brought back anyway.

Councillor Jeff Cant commented that the draft Plan had gone through a protracted development process resulting in a very coherent document. He noted that anything beyond minor typographical and nonmaterial changes arising from the Regulation 19 stage would result in it being brought before Council again, therefore making this Amendment redundant.

Councillor Owen Jeffery confirmed that ten years ago full Council determined to do exactly what this Amendment was asking Council to do for this Motion. He pleaded with his colleagues to disregard the timings around the election, and to focus on what was best for the district by making the decision at full Council in two to three months' time.

Councillor Graham Pask expressed sympathy with the view regarding bringing the decision back to Council rather than delegating to officers. However, he noted that the Minerals and Waste Plan had already gone through the Inspectorate stage and was a decision for adoption, whereas this decision concerned moving on to the next stage of Regulation 19 consultation. It was then for the Planning Inspectorate to appoint a Planning Inspector to examine everything in detail, including responses submitted by residents and developers, and he believed this was the proper process.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter made clear his view that the Amendment was a political manoeuvre introduced at the last possible minute to stall the Motion, especially given the previous constructive participation of opposition Members in PAG.

Councillor Tony Linden reflected on his 35 years of experience as a Councillor and assured his fellow Members that this was the start of this process. He believed that the Plan should be considered by the Inspectorate without delay and so would be voting against the Amendment.

Councillor Abbs advised that the late submission of this Amendment related to his recent ill health. He highlighted that Council had agreed to do what the Amendment proposed in 2010 and to therefore not make the same decision tonight would be an anomaly. He stated that the Amendment was not political and provided Members the opportunity for further input. This could reduce the likelihood of feedback being provided during the Regulation 19 consultation which could potentially put the whole draft Plan into disarray.

Councillor Somner expressed his disappointment at the Amendment and the comments made during debate given the extensive and cross party working that had been taking place at PAG. He noted that the draft Plan had been amended as a result of the Regulation 18 consultation, and that the Minerals and Waste Plan had gone through the same process as proposed for the Local Plan. Councillor Somner suggested that the protracted process in developing the draft Plan meant it was time to start moving forward and to open the public consultation. He reiterated that any major issues raised during the Regulation 19 consultation would be brought back by default and stated he would not therefore be supporting the Amendment.

The Amended Motion was put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

Councillor Tony Vickers highlighted the importance of this being evidence based policy and expressed concern as to how developers and agents were going to respond to the consultation and public examination when, in his opinion, the draft Plan did not work as a cohesive set of documents. He asked that the publication and collation periods not be rushed and to allow the new Executive Director for Place involvement in the process,

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

though he acknowledged the opinion of officers that major issues had been addressed through the Regulation 18 consultation. Councillor Vickers concluded by praising his colleagues on PAG for their collaborative cross party work and reiterated his concerns that the failure of Members to have another opportunity to review the draft Plan would lead to dissatisfied developers and landowners successfully lobbying against it. He advised that his political group would not be supporting the Motion.

Councillor Dillon explained that his political group were not against every detail or policy in the draft Plan, and had welcomed the environmental policies being given more prominence. However, he and his group were opposed to this being rushed through before the election due to what they perceived as a worrying lack of key documents and outdated information. Councillor Dillon remarked that this seemed to be particularly true for those communities taking the largest share in this Plan period, quoting the reduced number of dwellings proposed in Thatcham and its subsequent effect on potential funding for a new secondary school as an example. He believed it inappropriate to invite local communities and stakeholders to give views on an unfinished piece of work but felt sure in assuming that the current version of the draft Plan would deliver more houses in Thatcham, in a shorter period, and with less education infrastructure. Councillor Dillon argued this was unfair, unsustainable, and resulted in future failure. He noted that the reduction or loss of any school would also impact the Playing Pitch Strategy which required the use of school fields to meet the required criteria of pitches within the area. He further noted other discrepancies relating to the growth study and it no longer being a valid master plan for Thatcham given that its housing allocation had been reduced. Councillor Dillon thought it irreconcilable that future housing allocation for the next generation would be left to delegated decision when the public would be making comments on flawed thinking. He called upon Members to pause and allow the collation of the correct information which could be taken to the public in full confidence that they could then make informed contributions based upon it.

Councillor Pask reflected on the many officer hours it had taken to complete the Local Plan Review and the comprehensiveness of the document. He made clear that he had always supported West Berkshire being a plan-led authority and that there was much to praise in the review such as the policies to protect the environment, water resources, listed buildings, and assets of archaeological importance. Other important policies which he believed would garner general support included exception sites to boost the rural economy and residential extensions. However, Councillor Pask expressed concerns regarding Policy SP17, the North East Thatcham strategic site, which he gratefully acknowledged had been reduced by 40% but felt would still cause an increase in local road use which needed to be addressed. Other concerns raised by Councillor Pask related to the use of Bucklebury Common to facilitate connection to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty given that its fragile ecosystem required protection, and the importance of having a strategic gap policy and a separation of settlements.

Councillor Phil Barnett, in relation to the comments made by Councillor Pask, submitted a plea that the strategic gap between Newbury and Greenham not be encroached upon further. He expressed concern over what he felt appeared to be factually incorrect wording in the documents, and he hoped that consideration would be given to the access and egress should the retail park in Newbury be expanded given the traffic problems already experienced on the A339. Councillor Barnett also mentioned that he could find no reference to the Newbury and Greenham golf course, he referred to the disturbance caused to residents from developments, and he also challenged whether the proposal for Newbury Racecourse and the need to have high quality sustainable development sensitive to environmental quality and the historical character of the area was actually taking place.

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

Councillor Alan Macro agreed with the sentiment expressed by Councillor Pask regarding strategic gaps, and he suggested gaps were also needed between Calcot and Theale, Tilehurst and Theale, and Purley-on-Thames and Pangbourne. He noted that in the east the emphasis had mostly been on Theale, and he was pleased to note that a housing allocation for Princes Hill had not come to fruition. Councillor Macro expressed concern that the lakeside development near Theale had begun with seemingly no provision for upgraded facilities and services planned, and that this and another 100 proposed homes would increase the size of Theale by around 25%. This continued development in the area was leading to ongoing complaints from residents regarding the lack of infrastructure which Councillor Macro believed would only get worse. He welcomed that a site from the Regulation 18 consultation for 20,000 square metres of office space had been dropped from the latest iteration of the Plan, but expressed concerns at the number of smaller developments on windfall sites of less than 10 units. He felt these were not accounted for resulting in more greenfield sites being developed than necessary. He concluded by suggesting that the Plan should not be submitted to the Planning Inspectors due to the inconsistencies between the documents and the incomplete documentation.

Councillor Marsh stated that developers should not be given 'get out' clauses if the overall number of zero carbon housing was to be increased, and that the Local Plan must also be effectively enforced. He expressed reservations that the Plan, in its current form, relied on building two large developments on greenfield sites which he felt was incompatible and contradictory to other policies expressed elsewhere in the Plan. As an example, he talked about Policy SP16, the Sandford Strategic Site Allocation, which he argued contradicted the prioritising of sites of lower environmental value on previously developed land, and conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Councillor Marsh also highlighted other policies in the Plan, such as the policy of not losing wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity, maintaining appropriate buffer zones for ancient woodland (which he believed at 15 metres to be inadequate), and minimising the impact of all forms of travel on the environment, and described in detail how building on greenfield sites did not achieve these.

In relation to maintaining the separation between Newbury and Greenham, Councillor Marsh referred to a number of proposals within the Plan which he argued reduced that gap. He also expressed astonishment at the statement within the Plan that SP16 was likely to have a positive impact on sustainability just because it would help to deliver new housing to meet local needs, especially since the Inspector who had approved the first phase of Sandford had acknowledged the damage that future phases would cause. Councillor Marsh then referred to the Warren Road access road, originally designated for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport only, which, without explanation, had been re-designated for primary vehicle access in the latest version of the Plan. He further explained the negative impact this would have on the surrounding area. He also noted that the single planning application to cover the whole Sandford site would not be brought forward because the developers did not agree with each other, and the Administration had chosen not to challenge them as they were of the opinion that this site was the most appropriate for strategic housing delivery in Newbury which Councillor Marsh disagreed with. He concluded by announcing that large scale developments on Greenfield sites were not green, not sustainable, did not protect or enhance biodiversity, did not promote active travel and were not compatible with this Plan. For those reasons, he advised that his political group would not be supporting the Motion.

Councillor Jeffery wished to focus on the proposal for 1500 houses in Thatcham which he argued would have a massive impact on every resident in the town. He referred to the

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

infrastructure promised as part of the proposal which he felt had been hollow. He acknowledged the pressure on admissions to Kennet School, which shared a site with a public sports centre and whose original main building was no longer fit for purpose. Councillor Jeffery expressed his disbelief that this issue had been ignored in the Local Plan Review and felt it to be a wasted opportunity. He suggested that Thatcham required a purpose designed, purpose built educational campus with proper playing fields provision, its own gymnasium, its own swimming pool, and extensive playing fields. It should contain an 1800 entry school, with 600 in an additional sixth form, along with a couple of primary schools. He further suggested that the existing school site could then be redeveloped for sustainable housing. In conclusion, Councillor Jeffery stated that a proactive Administration would be resolving the needs of its communities, and not just ticking a box for a given number of houses against a government plan.

Councillor Jeremy Cottam expressed his concerns that additional homes would be built without any reference to infrastructure. He believed the Plan was missing key information, and that children should be able to be educated in their local area. He felt it irresponsible of Members to support the Plan in its present form because of the missing information and lack of infrastructure, and that the Administration was putting this through at pace rather than with care.

Councillor Linden was pleased with the proposals for Pincents Lane, and he reflected that this Council had been more successful than neighbouring authorities in making sure that development took place in the right areas and at the right time. He noted that the Council had a more than five year supply of land and that the Inspectorate had indicated a lack of support for previous iterations of the Plan, but he felt that this process now needed to move forward. He acknowledged the concerns raised in relation to Thatcham and Newbury but remarked that development would be steady and necessary rather than excessive as a result of the Plan. In conclusion, Councillor Linden urged his fellow Members to support the Motion.

Councillor Martha Vickers took the opportunity to raise awareness of the Newbury Development Plan as referenced in the Local Plan Review. She highlighted the importance of obtaining residents' contributions to the Newbury Development Plan, and that it was accessible via the Town Council website. She noted that the deadline for ending the consultation on the first phase of the Plan had been extended until the end of January 2023.

Councillor Brooks, further to the statements made by Councillor Somner regarding PAG, stated that Liberal Democrat Members nodding at those meetings meant that those Members had understood the points, but not necessarily that they were indicating acceptance. Those Members had then taken those points to their political group meetings at which the position of the group had been agreed. He acknowledged that there were parts of the Plan that stood up to good scrutiny, but disapproved of what he believed to yet again be the dumping of thousands of houses in Thatcham with no infrastructure, irrespective of whether it had been reduced to 1500 units. He went on to highlight how his political party had subsequently put infrastructure in place during the 1990s and 2000s that the Conservatives had not provided in the 1970s and 1980s. He noted that there was time to delay the Plan but that the Administration was refusing to do so.

Councillor Abbs advised that the residents within his Ward were opposed to further development in Sandford. He noted that the Inspector had confirmed that the two sites did not need to be connected and Councillor Abbs questioned whether one of the developments could therefore be moved to another site with the potential for development. He suggested that those in opposition to Sandford would also be

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

submitting that feedback straight to the Inspector. Councillor Abbs went on to also suggest that West Berkshire should be viewed as a whole, particularly on issues such as what the villages and smaller locations required to remain viable, which could have been easily integrated into the Plan.

CouncillorCarolyn Culver wanted to focus on positive aspects of the Plan, which included its response to climate change and its promotion of sustainable homes and businesses. She referred to the advice from a company called Bioregional who had said an Inspector would be happy if the Council pushed further on its carbon reduction targets, and Councillor Culver welcomed this. She also welcomed the policy relating to housing type mix since she was very supportive of increasing the number of smaller homes available in the district. She believed that there was a discrepancy however when it came to planning decisions at Committee, as too often it appeared that full weight was not given to the protective policies already in place and enforcement was lax. Councillor Culver asked that going forward these policies should be more respected and communities advised as to why they were in place. She wanted to celebrate the policies around housing biodiversity net gain and climate, and hoped ultimately that the government adopted better policies and were more robust on matters such as climate change to help address the emergency being faced.

Councillor Hilary Cole reminded Members that this vote was for the Plan to go out for final consultation and that people would have ample opportunity during the six week consultation period to make their views known. She further reminded Members that without a sound Local Plan in place residents would be exposed to district wide wholesale development by developers who would win planning applications on appeal. In response to comments made by Councillor Abbs regarding viewing West Berkshire as a whole, Councillor Cole drew attention to the settlement hierarchy for villages and used this as an example to suggest that some comments made so far during debate had been ill-informed and parochial. She was concerned that Members should be looking at this Plan as a district and as a whole, whereas a lot of emphasis had been placed on local Wards. Councillor Cole also remarked on the very collaborative working relationship across the political parties she had witnessed during her involvement with PAG and expressed disappointment at the contrary comments made by the Opposition Group who she felt were making political points.

Councillor Law described how he had been involved both in 2010 and 2015 in bringing the components of the current Plan, the Core Strategy, and the Housing Site Allocations DPD for decision, and confirmed he had been a member of PAG for the last four or five years working on this version. He expressed surprise at the comments made by Councillor Tony Vickers that PAG had not seen a number of the key reports and explained how some had been brought in detail and some in summary format. Councillor Law set out how this vote was about local democracy and about who controlled and managed the local development in West Berkshire for the next 17 years, and he wanted to take forward the consultations and not delay the process. He also disagreed with Councillor Abbs and Dillon that this was the last opportunity for Member involvement with the Plan since Regulation 19 provided an opportunity to submit comments, along with the public hearing led by an Inspector. Councillor Law was concerned that voting against this Motion deprived the public of one more consultation before it went to the Secretary of State and a public hearing, and also could result in the Plan being discarded and started again. He noted that four to five years of evidence collection, research, review, and scrutiny would all have to begin again. He highlighted that this Plan suggested around 27 sites and about 8,500 to 9,000 houses, whereas developers and land owners submitted almost 250 sites and about 30,000 houses when asked during consultation. He argued that not having a Plan increased the risk of more than 9,000 homes across 27 sites being

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

built, and cited the example of planning chaos in South Oxfordshire District Council which rejected its Local Plan at a similar stage. He concluded by thanking the officers in Policy Development and urged Members to support the Motion.

Councillor Abbs requested a point of clarification on whether Members could, in fact, submit comments directly to the Inspector during that phase of the process as his political group had received conflicting advice on this matter. The Monitoring Officer, after consulting with planning colleagues, advised that it was her understanding that Ward Members could attend and had previously attended the public examination.

Councillor Ardagh-Walter began by thanking officers for their diligent and attentive work on the Plan and welcomed its emphasis on matters such as good environmental standards and biodiversity net gain obligations on developers. He then focussed on comments made by Members during debate regarding Thatcham. In particular he referred to comments made that a new secondary school had been promised as part of the initial plans for 2,500 houses which was now uncertain given this number had reduced to 1,500 houses. He agreed that Kennet School was full and that the secondary school provision needed sustained growth, but pointed out that fewer houses being built resulted in fewer school spaces being needed. He also looked forward to working in the future with officers and the Kennet School Academy to develop the best plan not only for the school but for the children of the town.

Councillor Ardagh-Walter also touched on the car use of residents in new housing developments and the fact that some people having fewer transport choices was something that should collectively be worked on. He believed it important to balance the needs of future generations wanting to stay in the area against the needs of more elderly people and felt that growth in housing was essential. In conclusion and in reference to comments made by Councillor Brooks regarding infrastructure not being put in place by Conservative Administrations, he quoted some examples where he felt Liberal Democrat Administrations had created developments without supporting infrastructure.

Councillor Mackinnon reflected on a recent example of cross party working with a Green Party member on a Fair Tax Motion which he felt had been effective and successful. He went on to talk about the petition relating to water companies which had demonstrated spontaneous collaboration from the Liberal Democrats resulting in a Motion agreed by all parties. He was disappointed, however, that three weeks later newsletters were being posted through letterboxes by the Liberal Democrats indicating the opposite. With regards to the Local Plan, he believed it was the culmination of five years of hard work from both officers and members of all parties on PAG and was disappointed at the remarks made by Councillor Brooks on not expecting cross party agreement. Councillor Mackinnon then referenced comments made by Councillor Tony Vickers on 24 November in The Penny Post that the Liberal Democrat view was broadly consistent with the district wide policies and that they would not be voting against the Local Plan being published for the Regulation 19 consultation. He pointed out that the Liberal Democrats were all now in opposition to the Motion and questioned what had changed in the days since that article was published. He suggested that they were in opposition for opposition's sake and were willing to ruin five years of work for a perceived political advantage. Councillor Mackinnon referred to the Liberal Democrat pledge to build 380,000 homes per year and the plans for zero carbon housing being proposed by Somerset County Council, and queried why the party members in West Berkshire were therefore not more supportive of new homes being built in this district.

Councillor Bridgman referred to the Newbury Development Plan as mentioned by Councillor Martha Vickers and took the opportunity to encourage any community to develop a Neighbourhood Development Plan. He advised that Stratfield Mortimer Parish

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

Council was now at the point of drafting its second iteration of its Neighbourhood Development Plan and noted that Mortimer was not being asked to take any housing in the Local Plan. Concerning comments made by Councillor Law regarding the planning chaos in South Oxfordshire, Councillor Bridgman wished to highlight the amount of housing being built in Wokingham which also did not have a Local Plan. He then drew attention to the original Regulation 18 consultation dated November 2018 which showed how long this process had been going on for and, to his mind, demonstrated that the decision about Regulation 19 was not being rushed. He supported the Motion as he thought it time for the Plan to be put before the Inspectorate and adopted.

Councillor Biyi Oloko stated his belief that the process had been agreed for this activity, and had involved the cross party working group. This next part of the process was thanking those involved for their work, taking the Plan through another round of consultation and subsequent independent examination, and entrusting that process to the Executive Director. He was disappointed at what he perceived to be political jousting, especially because of the prior involvement and work of the cross party working group. Councillor Oloko also mentioned the litany of issues and complaints about the content of the Plan raised by the Opposition and his surprise, therefore, at the wording of the Motion Amendment they had proposed. He argued that the Opposition had been involved fully in the process of developing the Local Plan Review but were now denying the content of the work they had done for political grandstanding purposes. Councillor Oloko concluded by indicating his support for the Motion given that it concerned moving to the next stage of activity in the process.

Councillor Dillon requested clarification from the Monitoring Officer regarding the limitations on wording for potential Amendments to the Motion in response to the comments made by Councillor Oloko. It was his understanding that Amendments could not make changes to the content of the Local Plan because it would negate the whole Motion. Therefore the Amendment proposed had related to the process. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that advice had been provided to all Members that Amendments under the current rules of the Constitution could not be to negate the Motion that had been moved. Any Amendment therefore that sought to change the recommendations within the Plan itself would have failed because the whole Plan would then have failed due to all of the assessments and documents supporting that.

Councillor Tom Marino stated how effective and productive he considered working groups to be and therefore how saddened he was to hear the earlier comments made by Councillor Brooks regarding PAG.

Councillor Howard Woollaston advised that he had sat on PAG since becoming the Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for housing, and he wished to join with colleagues who had congratulated officers for their monumental effort in getting the Local Plan Review to this stage. He noted that PAG was comprised of officers and ten councillors; six Conservatives, three Liberal Democrats and one Green Party member. He felt there had been a consensus at the meetings to ensure that the Council was a plan-led authority to help avoid a potential excess of developments. He was therefore disappointed that the Opposition, despite their involvement in the process, had backtracked for what he saw as political opportunism. He commented on the planning issues present in most Wards, giving the Membury Industrial Estate in his Ward as an example, but he also accepted that there was a major shortage of industrial commercial sites for allocation. As such, he reluctantly saw the need for additional site allocation at Membury although he wanted to see major constraints on vehicle movements and traffic speeds in the area. He remarked on the constraints placed upon the provision of sites in West Berkshire due to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the risk of flooding

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

from the River Kennet. He also acknowledged the need for affordable housing to enable younger generations to live and work in the district. Councillor Woollaston explained how the Administration was on track to produce over 200 affordable housing units this year but, with the cost of living crisis and energy issues, the demand on the housing list was bound to grow. He further noted that smaller schemes of 10 or 20 homes would go some way to meeting that need but, in reality, larger developments such as Sandford, North Newbury, Calcot and North East Thatcham were needed to meet the demand of the Plan period up to 2039. Councillor Woollaston went on to say that he had sincerely hoped for cross party agreement to approve the Motion for the benefit of West Berkshire as a whole.

Councillor Macro interjected and claimed that Councillor Woollaston was accusing members of saying one thing in PAG meetings but saying another here at this Council meeting. Councillor Macro wished to note that he had spoken several times at PAG against the housing allocation for North East Thatcham and Theale and so the accusations of hypocrisy by Councillor Woollaston were completely unfounded.

In summation, Councillor Somner thanked those Members who had expressed support for the Motion which he knew was appreciated both by himself and the officers involved. He wanted to state a few points for clarification which included: that the Executive Director for Place started on the 6 March 2023 which was well within the period before the Local Plan Review was due to go to the Inspector; that any points raised during this debate about particular sites should be fed in to the Regulation 19 process; and the recognition that the removal of Pincents Lane had been proposed by Councillor Macro.

Councillor Somner also wanted to note that current negotiations with developers were proactive, and that negotiation prior to applications being submitted was a correct and efficient process to help resolve issues prior to submission. He referred to the doubts raised over sustainability and directed Members to SP17 which clearly detailed on page 64 of the Local Plan what sustainability was. He drew attention to the language used within the documentation, with references to 'will do' or 'will be', not 'should do' or 'should be', which he felt was forthright and telling developers exactly what was expected of them. He also acknowledged and supported the points made earlier by Councillor Culver around enforcement.

Councillor Somner reiterated that the Plan was now at a stage where it was ready to be taken forward. It needed to go out to consultation and to the Inspector so that the people of West Berkshire could make comments on it. He concluded by urging Members to vote in support of the Motion.

The Motion was put to the vote and duly **RESOLVED**.

### 75. Notices of Motion

*Councillor Jeff Brooks declared an interest in Agenda Item 19. Notices of Motion (Motion A: Support the Watermill Theatre) by virtue of his wife's former employment at the venue and his current status as a paying 'Friend of the Watermill'. 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 and vote on the matter.*

*Councillor Owen Jeffery declared an interest in Agenda Item 19. Notices of Motion (Motion A: Support the Watermill Theatre) by virtue of his current status as a paying 'Friend of the Watermill'. 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 and vote on the matter.*



## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

*Councillor Tom Marino declared an interest in Agenda Item 19. Notices of Motion (Motion A: Support the Watermill Theatre) by virtue of his employment in the Office of Alok Sharma MP. 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 and vote on the matter.*

The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Rule 4.9.4, he had agreed to accept an Urgent Motion submitted by Councillor Graham Bridgman, Motion C (Constitution), the details of which were circulated to all Members prior to the meeting and published on the website.

As the Motion to be moved would rescind a decision made by Council within the preceding six months, in accordance with Rule 4.16.1 notice had been given under Rule 4.9 and had been signed by at least one-quarter of all Members of Council.

The Chairman also advised he would be re-ordering the Motions to consider Motion C first.

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda Item 19(c) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Graham Bridgman relating to the Constitution.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Graham Bridgman and seconded by Councillor Andy Moore:

### “Background

On 6 October 2022 Council approved changes to the Constitution (to Parts 4, 5, 6, 7 and elements of Part 13 – in essence the rules relating to meetings and bodies), but resolved that they were not to be introduced until 1 January 2023. The delay was: (a) to allow a tidying up of minor elements of the new rules, (b) to ensure that other Constitutional changes (to Parts 9, 10, and 11 - the budget and policy rules, the financial rules, and the contract rules) were brought to Council at this meeting (1 December) such that both sets of changes tied together, and (c) to ensure that there was no conflict between the two sets of changes.

The tidying up has been completed but the second set of changes are not yet ready to be put before Council.

### Motion

In order to ensure that there is no conflict between the key elements of the Constitution, this Council RESOLVES that:

- recommendation 2.1(g) of Agenda Item 17 ‘Updates to the Constitution’ approved by Council on 6 October 2022, stating that Council “agrees that the changes to the Constitution detailed in this report take effect from 1st January 2023” be rescinded;
- and
- it is agreed that the proposed updates to the Constitution already approved by Council will not come into effect until Council has also approved the revised rules for the Budget and Policy Framework, the Financial Rules, and the Contract Rules”.

Councillor Bridgman introduced what he believed to be a very straightforward and self-explanatory Motion. He expressed his gratitude to those Members who had signed to support the Motion as well as the members of the Task Group.

Councillor Jeff Brooks confirmed that the Task Group had agreed with and supported this Motion for the avoidance of doubt.

In summation Councillor Andy Moore, as the seconder of the Motion, stated he had nothing further to add to the introduction made by Councillor Bridgman.

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

---

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda Item 19(a) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Jeff Brooks relating to the Watermill Theatre.

The Chairman advised that an alteration to the Motion had been agreed prior to the meeting, and it was the altered version being proposed by Councillor Brooks and seconded by Councillor Lynne Doherty.

**ALTERED MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Lynne Doherty:

“This Council recognises, and welcomes, that Laura Farris MP has discussed the issue with the management of the Watermill and written to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport seeking a reconsideration of the decision. This Council therefore resolves to (a) write to the Arts Council and the District’s three MPs, in support of the Watermill Theatre and to ask (i) the Arts Council to re-consider its decision and consider what other funding options could be available to the Theatre, and (ii) the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP and the Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP to support that campaign, and (b) assist, and give advice to, the Watermill in respect of exploring such other avenues of financial support as might be available”.

Councillor Brooks introduced the Motion by highlighting the jewel that the Watermill Theatre was as a facility within the district. He noted that the Watermill Theatre had not only hosted touring shows, plays and musicals, but that it was one of a very small number of producing theatres in the South East of England outside of London. He referred to its production of a version of Stephen Sondheim's Sweeney Todd that ended up just off Broadway and won a Tony Award, which he felt demonstrated the quality of the theatre available in the district. He referred to the Theatre’s outreach programme which involved thousands of people across the district, including their work with young people. The decision of the Arts Council would negatively impact the budget of the Watermill Theatre as confirmed by Mr Paul Hart, its Creative Director. Councillor Brooks acknowledged the work already undertaken by Laura Farris MP to help the Watermill Theatre but argued that the Council also needed to take action and provide practical support such as asking other MPs to put their support behind it, or perhaps assisting the Theatre with their bid to the Arts Council. He asked Members for their unanimous support for the Motion to help continue the national recognition of the quality of theatre in the district.

Councillor Doherty quoted Othello, the last production she had watched at the Watermill Theatre. She stated that West Berkshire residents were lucky to have such a small and intimate venue in a unique rural setting, and agreed that the Council did need to provide practical support where possible. Councillor Doherty also referred to the work already done to assist the Theatre by Laura Farris MP, and encouraged residents to support it by purchasing tickets and becoming Friends of the Watermill Theatre. She referred to the potential for the Theatre to embed itself in to the community, and what it could take forward in its Business Plan to become sustainable.

Councillor Steve Masters welcomed and supported this Motion as he believed the Watermill Theatre was an extremely valuable resource, and a source of entertainment and great pleasure for many people across the district.

Councillor Lee Dillon referred to his visits with his family to the Watermill Theatre and their enjoyment of the pre-show meals. He noted that the Liberal Democrat Group had used it as an external training venue which he felt helped to demonstrate what it offered to the community. He described how his local school had struggled to receive voluntary

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

contributions towards the cost of attending a pantomime but that the availability and affordability of this local theatre meant it could be provided. He argued that it was crucial to maintain this asset in West Berkshire so that local children could experience the magic of theatre and the opportunities it brought, be it in acting, stage directing or behind the scenes doing arts, crafts and lighting. There was a whole economy around the theatre and Councillor Dillon felt lucky to have that in West Berkshire.

Councillor Graham Bridgman highlighted that the Conservative Group were using, and had previously used, the Watermill Theatre as the venue for their Christmas meal. He encouraged residents to use the facilities, to attend the theatre, and to use the restaurant.

Councillor Adrian Abbs indicated his support for the Motion and queried if it was possible for Council officers to visit the venue and provide advice where possible as part of the practical support the Council could offer to the Watermill Theatre.

Councillor Howard Woollaston indicated his support for the Motion and was pleased to hear the cross party support being expressed for it in the Chamber. He had visited the Watermill Theatre on a number of occasions and highly recommended it.

In summing up Councillor Brooks encouraged all Members to vote in support of the Motion and thereby vote to help the Watermill Theatre.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

---

The Council considered the under-mentioned Motion (Agenda Item 19(b) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs relating to insulation.

The Chairman advised that notice of an alteration to the Motion had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting, and it was the altered version being proposed by Councillor Abbs and seconded by Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter.

The Chairman advised that Council would not debate the Motion and, in accordance with Rule 4.9.8, this would be referred to the Executive for consideration as the detail of the Motion fell within its remit. A report would be considered by the Executive and the outcome of that would be reported to Council.

**ALTERED MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Adrian Abbs and seconded by Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter:

“Overview:

Council acknowledges that people living in poorly insulated homes suffer from significantly higher heating bills per sqm and are amongst the highest CO2 contributors from a heating perspective.

This motion commits West Berkshire Council to take a bold step in helping as many residents as possible and as rapidly as possible to have a positive impact on energy needs next winter.

Council notes:

- That we declared a climate emergency across the district, and we need to make progress on our district target as a matter of urgency.
- That the better a property is insulated the lower the need for any kind of heating.
- That for any insulation scheme, there will be a shortage of skills needed to implement the scheme.
- That many believe the costs of fossil fuel will not return fully to previous levels for many years, if ever.

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

- That better insulation is one of the best ways to jump up from a poor EPC rating.
- That we can learn from the government's current Sustainable Warmth initiative which comes to an end in March 2023
- That by having our own scheme we can more directly target relevant residents of West Berkshire.

### In order to help:

This Council will introduce a scheme which will begin by focusing on those who cannot afford to undertake basic insulation, or lack the skills, or physical ability to do it. The intent for the scheme would be to allow council to undertake a long-term programme which would help towards our enabling of net zero by 2030 for the district.

### Criteria that should be met:

- Living in a home or flat that has an EPC of D or below;
- Can demonstrate to the Council that they are not in a position to:
  - Afford the simple steps to better insulation, in which case material will be supplied;
  - Afford the simple steps to better insulation and don't have the skills to implement. In which case, materials will be provided and a suitable course made available for them to gain the skills;
  - Afford the simple steps to better insulation and don't have the physical ability to undertake the work, in which case, the material would be provided, and work carried out for them.

### This council commits to:

- Presenting a scheme to council a.s.a.p in order to be able to take advantage of funds like the Household Support Fund which we expect to get further funding from.
- Officers developing details for a scheme to be considered by the Environment Advisory Group at their next meeting, leading to presenting to the Executive for a decision.
- Officers identifying
  - homes that meet the affordability and physical ability criteria.
  - homes that meet the supply and training criteria.
  - homes that meet the supply only criteria.
- Officers to investigate creating a directory of local tradespeople who will participate in the implementation of the scheme.
- Officers to work with local education facilities (such as Newbury College) to ensure the suitable availability of short courses for those wanting to skill-up.
- Officers to present costs for such courses that will need to be funded
- Ensuring those that have the greatest need are helped first.
- Working with both the public and private sectors to ensure anyone meeting the criteria can take advantage of the scheme (no matter who owns the property).
- Applying for complete funding from government to fund the project.
- Investigating the creation of a WBC Insulation Bond that would act as a backstop or allow for the extension of the programme dependant on the success of the grant bid
- Approaching Greenham Trust to support WBC in this program with whatever match funding they could make available.
- Investigate other funding sources as the scheme develops".

## 76. **Members' Questions**

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

## COUNCIL - 1 DECEMBER 2022 - MINUTES

- (a) A question standing in the name of Councillor Jeremy Cottam on the subject of environmental causes being reflected in the Council's Risk Register was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships.
- (b) A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of the Council's plans for filling the gaps in provision of defibrillators across the district was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing.
- (c) A question standing in the name of Councillor Lee Dillon on the subject of the London Road Industrial Estate project not being in the Local Plan was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (d) A question standing in the name of Councillor Phil Barnett on the subject of contractors overriding planning conditions to suit their own schedules was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (e) A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of the Administration working co-operatively with opposition groups to set the next Budget was answered by the Leader of the Council.
- (f) A question standing in the name of Councillor Steve Masters on the subject of the availability of emergency accommodation was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.
- (g) A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of the current typology of the old football ground grass pitch at the southern end of Faraday Road was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (h) A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of when the recruitment freeze in planning would be lifted was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships.
- (i) A question standing in the name of Councillor Steve Masters on the subject of how many major developments completed since May 2019 had met the affordable housing target, in particular the 70% social rent target, was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.
- (j) A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of why the old football ground grass pitch at the southern end of Faraday Road had been or was to be included in the Brownfield site BR/201729 when the National Planning Policy Framework Criteria for Brownfield sites (as well as the Council's website) specifically excluded Recreation Grounds was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside.
- (k) A question standing in the name of Councillor Steve Masters on the subject of the current numbers on the housing register was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 9.50 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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