

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 20 JUNE 2023

Councillors Present: Carolyne Culver (Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Ross Mackinnon, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read, Stuart Gourley (Substitute) (In place of Geoff Mayes), Richard Somner (Substitute) (In place of Paul Dick) and Howard Woollaston (Substitute) (In place of Dominic Boeck).

Also Present: Councillor Adrian Abbs (Executive Portfolio Holder: Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity), Councillor Denise Gaines (Executive Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel), Councillor Janine Lewis (Executive Portfolio Holder: Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Country), and Councillor Alan Macro (Executive Portfolio Holder: Adult Social Care and Health Integration),

Officers Present: Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Paul Coe (Interim Executive Director – People), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance)), April Peberdy (Acting Service Director - Communities and Wellbeing), Catalin Bogos (Performance Research Consultation Manager), Neil Stacey (Network Manager (Highways)), Paul Martindill (Interim Consultant – Leisure), Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Services) and Vicky Phoenix (Principal Policy Officer – Scrutiny)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dominic Boeck, Councillor Paul Dick, Councillor Geoff Mayes and Councillor Iain Cottingham

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 7 March 2023 and 25 May 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Actions from previous Minutes

Members noted the updates on actions from the previous Minutes.

For Action 70, Councillor Somner noted that he had been unable to find a mutually convenient date to meet with Thames Water.

5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Richard Somner declared an interest in Agenda Items 6 and 7 by virtue of the fact that he had been involved in the decisions being scrutinised. He reported that, as his interest was personal and prejudicial, he would be leaving the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 by virtue of the fact that he had been involved in the development of the Sports Hub proposal. He reported that, as his interest was personal and prejudicial, he would be leaving the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

Councillor Howard Woollaston declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 by virtue of the fact that he had been the Executive Portfolio Holder for Leisure. He reported that, as his

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interest was personal and prejudicial, he would be leaving the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

Councillor Carlyne Culver declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 by virtue of the fact that she had been part of the Planning Committee that had previously considered the Sports Hub application. She reported that, as her interest was personal but not prejudicial, she would remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Christopher Read declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 by virtue of the fact that he had been a member of Newbury Rugby Club. He reported that, as his interest was personal but not prejudicial, he would remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

6. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

7. Items called-in following the Individual Executive Member Decisions on 16 March 2023

The Commission considered the call-in of the Individual Executive Member Decision (ID4317) of 16 March 2023 related to Active Travel Experimental Road Closures and Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Deadmans Lane (Agenda Item 6).

It was noted that the circumstances related to both call-ins being considered at this meeting were unusual in that the decisions had been called in by Liberal Democrat Members prior to the election when they were in opposition, but they were now in the administration. Also, neither of the current Executive Portfolio Holders were part of the Council when the original decisions had been made.

Councillor Denise Gaines (Executive Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel) and Neil Stacey (Network Manager (Highways)) presented the background and rationale for the Individual Executive Member's Decision not to progress this scheme. Key points from the presentation were:

- Government funding had been secured from the Department for Transport in 2020/21 for Active Travel initiatives, including several 'quiet street' schemes.
- An Experimental Traffic Order was brought into force in July 2022 for a maximum duration of 18 months, the effect of which was to prohibit motor vehicles from Deadmans Lane and two other streets in the District.
- During the first six months of the operation of such orders, affected road users are able to make representations to the Council supporting or objecting to the restriction. In light of the representations received, the Council then makes a decision as to whether to make the restriction permanent, to abandon it or to modify it.
- Although Deadman's Lane was included within the Experimental Traffic Order, the restriction was never implemented on site due to unresolved issues around an access to Theale Green School and operational issues affecting the Network Management Team at the time.
- Because members of the public were unable to comment on the operation of the restriction during the initial six month period, it was not possible to make the Order permanent.

Councillor Alan Macro presented the reasons why the decision had been called in and the alternative course of action proposed. Key points from the presentation were:

- Deadman's Lane was very narrow with a double bend and it was not possible for vehicles to pass other vehicles or even pedestrians with pushchairs.

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- If two vehicles met, one would have to reverse up to 200m onto Englefield Road or round the double bend – neither option was considered safe.
- Deadman's Lane was well used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians as a recreational route and also as a route to Theale Green School.
- The school was located to the east of the lane, with playing fields and a bus park on the west side, which resulted in significant numbers of people needing to cross the road.
- There was very little use of the lane by motor vehicles, since it did not serve any houses or businesses – occasionally, delivery vehicles were routed along the lane by sat-navs.
- The small car park to the rear of the school was accessed from the lane, but it was suggested that the road could be closed to the north of the car park to prevent use of the narrow section.
- It was suggested that advanced signage may would help to prevent vehicular access and drivers having to reverse to Spring Lane to turn round.

The following points were raised as part of the debate:

- Members agreed that the Individual Executive Member decision had been sensible, since a delay could have affected the other schemes covered on the same Experimental Traffic Order.
- Technically, the original decision could not be referred back for reconsideration, because the six month consultation period of the traffic order had expired. However, the Deadmans Lane project could be revived and a new traffic order made as part of the Network Management Team's works programme.
- Members asked about where the proposed closure would start – it was suggested that it should start just after the access to the rear car park for Theale Green School. Traffic ignoring the signs would only have to reverse a short way to Spring Gardens to turn round.
- Officers considered that in addition to prominent signage, physical barriers would be essential to enforce the closure – otherwise, active travel users would have a false sense of security.
- It was noted that the school would need to be consulted on any new proposal to close the road before the restriction came into force.

RESOLVED that the Individual Executive Member Decision (ID4317) should stand, but that the proposal for a road closure and active travel scheme on Deadman's Lane be referred to Councillor Denise Gaines as the new Executive Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel for consideration as part of a separate scheme.

8. **Items called-in following the Meeting of Executive on 23 March 2023**

The Commission considered the call-in of the Executive Decision (EX4332) of 23 March regarding revised costs and permission to sign the development management agreement for Newbury Sports Hub (Agenda Item 7).

Councillor Janine Lewis (Executive Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure and Sport) and Paul Martindill (Interim Consultant – Leisure) presented the background to the Sports Hub and the reasons for the decision. Key points from their presentation included:

- It was proposed that the Sports Hub would be located at Newbury Rugby Club.
- This would be a Step 4 Ground, with capacity for 1,300 spectators, a 3G artificial pitch, a pavilion and 50 parking spaces.

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- The proposal was the top priority for the Playing Pitch Strategy and was needed to meet unmet demand - it would provide for 80 hours of community football and rugby per week.
- The scheme was originally costed at £3.51 million in December 2022.
- Although planning approval was given, it was subsequently the subject of a claim for a judicial review. Although the case was rejected, this led to a significant delay resulting in increased costs due to inflation.
- A further appeal to the Court of Appeal in relation to the judicial review was rejected, thus avoiding further delay.
- A revised cost of £3.878 million was approved by Executive on 23 March 2023, but the scheme had been put on hold because the decision had been called in.

Councillors Erik Pattenden and Adrian Abbs presented the reasons why the decision had been called in and the alternative course of action proposed. Key points from the presentation were:

- While they recognised the need to meet the demand identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy, the Liberal Democrats did not feel that the Rugby Club was the correct place for the Sports Hub.
- It was felt that the reasons for the call-in remained valid post-election.
- It was recommended that the decision be referred back to the Executive for further consideration to look again at the scheme in detail.

In debating the item, Members raised the following points:

- The Conservative Members had a different view about the Sports Hub.
- The change in political administration effectively rendered the call-in moot.
- Only the Executive could reverse the previous Executive decision, and the Conservative Members would have much to say when the matter was next discussed.
- It was recognised that there was a great deal of public interest in the Sports Hub.
- Given that the Sports Hub was the top priority in the Playing Pitch Strategy, the Strategy may need to be revisited if the scheme was not progressed.
- Members were reminded that the Commission could let the original decision stand or refer it back to Executive to ask them to reconsider the matter. While the Commission could highlight particular aspects where Members had concerns, they could not compel the Executive to act on these concerns.

RESOLVED to refer the matter back to the Executive for further consideration, particularly in respect of the following aspects: legal costs incurred by the Council; costs incurred by the Rugby Club; any penalty fees associated with not proceeding as planned; implications for the new Leisure Contract; and the need to revisit the Playing Pitch Strategy.

9. **Capital Financial Performance Report: Quarter Four 2022/23**

Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources) presented the Capital Financial Performance Report for Quarter Four 2022/23 (Agenda Item 8).

The following points were raised in the debate:

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- It was explained that the financial reports would usually come to Scrutiny Commission before going to Executive, but this had not been possible for the Quarter Four reports due to the election.
- Members asked if the Council might miss out on external funding as a result of budget reprofiling and whether internal funds would have to be found to replace any external funding that had been lost. It was explained that this was not an issue, since capital grants usually had longer time frames in which they could be spent (often several years). This was in contrast to revenue grants usually had much tighter timeframes.
- Members asked about Care Director. It was explained that this was the case management system for social care, which was one of the Council's largest and most crucial IT systems.
- Members asked about the difference in the interest rates charged by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) compared to those charged for short-term borrowing. It was explained that short-term borrowing rates were slightly below that the PWLB rate and close to what the Council could achieve by investing through the Debt Management Office. Also, there was an established market for local authorities to lend to each other to cover in-year cash flow variations.
- It was noted that the Prudential Code prohibited borrowing to fund commercial investment. Members asked how the Council had been able to borrow to fund its investments in Sector 4 and the petrol station. It was confirmed that this had taken place prior to the change in the regulations and that the Council would not be permitted to undertake further borrowing to extend its commercial portfolio.
- Members noted that the budget had been reprofiled downwards and asked if this was commonplace. It was confirmed that the Council had not achieved 100% budget spend historically, but the amount of reprofiling fluctuated. Reasons for the latest reprofiling included the delay to the Sports Hub as a result of the call-in. Other common reasons were: supply chain issues; unexpected utility diversion costs; resourcing challenges; project management issues; etc. However, where projects were progressing ahead of schedule, funding could be brought forward from future years.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10. **Revenue Financial Performance Report: Quarter Four 2022/23**

Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources) presented the Revenue Financial Performance Report for Quarter Four 2022/23 (Agenda Item 9).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members highlighted the overspend on staffing costs, and asked how this was expected to change, and what mitigation measures were being put in place to address the issue. It was confirmed that this was one of the most significant pressures facing the Council, particularly in the People Directorate. There were some early signs of success in reducing agency costs and increasing the number of staff employed directly by the Council. Additional funding had been allocated for recruitment and retention support for social care workers. Also, greater use was being made of talent attraction officers within HR. However, it was acknowledged that it would take time for changes to take effect. It was noted that problems with recruitment of social care staff was a national challenge. There was a particular shortage of adult social care workers, but there were also challenges in sourcing staff within other professions such as occupational therapists.

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- Members asked what plans there were to increase the Council's reserves. It was explained that this would be addressed through the next budget, which would be prepared by the new administration and brought to Council for approval in February 2024. The current Medium Term Financial Strategy recognised that the Council needed to build up its reserves and £1m had been allocated to do this. The Council was also looking to increase specific risk reserves (e.g. Education and Social Care). It was stressed that the Council had to break even in the current year.
- Members asked if Home to School Transport budgets were sustainable in the long-term and highlighted challenges faced by parents trying to secure places on services. It was confirmed that there were pressures on the budget, which was in line with the national picture. Last year, there had been significant increases in fuel costs. Significant investment had been made in the 2023/24 budget for this purpose. Fuel prices had since fallen back, which may support lower contract prices in future. It was highlighted that an external review had been commissioned, which was due to report shortly. Officers were also reviewing what other local authorities were doing to identify any best practice that the Council could apply.
- Members asked why expected levels of solar energy income had not been achieved. It was explained that the solar power scheme had been delayed, but there was a big push to ensure this would be delivered in 2023/24.

RESOLVED to note the report.

11. **Quarterly Performance Report 2022/23: Quarter Four**

Catalin Bogos (Performance, Consultation and Risk Manager) presented the Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter Four 2022/23 (Agenda Item 10).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members asked about difficulties in recording visits to children in care. It was acknowledged that there were issues around recruitment and retention of staff. It took time to train agency staff, so the priority was to ensure that visits took place, with recordings completed later. Members were assured that efforts were being made to improve performance in this area.
- A question was asked around the number of metrics overall and the proportion that were red / amber. Officers did not have the precise number, but stressed that the reports showed how the Council was performing across core business areas rather than focusing on the percentage of metrics that were red / amber. Overall, four core business areas were rated as green based on a basket of measures, six areas were rated as amber and just one was red, which related to planning application determination. It was noted that the new Council Strategy was coming to Council for approval in October 2023, which would have a more focused set of KPIs
- Members noted that many of the targets were aligned to national averages and queried whether the Council should be more aspirational and look more to authorities that were similar to West Berkshire. It was explained that targets were set with reference to a range of intelligence, including national averages, statistical neighbours, the level of resources allocated to particular functions, etc. It was suggested that targets were aspirational in many areas.
- Members highlighted the poor performance in relation to average attainment for children on free school meals. It was explained that this was a difficult target for the Council to achieve. Funding was allocated on a per pupil basis and smaller schools may only have two or three eligible pupils, which made it harder to provide additional

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support than in schools with larger numbers of eligible pupils, where funding could be pooled to pay for additional resources. It was confirmed that officers were looking at this and considering how additional resources could be allocated. Although the overall number of affected pupils was small, they were not achieving their potential. Members suggested that this should be considered for inclusion in the Commission's work programme.

- Members observed lots of variation in the extent to which targets were not achieved and suggested that there should be an additional category for large variances (e.g. a black rating). It was confirmed that the categories referred to percentage difference relative to the thresholds - up to 5% variance was classified as amber and more than 5% variance was classified as red. Exceptions could be made for KPIs where numbers were very small.
- There was some discussion about ES-KPI-118. It was noted that this was an average attainment score rather than a percentage of pupils reaching an expected level.
- Members expressed concern at the lack of progress in securing landowner commitment to nature recovery and indicated that they would like to hear more about how this was progressing. It was stressed that Members needed to be mindful about weighting for indicators where numbers were low. In this case, the target was two and one scheme had been delivered, which resulted in a 50% variance. The need for ongoing conversations with landowners was recognised. It was suggested that the Environment Advisory Group should discuss this.
- Members highlighted areas where there was good performance, including the Youth Offending Team, which had maintained its 'outstanding' rating by Ofsted, and the refurbished lido, which was on schedule to open soon. Members thanked the officers involved.

RESOLVED to note the report.

12. Appointment of Task and Finish Groups

The Commission considered appointments to task and finish groups and any associated terms of reference (Agenda Item 11).

The Chairman invited comments on the terms of reference for the Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group. Proposed amendments included:

- Part 2 – consideration of impacts on loneliness and mental health;
- Part 4 – consideration of school attendance during and after the pandemic and the impacts of absences on academic attainment.
- The Chairman had recently met with Carolyn Richardson (Service Manager – Joint Emergency Planning Unit) who had suggested some minor amendments to the Terms of Reference.

It was proposed that the Task and Finish Group should have no more than six meetings.

In terms of witnesses, it was noted that several key officers had left the Council. While they could be invited to attend, they were not obliged to do so. It was proposed to add Newbury Racecourse and Newbury Rugby Club as witnesses.

The Chairman invited nominations for membership of the Task and Finish Group. It was confirmed that the Task Group Chairman did not have to be a Member of the Scrutiny Commission. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that previous Executive Members would

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be eligible to sit on the Task Group, but it may be preferable for them to give evidence instead. It was suggested that the Task Group should consist of five Members.

Action: The Liberal Democrat and Conservative Groups to nominate Members to sit on the Task Group by 20 July 2023.

13. Health Scrutiny Committee Update

Councillor Martha Vickers provided an update on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 12) as follows:

- The Committee had met on 13 June.
- The main scrutiny topics were around dementia and diabetes.
- Rates for dementia diagnosis were lower than the national average and waiting times for diagnosis were double those in other parts of Berkshire West. Early diagnosis was important in order to get treatment as early as possible.
- West Berkshire had a high number of people aged under 40 who were diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. This was preventable and could be put into remission.
- Updates were also provided by the Integrated Care Board and Healthwatch West Berkshire.
- Members had raised a number of issues that had been taken on board by NHS representatives.
- Workforce issues were acknowledged as a challenge for health partners.
- It was proposed to have follow up sessions to get updates on progress made in tackling the highlighted issues.

Members asked about the Healthcare in New Developments Task Group, which had started its review prior to the election. It was confirmed that new Members were being appointed to the Task Group and it was expected to start work again shortly. It was confirmed that the Task Group sat under the Health Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny Commission Members were encouraged to contact the Health Scrutiny Committee Chairman with any potential topics. Maternal mental health had been put forward as a possible topic by Councillor Jo Stewart.

It was noted that Adult Social Care was not within the remit of the Health Scrutiny Committee, which made it difficult to review certain topics. Other local authorities had Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees. It was confirmed that changing the terms of reference of the Health Scrutiny Committee would require a change to the Council's Constitution. This would need to be considered by the Governance Committee before going to Council for approval.

RESOLVED to note the report.

14. West Berkshire Council Forward Plan 1 April 2023 to 31 July 2023

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan for the period covering 1 April 2023 to 31 July 2023 (Agenda Item 13).

The following items were discussed:

- **Shaw-cum-Donnington Parish Plan** - officers indicated it this may be classed as a Development Plan Document and therefore may not be eligible for scrutiny. Also, depending on whether final approval was via full Council, the may also preclude it

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from being subjected to scrutiny. In any case, it would have been the subject of considerable public engagement.

Action: Officers to confirm if Parish Plans were part of the Local Plan and how they are approved.

- **Response to petition to Full Council on the 1st December 2022** – Members asked what petition this related to. It was noted that there were two petition responses outstanding – one related to Community Infrastructure Levy payments and one related to hedgehogs.

Action: Officers to confirm the details of the petition.

- **LRIE Lease Acquisitions** – It was noted that the new administration had plans for this site, so the scheme may not go ahead as originally planned.
- **Parking Strategy** – This was felt to be a suitable subject for scrutiny.
- **Council Strategy Delivery Plan** – It was noted that Members were yet to see the new Council Strategy, so the Delivery Plan may slip. Members noted that there may be some changes made to the Forward Plan by the new administration in coming weeks.

Action: Councillor Carlyne Culver undertook to meet with the Leader of the Council to discuss the Forward Plan and what changes are planned.

- **Hackney Carriage Tariffs** – It was not clear from previous reports what Members were being asked to approve. Officers confirmed that the report had been approved by the Executive and the decision had not been called-in. Members were asked what value there would be in reviewing the decision at this stage, since it could not be reversed. Assurance was provided that officers would seek to make changes to the way future reports were presented in response to comments received.
- **Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Framework** - This was felt to be of interest to Members and the public, and would be a suitable subject for scrutiny. It was confirmed that this was already on the work programme.
- **Waste Strategy** – While development of the strategy was a long-term process, it was noted that officers were working on this now and may benefit from early consideration by the Commission.
- **Retendering of Bus Services** – This was considered to be a key decisions that would affect residents across the District.
- It was noted that some items on the Forward Plan mentioned officers who had recently left the Council.

Action: Democratic Services Team to review and update officer details on the Forward Plan.

15. Scrutiny Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year (Agenda Item 14).

Members noted the following:

- Items included on the work programme for the September meeting included: the annual Community Safety Report; the Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Framework; and the Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan.

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- The PAPER prioritisation tool, which had been adopted by the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- A list of potential scrutiny topics that had been identified through early discussion with officers and Members.

In the course of the debate, the following points were discussed:

- Members queried whether the scope of the Early Years Capacity item should be widened to consider provision by charities, including those that provided care during school hours rather than solely wrap-around care. Officers indicated that this could be included, but it would be a significant extension of the scope of the review. It was noted that West Berkshire Council was amongst the poorest performing local authorities. Members asked about the criteria on which this performance was assessed. Officers highlighted that a Childcare Sufficiency report was being prepared, which would give a rounded view of current situation.
- Members noted that there were numerous education related grants and indicated that it may be useful to consider which had / had not been applied for and what funding had been secured. It was suggested that Members speak to officers in Finance initially to understand the current situation and if there were any resourcing constraints that affected the Council's ability to apply for grants.

Action: Councillor Christopher Read to have an initial discussion with Joseph Holmes around grants.

- Members welcomed the proposal to undertake scrutiny of the Budget. This could be done via a Sub-Committee or at a special meeting of the Commission. Members asked how a sub-committee would be set up. It was confirmed this would require a formal proposal, and the Commission would vote on the matter. Members would need to decide which of its powers to delegate to the new body. A date of 6 February was proposed for a special meeting of the whole Commission. This would allow scrutiny to take place before the draft Budget was considered by Executive on 8 February.

Action: Gordon Oliver to set up a special meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 6 February 2024 to consider the draft Budget.

- It was noted that Thames Water had given evidence to a previous meeting of the Commission. The Chairman was keen to invite them back and proposed a special meeting in October / November. Sewage issues were of concern to the public and there were infrastructure issues related to new development. Also, the Commission could explore reasons why opportunities for developers to pay reduced connection charges for developments designed to minimise water consumption were not being taken up. It was suggested that there was a need for joined up working between Council services on this issue. It was agreed that other stakeholders such as the Environment Agency and Action for the River Kennet be invited to attend. Members suggested that Thames Water should be asked to provide more regular updates, but it was noted that they could not be compelled to do so. Members noted that developers no longer had an automatic right to connect to the public sewage network and could potentially seek to use other providers. It was suggested that the Commission should review this. Officers stated that planning conditions were beyond the remit of the Commission. However, as an initial step, it was suggested that relevant officers be consulted to understand the current legislation and the position in West Berkshire, and what value the Commission could add.

Action: Gordon Oliver to liaise with Thames Water and other external stakeholders over a suitable date for an additional meeting if the Commission in October / November.

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Action: Gordon Oliver to liaise with colleagues in Highways and Planning regarding the impacts of changes to developers’ rights of connection to water and sewage networks.

- It was noted that the Council did not perform well in terms of the percentage of children on free school meals who achieved a good level of development and officers had suggested that the Commission look at this in more detail. This was agreed.
- It was proposed that the Commission should consider the Council’s Environment Strategy Delivery Plan. The Chairman suggested that Members may wish to look at particular aspects, such as how the Council was measuring its carbon footprint, preparations for dealing with the effects of climate change, and whether warm weather advice was being followed in schools and care homes.
- A further topic was suggested around dementia care, which would be complementary to the recent review of dementia diagnosis. Such a review would need to be undertaken in partnership with the Health Scrutiny Committee. Pressures on adult social care were noted and it was recognised that dementia cases would increase with an ageing population.
- It was suggested that a half-day scrutiny work programme planning event could be held with Members of the Executive and senior officers. This was supported.

Action: Councillor Carlyne Culver to consult with the Leader of the Council regarding a scrutiny work planning event.

- Members were directed to the supplementary agenda pack, which referred to a recent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ruling in relation to a Housing case. The ruling required the Ombudsman’s report to be reviewed by a decision making body made up of elected Members to ensure that lessons learned are embedded in service delivery models. Due to the time constraints imposed by the Ombudsman, this would have to be carried out as soon as possible. Members noted that another local authority had been involved in this case and asked if they could be invited to attend the meeting. It was confirmed that they could be invited, but the ruling was against West Berkshire Council, and the Council had been instructed to review its own processes. Councillor Gaines provided an overview of the case for the benefit of the Members present.

Action: Gordon Oliver to arrange an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Commission to review the Ombudsman ruling.

(The meeting commenced at 6.33 pm and closed at 8.47 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature