

# DRAFT

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

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2024

**Councillors Present:** Carlyne Culver (Chairman), Dominic Boeck (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Jeremy Cottam, Paul Dick, Ross Mackinnon, Erik Pattenden, Christopher Read and Martha Vickers

**Also Present:** Joseph Holmes (Interim Chief Executive), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director - Children's Services), Rebecca Wilshire (Service Director - Children's Social Care), Jon Winstanley (Service Director (Environment)) and Karen Atalla (Service Manager Children's Services), Councillor Howard Woollaston, Councillor Heather Codling (Executive Portfolio Holder: Children and Family Services), Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Resources) and Councillor Nigel Foot (Executive Portfolio Holder: Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside)

#### PART I

#### 34. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2024 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- Councillor Chris Read had asked for examples of success by other local authorities who were ahead of West Berkshire Council in the Delivering Better Value programme.
- In relation to Action 165, 'work planning session with the Leader' should read 'dialogue with the Leader'.

It was noted that the action to develop a recommendations log was outstanding.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- Councillor Jeremy Cottam's written question about the ownership of Thatcham Sewage Works, had not been included in Thames Water's response.

#### **Actions:**

- **Officers to provide examples of success by other local authorities ahead of West Berkshire Council in the Delivering Better Value programme.**
- **Officers to ask Thames Water about ownership of Thatcham Sewage Works.**

#### 35. Actions from previous Minutes

Members noted the updates on actions from the previous meetings.

Further updates / comments were made in relation to the following actions:

- **89-91** – A new Libraries Manager had been appointed and work was ongoing to progress these actions. Councillor Nigel Foot promised to update the Commission as soon as possible.

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

- **130** – Officers had provided the Scrutiny Commission Chairman with an update on Transformation activities:
  - The Care Homes report had been approved by Executive on 7 November 2024.
  - Council Tax donations were being considered as part of the budget consultations.
  - Development of the Employee Value Proposition had resulted in a new recruitment website, and work was ongoing to reduce agency staffing costs.
  - A new officer had been recruited to look at home to school transport, and the Delivering Better Value work would feed into this.
  - Walnut Close was being refurbished – a family space had already opened, and a proposal for homeless facilities would be considered by Eastern Area Planning Committee shortly.
  - A report on Options for Shaw House was on the Executive Forward Plan.
- **132** – Text to be changed to reflect that the update had been received as a presentation rather than a report.
- **141** – Update received from Councillor Stuart Gourley: *'Meetings are continuing in collaborative fashion. A recent joint media briefing was held to highlight works completed by various agencies, and what is ongoing. Letters to the new administration are in progress'*
- **143** – Update received from Councillor Stuart Gourley: *'The Environment Officer who joined us on the site visit, has requested a water quality monitoring device to be deployed along the Northbrook. We have a limited number of these devices available and for obvious reasons, they are all currently deployed at sewage treatment works across the Thames catchment. He has also had to focus his time on inspection visits to treatment works but did say he would repeat the request with the officers who manage this equipment, in case one can be made available but we cannot promise this will happen, nor say when this may be possible.'*
- **178** – Neil Goddard would be happy to bring the performance dashboard to Scrutiny Commission when invited to do so.
- **179** – This action had been completed.
- **190** – Councillor Read confirmed that he had not been sent details of the lining works at Standford Dingley.
- **191** – Councillor Antony Amirtharaj requested that this action be reopened.
- **194-196** – No response received from the Environment Agency.

### **Actions:**

- **An update on transformation activities to be brought to Scrutiny Commission next year.**
- **Amend text for Action 132**
- **Gordon Oliver to follow up with Jenny Legge regarding Action 161.**
- **Chairman to liaise with AnnMarie Dodds regarding Action 180.**
- **Gordon Oliver to follow up with Thames Water re Action 190 and the EA re Actions 194-196.**

**36. Declarations of Interest**

*Councillor Jeremy Cottam declared an interest in Agenda Item 9 by virtue of the fact that he had been involved in setting up the Downland Sports Centre, but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.*

**37. Petitions**

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

**38. Response to Faraday Road Football Ground queries**

The Commission considered a report concerning the Response to the Faraday Road Football Ground queries (Agenda Item 7).

It was noted that the questions had come from Mr Paul Morgan. The Chairman proposed to suspend standing orders to allow Mr Morgan to speak at the meeting to outline his concerns, and to ask a supplementary question if necessary. This was seconded by Councillor Jeremy Cottam. At the vote, the motion was passed.

Mr Morgan was invited to address the Commission. His full representation can be viewed here: [Scrutiny Commission, Tuesday 26 November 2024 - YouTube](#)

Councillor Nigel Foot (Executive Portfolio Holder - Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside) and Mr Jon Winstanley (Service Director – Environment) presented the report.

The following points were raised in the debate:

- It was noted that a spend of £230,000 was referenced in the report, but at Executive on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024, in response to a question from Mr Alan Pearce, Councillor Jeff Brooks had confirmed that £395,000 had been spent, and he had provided a detailed breakdown. Mr Morgan had subsequently indicated that the figure was now £430,000. It was confirmed that the figure in the report related to what had been spent in Phase 1, which was the question asked by Mr Morgan. Officers did not have the figure to hand for the amount spent on the current phase.
- Members also asked if there were additional costs associated with doing the project in phases. Officers responded that the scheme had been designed so elements provided as part of the initial phases would not need to be replaced in subsequent phases, so there would be no additional cost incurred by doing it this way.
- Members asked why football was currently being played at Henwick Worthy rather than Faraday Road. It was confirmed that a senior match had been played at Faraday Road, but work was needed to enlarge the changing rooms. Also, the project was being delivered in phases - Phase 1 was complete, and Phase 2 was underway.
- A question was asked about why changing rooms had been built that did not meet the football league's requirements. It was explained that the first game of the season had been earlier than expected, which had left no time for a league inspection. Facilities were like-for-like replacements for those previously on the site. However, the football league had subsequently ruled that they were to be treated as new facilities, which meant that larger floorspace standards applied.
- Members asked how many hours of football had been played on the restored pitch at Faraday Road. Officers were unable to confirm this.

**Action: Officers to confirm hours of football played at Faraday Road.**

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

- Members asked why the pitch could not be booked by members of the public. It was explained that because it was a grass pitch, the number of games had to be limited. Also, the pitch was still being prepared and availability would change over time. It was indicated that members of the public could book the pitch through Newbury Community Football Group (NCFG).

**Action: Officers to investigate concerns about members of the public being unable to book the football pitches at Faraday Road and Linear Park, and to confirm whether bookings for Faraday Road had to be made through NCFG.**

- It was queried whether Faraday Road was benefiting NCFG and Newbury Football Club (NFC) rather than local residents. It was confirmed that the aspiration was to have NFC playing at Faraday Road and the Council was working towards this. Members noted that this was different to having football back in the community.

*Councillor Jeremy Cottam declared an interest by virtue of the fact that he was Lead Member for Recreation when the ground had been handed to Ecchinswell when Newbury Football Club had failed previously.*

- It was noted that when Henwick Worthy had been established, it had taken six months to make it suitable for play.
- It was confirmed that WBC used Continental Landscapes to prepare all their pitches. They had been through a competitive procurement process, and they had passed all necessary quality checks. Individual pieces of work could be called off through the contract.
- It was noted that White Horse Contractors did not appear to have the same level of health and safety policies as Volker Highways. Officers confirmed that tender responses were assessed in terms of both quality and cost. If contractors did not satisfy minimum requirements, their tenders would not be accepted.
- It was confirmed that they had previously undertaken trenching, ducting and fencing work on behalf of WBC.
- It was confirmed that palisade fencing had been supplied by Volker Highways.
- Members asked about the difference in spend mentioned in the report and in reply to the public question at Executive on 7 November 2024. It was confirmed that the figure of £230K related to expenditure incurred up to February 2024, as per Mr Morgan's question. Further work had taken place since then, which was included in the figure quoted at Executive.

**Action: Officers to provide additional detail on costs and timescales of the project phases.**

- Members asked if the project could have been delivered at a lower cost if there had not been pressure to deliver it so quickly. Officers felt that this was a difficult question to answer. All tender assessments took account of price and quality aspects, and the latter may include speed of delivery. Use of the Volker term contract was considered to be the best option in terms of providing value for money and what the Council wanted to deliver.

Mr Morgan was asked if he had a supplementary question arising directly out of the answers provided to his original questions. Mr Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

*“Do you not think now, after 18 months of messing about with this, the time is now to get a firm project plan with a firm project objective to rebuild the football stadium back to what it was prior to 2018?”*

The Portfolio Holder answered that there was a plan that the Council was working on, and he was happy that there was a project objective. He indicated that he would be happy to provide a further update to a future meeting.

**Action: Councillor Nigel Foot to provide details of the project plan and objectives for Faraday Road.**

Councillor Jeremy Cottam proposed to resume standing orders. This was seconded by Councillor Chris Read. At the vote, the motion was carried.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 39. **Unregistered and Unregulated Provision in Children's Social Care**

Rebecca Wilshire (Service Director for Children's Social Care) presented the report on Unregistered and Unregulated Provision in Children's Social Care (Agenda Item 7).

During the debate, the following points were made:

- Officers were commended for their work in this difficult area.
- It was noted that children in unregistered settings were often those with the highest level of needs.
- Members asked:
  - what was being done to get providers registered;
  - was fostering promoted; and
  - were safeguarding measures sufficiently robust?

It was explained that some of the delay in registering providers was down to a backlog with Ofsted, resulting from a legislative change last year. WBC liaised with Ofsted to make them aware where they had to use unregistered providers and to ask if these could be fast-tracked. Some providers had not applied to be registered, and the Council sought to avoid using these or move children on quickly. Officers confirmed that fostering options were promoted and the WBC was exploring regional collaborations, which had potential for access to residential provision to meet the needs of high-risk/high-need children. In terms of safeguarding, it was confirmed that settings were visited weekly as a minimum.

- Members asked if the Council sought to limit use of unregulated settings solely to those that were fully accountable in the UK. It was confirmed that accountability was achieved through regular visits, quality assurance, and the assessment framework. Registration with Ofsted provided additional assurances. Some settings were registered with the Care Quality Commission, which provided an element of regulation.
- A question was asked about the difference in costs between regulated and unregulated care provision. It was confirmed that costs were generally higher, but these were mostly due to the increased level of needs of the children placed there. Often these were solo placements that required 2:1 staff to child ratios. As settings became regulated, they could take more children and costs decreased.
- There was a query about additional reporting required for unregulated settings. This was achieved through regular visits and holding providers to account in terms of the

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

progress that children were making. Alternative provision would be sought if children were not making progress.

- Members recognised that it was not always possible to place children in registered settings, but felt that the report gave assurances that children and young people were being looked after.
- Members asked if the Council used unregistered/unregulated settings outside of West Berkshire. Officers confirmed that some out of area settings were used. This was managed with parents and schools where safe to do so.
- It was confirmed that WBC made less use of unregistered/unregulated care settings than many other local authorities.
- Members asked about legal risks. Officers indicated that that main risk was to the Director of Children's Services (DCS) for use of unlawful placements. One DCS in another local authority had been interviewed under caution, but officers were not aware of any prosecutions.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 40. **Early Intervention and Family Help**

Rebecca Wilshire (Service Director – Children's Social Care) and Karen Atalla (Service Manager - Children and Family Services) introduced the report on Early Intervention and Family Help (Agenda Item 8).

During the debate, the following points were made:

- Members asked if the Council worked with Time2Talk and other voluntary sector organisations. Officers confirmed that there were several voluntary sector organisations that the Council worked with, and it was stressed that a whole community response was required. Links, collaboration and relationships developed with statutory and voluntary partners allowed issues to be identified sooner. The Council already partnered with 16 different agencies, including mental health organisations, to deliver early help, but there was a desire to expand the footprint.
- Articles were cited highlighting differences in deprivation and levels of support received by those living in rural and urban areas. Members asked if the Council could be overlooking rural deprivation issues and late intervention problems because they were more difficult to spot. Officers indicated that there had been changes in approach since 2016 and again post-Covid. Officers had a good understanding of what West Berkshire's rural areas looked like and this was not considered to be a significant issue locally. However, further work was needed to consider how services could better engage with rural communities, particularly in relation to family hubs and early help.
- Concerns were expressed about reductions in the number of health professionals visiting young families, particularly in rural areas affected by deprivation. It was suggested that this could be a topic for a future scrutiny review. Officers highlighted that there had been a recent push to identify young carers in rural areas by working with parish councils. Efforts were also being made to ensure that they were able to access activities to the same extent as those living in urban areas, which relied on volunteer support. However, a mobile facility was being explored. Members suggested that parish councils could be engaged to help source volunteers.
- The importance of the first 1001 days was highlighted, and officers were asked if there were enough hubs in the right locations, and if midwives and health visitors

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

were involved. It was confirmed that they were involved and there was a good partnership, with a focus on the first 1001 days. Options were being considered to increase the number of hubs, including remote/ satellite facilities. Also, consideration was being given to how families could be better informed about what services could be accessed through the hubs and to bring them in from 'day one'.

- It was highlighted that money invested in early intervention had clear impacts, improved lives, and in doing so could free up funds for other work. It was noted that work was ongoing to explore pan-Berkshire prevention initiatives that would help to reduce costs within Children and Family Services.
- Members asked if the Council was meeting its statutory obligations with regards to youth services. Officers explained that they were looking at how they could work more closely with Berkshire Youth, and they offered to bring a report on this to a future meeting.
- A question was asked about funding sources and ringfencing. It was confirmed that several posts were funded through the Strengthening Families Programme, which was due to end in March 2025. WBC was looking at how this work could be supported. It was hoped that there central government might make announcements about future funding shortly.
- Members expressed a desire to see cuts to youth services budgets reversed.
- Members asked if enough pre-school workers were being trained as SENCOs and ELSAs, and whether GPs were taking their observations seriously and making appropriate referrals. Officers recognised that there was still more work needed across the partnership to ensure that pathways were clear, and delays avoided. West Berkshire had very high quality early years provision, but officers were aware of pressures resulting from increased expectations of take up, so efforts were ongoing to build capacity while ensuring that quality remained high. It was confirmed that the Council worked with early years providers around early identification and support for families and the young people they cared for. The focus of Family Hubs was on the 0-5 age and pre 0-5 age ranges, through targeted and open access work in partnership with health colleagues. In addition to the four physical hubs, work was ongoing across the district. The focus was on identifying families who needed support, whatever that looked like and whoever may provide it.

*Councillor Chris Read declared an interest by virtue of the fact that his wife was a pre-school practitioner.*

- It was noted that the Scrutiny Commission had an item on Wraparound Care as a long-term item on its work programme.

### **Actions:**

- **Officers to provide additional information on support for rural communities.**
- **Timetable a future scrutiny review of youth services.**
- **Timetable a review of Wraparound Care.**

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **41. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2025-26 Planning**

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Resources) and Joseph Holmes (Interim Chief Executive) presented the report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Agenda Item 9).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members asked if the Council was borrowing to fund services. It was explained that the Council borrowed to fund capital expenditure. Also, the High Needs Block deficit was being financed through the general fund and as the deficit grew, the financing cost would also rise.
- Officers were asked about the impact of recent Employer NI increases. It was expected that central government would exempt local authorities from paying this, or there would be an appropriate contra-entry. However, it was recognised that suppliers may pass on the additional costs.
- Members asked whether the Collection Fund Deficit and the Capital Financing Cost Deficit could be avoided. It was explained that the Collection Fund Deficit was the difference between what the Council had expected to raise in Council Tax and Business rates vs the outturn. The Capital Financing Cost Deficit was related to increases in borrowing costs. This may come down in future, subject to the size of the Council Funded Capital Programme. Further details would be provided in the final Budget in March. Also, additional borrowing was incurred where clients came into care and the Council had a charge over their property, until such time as the charge could be repaid.
- Officers were asked if community bonds were being considered. It was confirmed that they were, but any decision would depend on prevailing market rates.
- Members noted that parking charges had already increased and asked if it was proposed to increase them again. Officers confirmed that it was not proposed to increase parking charges further.
- Members noted that Thames Valley Police's opposition to turning off streetlights between 12 - 5am was not reflected in the consultation document. Members requested that they be added to provide a balanced view. They also asked that responses made on the basis of the original wording be disregarded. The Portfolio Holder had not seen the TVP comments, but he undertook to review them and see if they could be added to the consultation.

**Action: Review the TVP comments and decide whether they could be added to the consultation document.**

- It was highlighted that the purpose of the consultation was to elicit feedback from partners as well as residents. Officers were asked if key partners were actively invited to respond. Officers confirmed that the consultation had been shared with partners and the Police and Crime Commissioner had responded. However, Members noted that the majority of respondents would be residents, who would only see the three pieces of evidence supporting the proposal. It was felt that residents would want to know if the proposal would be likely to lead to an increase in crime. Members asked if TVP had any factual evidence about the impacts of turning off street-lights, and suggested that their views should have been sought prior to consulting residents.
- It was noted that the consultation included a proposal to close the Downlands Leisure Centre, which attracted 4,500 visits per year. This would save £30,000 pa, with the loss of five jobs. It was suggested that residents might find this perverse when the Council had spent £230,000 to benefit one football group. Officers explained that the



## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

running costs of the leisure centre were revenue expenditure, while works at Faraday Road were capital expenditure, so they were not like-for-like comparisons.

- Councillor Cottingham indicated that there was a question around the number of visits made by feepaying members vs visits by schoolchildren. He also queried the £30,000 savings from five jobs. Members of the Scrutiny Commission expressed concern at the lack of confidence in the figures. It was noted that at a previous meeting of the Executive, a figure of 9,000 visits had been quoted, which excluded school use. The same report had quoted that there were just two active members of the leisure centre.

**Action: Officers to check if the wording in the consultation document for the Downlands Sports Centre proposal should be updated.**

- It was noted that the leisure centre had been conceived as a way of supporting the school and Members asked if there was another way to maintain the income. Officers explained that discussions had taken place with the Council's leisure contractor, but the centre had low use relative to other sites. It was stressed that the decision would be taken in February, and this would be informed by the consultation results and the final local government settlement. Also, the budget would come back to Scrutiny Commission in early February.
- Members asked if the school could run the leisure centre and employ the staff directly.
- It was noted that the Executive report had said that it was necessary for anyone who used the sports centre to drive there. However, there were over 600 homes in Compton, with 200 more homes likely in the near future. Also, the consultation did not make it clear that the centre had significantly reduced public opening hours compared to other sites. As such, it was felt that the consultation did not present a rounded picture.
- Members asked how many of the other local authorities seeking Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from central government were small unitary authorities. Officers indicated that the majority were upper tier authorities, of which several were smaller unitary authorities. These had to deliver the full range of services. It was noted that West Berkshire Council had the lowest level of reserves of any top-tier local authority in the country. Officers explained that the 1% premium on the cost of repaying EFS had recently been withdrawn. A policy statement on the future of EFS and the flexible use of capital receipts was awaited.
- Members asked about further savings proposals mentioned in the report. It was confirmed that these would be in the report to Scrutiny Commission in February.
- Officers were asked about risks associated with inflation and tax changes. It was noted that inflation had recently increased slightly. While local authorities were likely to be exempt from paying the recent increases in employers' NI contributions, care providers would have to pay them. Although last year's settlement wasn't 'inflation busting', the market was seeing increasing demand and decreasing supply, so price rises were forecast. The Council had expressed concern to central government about profiteering by children's and family services providers owned by hedge funds/sovereign wealth funds from outside the UK that had profit margins of 25-30%. Local authorities were calling for greater regulation and increased competition. Nevertheless, it was confirmed that the Council would never put children at risk, even if it meant going into EFS.
- Members noted that WBC's social care costs had risen from 56% to 75% of total spend over seven years. Officers confirmed that WBC had started from a lower

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

position than other local authorities, but it had quickly caught up. This upward trend could not be sustained.

- Officers were asked about the £25M loan from the Public Works and Loan Board that was due to be repaid after just one year. It was explained that the current policy was for short-term borrowing, but once interest rates fell, the Council would switch to longer-term borrowing. This was included in the capital financing charge. Every year that the Council had a council-financed capital programme, this generated an increased borrowing need. Further details would be set out in the treasury management report as part of the budget papers in February. It was noted that the high needs block deficit was now included within the financing requirement. This would be £17.5M by the end of the year, which would cost the Council £2M to fund the overdraft. Nationally, it was estimated that local authorities were covering a £3B - £4B high needs block overdraft.
- Members asked if local authorities were lobbying central government about the impact of the high needs block deficit. It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing with MCLG, and direct representations were being made to central government. Also, the Council would respond to the provisional finance settlement. In addition, the Local Government Association, and County and District Network were highlighting the issue.
- Proposed cuts to mobile libraries were discussed. Members asked if collaboration with other local authorities had been considered to save money/improve services. It was explained that proposed face-to-face visits would deliver an improved service. Accessibility issues with the existing service were highlighted, including one location where the mobile library stop was outside the village that it served. It was also noted that the vehicle was approaching the end of its economic life.
- Concerns were expressed that the proposed mobile library service would be run by volunteers rather than trained librarians and it was suggested that service users would want to choose their own books rather than have books selected for them. It was explained that users would be able to choose their own books online. There would be opportunities for volunteers to engage with residents and help to tackle social isolation. Also, it was highlighted that a pop-up library was being trialled in Compton. The proposed model was consistent with the Family Hubs approach (i.e. outreach in local communities).
- It was noted that income streams were not forecast to change over the next four financial years. Officers explained that there would be a fair funding review from 2026/27. In the absence of further details, officers had assumed that there would be no net change.
- Members asked about the proportion of Band G and H properties in the district and the value of such properties. Members also asked about the number of residents would be likely to make voluntary donations. Officers confirmed that 8% of properties were rated in Bands G and H. It was difficult to give current values, since Council Tax Bands were based on 1991 values.
- It was noted that residents could reduce their inheritance tax liability by giving money to charity. The Council was looking at setting up a charitable trust for this purpose. One legacy had already been received.
- It was highlighted that in an ideal world, there would be no consultation on budget cuts, but the Council was facing financial pressures and was exploring all options to achieve a balanced budget and avoid going into EFS.

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 42. **Task and Finish Group Updates**

The Scrutiny Commission received an update on the work of the Sports Hub Task and Finish Group (Agenda Item 10).

The update can be viewed on the meeting recording here:

[Scrutiny Commission, Tuesday 26 November 2024](#)

It was noted that there was an outstanding action to identify a third project for the Project Management Task and Finish Group to consider. It was suggested that there would be lessons to learn from the Sports Hub review.

Members asked for a list of recent projects and lessons learned. It was suggested that these should include successful projects, so good practice could be identified and captured.

**Action: Officers to provide a list of recently completed projects.**

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 43. **Health Scrutiny Committee Update**

The Scrutiny Commission received an update on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 11).

The update can be viewed on the meeting recording here:

[Scrutiny Commission, Tuesday 26 November 2024](#)

Members noted that it was planned to take a report to Council proposing to move scrutiny of Adult Social Care services from the Scrutiny Commission to the Health Scrutiny Committee.

**Action: Scrutiny Commission Members to see the report ahead of the Council meeting.**

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 44. **West Berkshire Council's Executive Forward Plan September to December 2024**

The Commission considered the Executive Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12).

It was noted that the Response to the Scrutiny Commission Task and Finish Group Report on Covid and Recovery was due to be presented to the December meeting.

Also, it was noted that there were reports on Shaw House Options and the Corporate Accommodate Review scheduled for the Executive meeting on 13 February 2025. Members were invited to consider when they would like a report on the Transformation Programme.

**Resolved that** the Forward Plan be noted.

### 45. **Scrutiny Commission Work Programme**

The Commission considered the draft Work Programme (Agenda Item 13).

Suggestions for changes to the programme included:

- Proposed flood alleviation/flood protection schemes

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 26 NOVEMBER 2024 - MINUTES**

- Traffic and road safety measures around schools
- Housing issues:
  - social housing disrepair
  - sale of social housing
  - future reports to Executive on Empty Homes, Housing, and the Housing Strategy for Care Leavers and Veterans
  - difficulties re adoption of social housing/lack of social housing in new developments
  - alms-houses
  - adaptations for disabled residents

Members noted that the Environment Department was putting on a lunchtime talk on the Great Shefford Flood alleviation scheme.

It was highlighted that the Commission could ask for a flooding update at any time.

It was suggested that the Chairman of Transport Advisory Group be approached to understand if they had already considered road safety outside schools.

Care was needed to ensure that Scrutiny Commission was not duplicating the work of other committees around Housing.

**Actions:**

- **Check with the Chairman of the Transport Advisory Group to understand what aspects of school road safety schemes have already been considered.**
- **Liaise with the Executive Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing regarding the timing of proposed housing reports.**

**RESOLVED** to note the work programme.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.23 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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