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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3 JULY 2025

Councillors Present: Jeff Brooks (Chairman), Patrick Clark, Iain Cottingham, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Gourley, Tom McCann and Justin Pemberton

Also Present: ,

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Heather Codling and Councillor Vicky Poole

Councillor(s) Absent:

PART I

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jo Stewart declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 9 and 11 as an employee of the Royal Berkshire Charity which was part of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Councillor Richard Somner declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11 as Head of Contracts for the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

As both interests were personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, both Councillors determined to remain and to take part in the debate.

3. Public Questions

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

4. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

5. Capital Financing Report Outturn Financial Year 2024/25 (EX4694)

Councillor Iain Cottingham introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 6), which detailed the under or overspends against the Council's approved capital budget and proposed reprofiling of planned expenditure into subsequent financial years.

Councillor Cottingham noted that there had been a detailed discussion in relation to the report at Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee earlier in the week. He drew Members' attention to Appendix B of the report which detailed the required borrowing to allow the Council to conduct day to day activities. Councillor Cottingham suggested that without radical reform from central government, by 2028/29 all the borrowed capital would be utilised in funding the High Needs Block.

Councillor Jeff Brooks explained that High Needs Block expenditure related to services that the Council purchased to help children that required special education, for example, teaching assistants.

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Councillor Cottingham reported that the Council would move to longer term borrowing once interest rates reduced.

Councillor Brooks noted that there was a trend in underspend that he wanted to halt and queried how much had been re-profiled in 2022/23. Shannon Coleman-Slaughter, the Section 151 Officer, agreed to revert with the figures at a future meeting.

Councillor Dominic Boeck acknowledged that the previous administration did have underspends towards the end of its term, however this had been due to the impact of Covid. He suggested that to understand any trends in re-profiling would require more of a historical review.

Councillor Richard Somner requested that formatting issues in relation to the graph at section 4.1 of the report be resolved in future reports.

Councillor Somner noted that it was important to understand the table at section 5.5 of the report, and the breakdown of the £7 million 'other projects' but acknowledged that Councillor Cottingham had agreed to provide the information.

Councillor Somner referred to the 'Liability Benchmark' graph and the issues raised by it and queried when it would be factored into discussions relating to Ridgeway Council. Councillor Brooks responded that the Ridgeway Council Proposal was not a certainty. Councillor Somner suggested that as the proposal progressed the issue would need to be at the forefront of discussions.

Councillor Howard Woollaston how borrowing would be repaid and the sum of the interest charged on it. Councillor Cottingham commented that the Council was currently within its borrowing fiscal rules, but that the pressure would increase over future years to service the High Needs Block.

Councillor Woollaston commented that his understanding was that the total debt recorded was probably effectively a third of the total being represented due to it being re-financed. Councillor Cottingham agreed with the synopsis.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon noted that the administration appeared proud of its £500,000 spending on a grass football pitch at Faraday Road and queried how residents may feel when that project was progressed, but a mental health and autism project had been slipped. Councillor Mackinnon queried why Faraday Road had been prioritised over such a worthy project.

Councillor Nigel Foot commented that sport had a significant benefit to the mental health and wellbeing of people. Councillor Mackinnon responded that Faraday Road could only be used twice a week, with priority booking awarded to Newbury Football Club, and consequently was unlikely to benefit many residents.

Councillor Jo Stewart referred to section 2.2 of the report and the request for Members to approve an increase in funding to the social care case management system and queried what assurances could be made to ensure that there would not be regular increases in budget to fund the system, as there had been for previous systems.

Councillor Cottingham provided assurances that the Executive would monitor the spending on the project to ensure that it remained to budget.

Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED that:

Members are informed of:

- The provisional outturn of £41.1 million against the 2024/25 capital programme of £59.2 million.

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- The impact of required capital financing on the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) and liability benchmark which identifies the Council as a long-term borrower of funding. (Appendix B).
- £18.3m of planned expenditure to be reprofiled into financial year 2025/26 (Appendix A). (Slippage discussed in Asset and Capital Group 28.04.2025)
- £1.6m of funding proposed to be brought forward from approved expenditure from financial year 2025/26 into financial year 2024/25 (Appendix A). (Slippage discussed in Asset and Capital Group 28.04.2025)
- Members are informed of the following adjustments to the 2025/26 capital programme:
 - £150,000 of external funding for Bus Service Improvement plan,
 - £118,347 of external grant for Royal Berkshire Archives extension,

Members are asked to approve:

- £408k of additional Council funding relating to Social Care Case Management System, increasing the budget provision from £960k agreed as part of the 2025/26 capital programme, to £1.37 Million. The increase is required to fund additional technical consultancy support for implementation.
- £316k of external grant for the expansion of childcare and wraparound places,
- £2.3m of combined funding (£1.86 million external funds and £460k Council funding), for the Royal Berkshire Archives extension.

6. **2024/25 Revenue Financial Performance: Provisional Outturn (EX4695)**

Councillor Iain Cottingham introduced the report (Agenda Item 7), which reported on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets.

Councillor Cottingham referred to sections 1.3 and 1.4 of the report and highlighted that Exceptional Financial Support was a capitalisation of the revenue to the balance sheet, was not additional funding and in essence had already been spent.

Councillor Cottingham referred to questions that had been raised previously at Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee in relation to the report and noted that an overspend in the Resources directorate had been partly due to the audit fee almost doubling and a TVI invoice.

Councillor Cottingham referred to section 4.14 of the report and reported that an overspend in Finance, Property and Procurement had been due to the purchase of a housing benefit system which had launched in 2020 but failed to interface with existing systems resulting in unreconciled balances. He reported that an eventual reconciliation had discovered overpayments of £650,000 housing benefit to residents which was unlikely to be recovered.

Councillor Richard Somner referred to section 4.18 of the report and a previous discussion at Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee relating to the 'loss of £477,000 income due to the sale of commercial property'. Councillor Somner suggested that the loss was significant and that there was a need to establish if there were budget commitments from property income and consequently a need to ensure that money was fulfilled on the sale of such property. Councillor Cottingham commented that the apparent disparity was an accounting variance and that the budget figures were a snapshot in time based on what was known in February 2025.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon referred to sections 4.18 and 7.8 of the report and queried whether they contradicted the Property Investment Strategy which aimed to dispose of all property assets by 2028. Councillor Cottingham commented that the paragraphs highlighted the financial risk of disposing of the commercial property portfolio and noted

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that whilst the policy was to dispose, there were a lot of complexities to review and understand before doing.

Councillor Mackinnon queried whether Councillor Cottingham was considering retaining any property assets for the yield they would contribute to the revenue budget. Councillor Cottingham confirmed that he was not.

Councillor Mackinnon suggested that the narrative in section 4.18 of the report was consequently incorrect. Councillor Brooks stated that the status of the assets was kept under constant review.

RESOLVED that: Executive

To note the provisional management accounting outturn of £15.9m overspend, this is prior to the following adjustments noted below, which result in an adjusted overspend position of £6.77m. Executive should also note that even with the adjustments, the outturn would have resulted in negative reserves without the application of EFS funding. The adjustments are as follows:

- The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) overspend of £6.68m. The overspend is subject to a statutory override, enabling the Council to transfer the overspend to a separate reserve protecting the Council's General Fund. The overall cumulative deficit relating to the DSG held on the Council's Balance Sheet as at 31.3.2025 is approximately £16.5m. This is impacting the Council's revenue budget with a capital financing cost of £750k per annum. The deficit is projected to increase to £31-37m by the end of 2025/26, increasing the revenue impact to £1.4- £1.67m per annum.
- The Public Health Grant underspend of £181k. Public Health funds are ringfenced and cannot be deployed in support of the Council's General Fund position. Unutilised Public Health funding is held in a separate reserve to the Council's General Fund. The overall cumulative reserve Public Health reserve held on the Council's Balance Sheet as at 31.3.2025 is approximately £1.19m.
- The Council has limited ringfenced revenue reserves beyond the General Fund. The 2024/25 position utilises £17k from the Proceeds of Crime Act reserve and £428k from Commuted Sums earmarked reserves for open spaces, play equipment and highways. The overall cumulative non-General Fund reserves held on the Council's Balance Sheet as at 31.3.2025 is approximately £3.4m (provisional).
- In accordance with the Council's policy on the use of flexible capital receipts, application of £2.868m of capital receipts in the form of transformation funding against the revenue outturn position. The remaining capital receipts balance held on the Council's Balance Sheet and committed against future transformation projects, as at 31.3.2025 is approximately £4.5m (provisional).
- The annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) adjustment of £4.36m. MRP is a capital financing adjustment between the General Fund and unusable reserves relating to the provision for the repayment of debt in accordance with the CIPFA Accounting Code of Practice and CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

Members are informed:

- That the provisional revenue deficit in the outturn is in excess of the Council's General Fund position as at 1.4.2024 (start of the 2024/25 financial year). The General Fund in essence is fully deployed in support of delivery of the Council's revenue budget, with a further £2.4m deficit created.
- That it is anticipated as part of the finalisation of the Council's 2024/25 financial statements, that the provisional EFS allocation of £13m relating to 2024/25 will be fully deployed to mitigate the Council's outturn position and rebuild the Council's

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General Fund to the minimum balance required to support the 2025/26 revenue budget, as detailed in the budget papers adopted by Full Council in February 2025.

7. **2024/25 Performance Report Q4 (EX4542)**

Councillor Jeff Brooks introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 8), which provided assurance that the priority areas in the Council Strategy were being managed effectively, and where performance had fallen below the expected level, presented information on the remedial action taken. It was highlighted that the report represented the data at the end of Quarter Four.

Councillor Brooks requested clarification in relation to the status of priority 15, 'to develop and adopt a refreshed Newbury Masterplan delivery plan'. Clare Lawrence, Executive Director Place, responded that a delivery date had not been set for the measure, however a review had recently been undertaken and it was felt that the original delivery plan was still a relevant document with no requirement to refresh. Councillor Brooks requested that the measure be amended accordingly.

Councillor Brooks requested an update to priority 13 which related to the percentage of potholes repaired within 28 days. Councillor Stuart Gourley commented that the administration had made changes to the criteria for filling potholes which had led to an increase in potholes requiring repair and being reported, however figures for May and June had risen and were back on target.

Councillor Brooks requested an update to priority 9 which related to 'adopting a plan to close the attainment gap focussing on early years and deprivation'. AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director for Children's Services, commented that there were multiple plans and data sets across the service aimed at reducing the attainment gap. A re-word of the measure was underway due to the difficulty of evidencing and proving a reduction in the gap due to the variety of data sets.

In response to a further update request in relation to priority 5, 'number of children's social workers who have more than 18 cases allocated to them' AnnMarie Dodds reported that the service remained challenged with caseloads. However, she was confident that children were still receiving the correct care and reported that the number of cases being closed was in line with the national average.

Councillor Richard Somner requested consideration in the use of colour ratings, which was difficult to review for those that were colour blind. Councillor Somner further suggested that 'succeeding' should not be rated green as it was an ongoing status and that there should be more defined target dates. Councillor Brooks agreed to review.

Councillor Dominic Boeck referred to page 45 of the agenda pack and priority measures 5,6, and 9 and suggested that the indicators would mean very little to residents and should consequently be reviewed. Councillor Brooks suggested that it may be an issue for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to review.

Councillor Howard Woollaston suggested that the graph on page 71 of the agenda pack was incorrect and requested further information in relation to the increase in domestic abuse incidents reported on page 74. Councillor Brooks agreed to review and revert in due course.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon referred to the Liberal Democrat election manifesto commitment to repair dangerous potholes within 72 hours and queried why there was no performance indicator relating to it. Councillor Stuart Gourley responded that the detail was tracked as part of a service level agreement but was not included within the report. He further added that dangerous potholes that were reported were actually fixed within 2 hours but again were not included within the report.

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Councillor Mackinnon queried whether the service level was being achieved and suggested that as a manifesto pledge it should be included within the report. Councillor Mackinnon further suggested that another manifesto commitment relating to earlier care assessments should also be included within the data. Councillor Brooks commented that there had been a need to refine the number of key performance indicators reported but acknowledged that both were important and that he would consider the request.

Councillor Mackinnon referred to priority measure 14 and the commitment to 'adopt the West Berkshire Local Plan' and queried whether Councillor Denise Gaines regretted pausing adoption of the Plan, given the large number of extra houses in various wards that had been included in the adopted Plan but had not been included in the original Plan. Councillor Gaines responded that she did not.

Councillor Patrick Clark seconded the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2027 priorities scheduled for this financial year.
- To review those areas where performance is below target i.e., reporting as 'Red' or 'Amber, and note that the appropriate remedial action is in place.
- Note that although the review of the measures by the Council had been approved by the time of reporting (deliberation on 15 May 2025), they are not applied to this report as the progress presented here predates said approval. The adopted changes will be reflected in the Q1 2025-2026 Performance Report whilst this presents results against the measures in place at the time of reporting.

8. **Voluntary and Charitable Sector Memorandum of Understanding (EX4653)**

Councillor Jeff Brooks introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 9), which recommended adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between West Berkshire Council (WBC) and the Voluntary and Charitable Sector (VCS).

Councillor Patrick Clark seconded the recommendation within the report.

Councillor Jo Stewart declared a personal interest as an employee in the charity sector and welcomed the MOU as a document that cemented the relationship and supported the work of the voluntary sector. Councillor Stewart queried how effectiveness of the MOU would be measured.

Councillor Brooks responded that the Council would seek ongoing feedback from the voluntary and charitable sector.

Paul Coe, Executive Director for Adult Social Care, commented that the MOU was a statement of intent and shared commitment, and that he was devising a workplan together with the VCS, which would be published to enable residents to view how the Council and VCS were working together to improve lives in the district.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Agrees to the adoption of the MOU by the Council and invites the VCS bodies named within to do the same.

9. **Motion Adopting Open Space in New Development (EX4686)**

Councillor Denise Gaines introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 10), which responded to a motion presented by Councillor Amirtharaj proposing that public open spaces on new developments were taken on by the Council (where possible). Councillor

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Gaines thanked Councillor Amirtharaj for proposing the motion and apologised for the length of time taken to respond.

Councillor Dominic Boeck queried what the report and motion achieved. Councillor Gaines responded that it had provided an opportunity for explanation of the complexities surrounding open space. Councillor Gaines promised to lobby MPs for revised legislation granting more robust powers to local and parish councils in the allocation of open space.

Councillor Richard Somner noted that there had been a contentious case in his own ward, but that Council officers had not been prepared to take on the land initially due to the cost of making it usable. He commented that expectations should be managed and that all should be mindful that it was not just down to adopting open space, but for the costs associated to be borne by the developer and not the Council or its residents. Councillor Gaines agreed and commented that land would only be taken on by the Council where it met certain standards.

Councillor Gaines promised to upload a briefing note to the Council website explaining the key issues, and to raise the matter with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at a future meeting.

Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Support the motion in principle, but with amendments to 1 to 4 of the Motion as follows (reasons are set out in the main body of the report);
- It is recommended that 1 and 2 above are combined and worded as follows;
To endorse a review of the application of the Council's policies regarding securing and adopting public open space including an investigation into the financial and legal implications of any change in approach.
- It is recommended that 3 of the motion is amended as follows;
To enhance the approach to engaging with Town and Parish Councils regarding funding, management and adoption of public open space.
- It is recommended to support point 4 of the motion.

10. Healthcare in New Developments (EX4687)

Councillor Denise Gaines introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 11), which provided a response to the recommendations made in the report from the Health Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Healthcare in New Developments, which was presented to Members at the Health Scrutiny Committee on 12 June 2024. It was highlighted that the report proposed five key recommendations aimed at enhancing collaboration between the planning team and district health providers.

Councillor Patrick Clark seconded the recommendations within the report and emphasised the importance of raising the profile of health in planning, of active travel, good design and ensuring that the places people lived were made to encourage activity.

RESOLVED that: Executive

Support the implementation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations summarised below and the associated actions set out in Appendix B.

- The Development Manager, Planning Policy Manager, Senior Primary Care Estate Manager and Senior Programme Manager (Primary Care Estates) to meet regularly to review their engagement on applications and that responses are timely and evidenced. To seek out and together review best practice regularly and make

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improvements in their ways of working. To hold each other to account and communicate effectively. To work closely on negotiations and to think broadly about the needs of the community and involve other stakeholders.

- The West Berkshire Council Planning Team to work with GP practices directly to understand their needs and requirements for new developments.
- The ICB to review how they work with GPs regarding the primary care needs of new developments and to consider any improvements that could be made.
- The Senior Primary Care Estate Manager and Senior Programme Manager (Primary Care Estates) to consider how they can input into the CIL charging structure when it is next reviewed. To be prepared through seeking best practice elsewhere to provide evidence requested and to be clear how much is needed for new developments.
- The Planning Policy Manager to consider a review of the CIL spending strategy.
- The Council, in collaboration with key stakeholders, to consider the opportunity of health hubs or multipurpose community facilities. This could be owned by the local authority and leased to the ICB or GP's or created by developers in the first phase of development and sold to GP practices for a nominal fee. To consider best practice, the local approach and new ways of delivering provisions. The NHS requirements to be built into the Council's wider thinking around multipurpose hubs.
- The ICB to continue work on workforce planning and staffing to support any infrastructure and to work closely with the local authority. The Berkshire West Place Director to keep the Health Scrutiny Committee updated.
- The Senior Programme Officer for the Wider Determinants of Health to request a peer review of the Healthy Planning Protocol from relevant colleagues at the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) that specialise in healthy place shaping and the planning process. Consider implementing any changes and recommendations that arise through the review.
- Further collaboration by Senior Programme Officer for the Wider Determinants of Health, the Development Manager and Planning Policy Manager with developers to finalise guidance and supporting documents with developers. To consider how to guide developers when consulting with the public for HIAs.
- The Health Scrutiny Committee to endorse the Healthy Planning Protocol, including Health Impact Assessments and any associated Service Level Agreements, to Heads of Service and Corporate Board.
- The Health Scrutiny Committee to endorse an application to Corporate Board/Financial Review Panel to approve a new Officer post for implementing the HPP
- The Senior Primary Care Estate Manager and Senior Programme Manager (Primary Care Estates) to work with the Senior Programme Officer for the Wider Determinants of Health to ensure the HPP is suitable for the ICB and staffed accordingly. The ICB to ensure there is suitable resource to implement this effectively in collaboration with stakeholders.
- The Planning Policy Manager and Development Manager to review if Planning have adequate resources needed to implement HIAs, improve collaboration and deliver the appropriate training. National guidance is available which can begin to strengthen the approach whilst the HPP is in development.
- The Senior Programme Officer for the Wider Determinants of Health, Development Manager and Planning Policy Manager to consider how best to engage with developers, for example via the developers' forum, to encourage them to use healthy design, provide health features in developments, and remind them that such actions help to fulfil their own companies' ESG commitments.

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- Public Health to deliver a public health prevention approach workshop for all elected Members, including public health data skills (the West Berkshire Observatory and Public Health Outcomes Framework data) and the HPP.
- The Senior Programme Officer for the Wider Determinants of Health, Development Manager and Planning Policy Manager to consider further training on healthy places in planning for all Members.
- The Council to explore 'design guides' or frameworks to supplement the HPP and supporting documents for prospective developers. These to be shaped around public health and council priorities.
- The Council to consider community engagement and engagement with town and parish councils and West Berkshire Council Members for continuity and accountability in design and in keeping the communities sustainable.

11. **Contract for Award: 9 Month Block Beds 'Bupa UK'(EX4685)**

Councillor Patrick Clark introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 12), which requested approval to directly award a 9-month exception for 25 blocks beds from July 2025 to Bupa UK within 3 different Care (Nursing) Home.

Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded the recommendation within the report.

Recommendation: (Vote to be taken in Part II)

12. **Commercial Property Disposal - Units 1 and 2 Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Guisborough (EX4715)**

Councillor Iain Cottingham introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 13), which sought approval for the disposal of the Council owned investment property, Units 1 and 2 Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Guisborough, TS14 7FE in accordance with the Property Investment Strategy.

Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded the recommendation within the report.

Recommendation: (Vote to be taken in Part II)

13. **Members' Questions**

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

14. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers.

15. **Contract for Award: 9 Month Block Beds 'Bupa UK' (EX4685)**

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person) (Paragraph 5 – information relating to legal privilege)

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 16), which requested approval to directly award a 9-month exception for 25 blocks beds from July 2025 to Bupa UK within 3 different Care (Nursing) Homes.

RESOLVED that: the recommendation in the exempt report be agreed.

Other options considered: 1) Do nothing - all current block beds would transfer to spot beds at an increased cost to West Berkshire Council. This would also lead to a reduction

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in guaranteed capacity within the area. 2) Undertake a procurement process now to expand the use of block beds. This would need to include an engagement exercise and sufficient time will be needed to do so. This option is not viable within the timescales for the existing block bed contract. However, the commissioning team has commenced work on this process with a view to this being in place before the end of the proposed contract with Bupa.

16. **Commercial Property Disposal - Units 1 and 2 Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Guisborough (EX4715)**

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person)

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 17), which sought approval for the disposal of the Council owned investment property, Units 1 and 2 Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Guisborough, TS14 7FE in accordance with the Property Investment Strategy

RESOLVED that: the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

Other options considered: 1) the asset provides an income stream both individually and as part of the eight-property portfolio. The option exists for the Council to retain the asset to benefit from the longer term income that the asset derives. Retention of the asset will though require the ongoing management of the asset including rent reviews, the lease expiry dates and costs associated with any voids. 2) The Council could choose to retain the asset until its investment manager successfully concludes future asset management initiatives before bringing the property to the market. 3) The Council could retain this asset and carry-out refreshed assessments of other assets to provide recommendation for an alternative disposal from the portfolio.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature