

DRAFT

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

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 MARCH 2026

Councillors Present: Tony Vickers (Chairman), Stephanie Steevenson (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks, Billy Drummond, Nick Carter, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Carlyne Culver, Paul Dick, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Clive Hooker, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Janine Lewis, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Tom McCann, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Vicky Poole, Christopher Read, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor, and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Executive Director – Resources), Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director – Place), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director – Children and Family Services), Melanie Booth (Group Executive – Liberal Democrats), Jake Carpenter (Group Executive – Conservatives), Martyn Sargeant (Service Director for Strategy & Governance), Nicola Thomas (Deputy Monitoring Officer and Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services), Honorary Alderman Adrian Edwards, and Honorary Alderman Tony Linden

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jane Langford, Councillor Biyi Oloko, Councillor Jeremy Cottam, Councillor Matt Shakespeare, Councillor Laura Coyle (attending online), Councillor Martin Colston, Councillor Martha Vickers, Councillor Geoff Mayes (attending online), Honorary Alderman Hilary Cole, Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles, Honorary Alderman Mollie Lock, Honorary Alderman Rick Jones, Honorary Alderman Keith Chopping, and Honorary Alderman Graham Bridgman

PART I

1. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that he had attended 22 events since the last Ordinary Council meeting on 27 November 2025. Specifically, he highlighted his attendance at numerous Citizenship Ceremonies, the York Nativity Play and several carol services, a local community hospital, a film showing at Newbury Town Hall, the launch of the West Berkshire Indian Society, the West Berkshire Community Champion Awards, the opening of the Old Library, and Mock Trails for students held at the Reading Magistrates Court.

The Vice-Chairman also attended a number of events since the last Ordinary Council meeting, including a number of Christmas events, the High Sheriff of Berkshire Awards Ceremony, and also the United Nations Association United Kingdom annual meeting.

2. Minutes

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Heather Codling and seconded by Councillor Billy Drummond:

“That the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 4 November 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.”

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

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MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Tony Vickers and seconded by Councillor Owen Jeffery:

“That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.”

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

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Heather Codling and seconded by Councillor Stuart Gourley:

“That the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 29 January 2026 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.”

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

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Stuart Gourley and seconded by Councillor Billy Drummond:

“That the Minutes of the budget meeting held on 26 February 2026 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.”

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

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. **Petitions**

Councillor Carolyne Culver presented a petition, on behalf of a resident, containing over 50 signatures relating to footpaths and cycle ways being implemented in the Donnington Heights Development.

Councillor Chris Read introduced a local resident, Dorothy Nesbit, who presented a petition containing 175 signatures relating to parking provision for the village shop in Bucklebury.

The Chairman thanked the Members and resident for presenting the petitions and confirmed that officers would review them and confirm within ten working days what action would be taken.

5. **Public Questions**

Details of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Q&As](#).

It was agreed that the questions standing in the name of Alison May would receive a written response, given that she was unable to speak to the meeting due to technical issues.

6. **Membership of Committees**

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines:

“That Council approve the following changes to the membership of Committees:

- That Councillors Martin Colston and Antony Amirtharaj swap places on the Western Area Planning Committee so that Councillor Colston would become a full Member, and Councillor Amirtharaj would become a substitute.
- That Councillor Owen Jeffery replace Councillor Jeff Brooks and that Councillor Alan Macro replace Councillor Chris Read on the Appeals Panel.”

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

7. **Motions from Previous Meetings**

Council was informed about the following response to a Motion which had been presented to a previous Council meeting:

- That the response to the Motion from Councillor Ross Mackinnon on explaining reasons for decisions following public consultations was heard at the Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026 ([Agenda Item 7](#)).

8. **Updates from Committees**

Council noted the meetings that had been held since the last ordinary meeting of Council as laid out in Agenda Item 9.

9. **Swift Bricks**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning a Motion presented to Council on 27 November 2025, about installing Swift Bricks in Council owned properties and amending Planning Policy and planning conditions to promote the use of Swift Boxes. This Motion was referred to the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee for Officers input and for the Committee's consideration, before it came back to Council.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Denise Gaines and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"That the Council does not support the Motion submitted in the name of Councillor David Marsh to Council on 27 November 2025, for the reasons set out in the report."

Councillor Gaines introduced the report and highlighted that swifts were on the red list of endangered birds according to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). She expressed her full support for implementing Swift Bricks in both new and renovated Council owned buildings in the future, where appropriate. The new Local Plan could also look into the issue. However, due to the cost of the bricks, it would result in a predicted total cost of £550k. Although finances should not be the only consideration on ecological issues, the proposal would create a significant and uncoded financial pressure for a Council that had to borrow several million pounds in order to simply continue its day-to-day operations.

In addition, the current Local Plan, although not mandating Swift Bricks, had several policies which required wildlife mitigation and had been used to require Swift Bricks in developments. Furthermore, it was not considered appropriate to issue a blanket requirement of 50 per cent of all developments to have Swift Bricks. For all these reasons, although the principle was supported, Councillor Gaines did not support the original Motion as worded and so proposed that the recommendation to not proceed be approved.

Members agreed with the point that, when renovations on Council buildings were undertaken, the installation of these bricks would be easier and more cost effective and so should be considered in these circumstances.

The need for immediate action was also mentioned, as waiting till the next Local Plan adoption would take several years. Questions were also raised about the high costs for these bricks that were suggested in the report. Some Members also indicated that part of the point of the Motion was to look to get developers to install swift bricks on new developments themselves, without the Council needing to provide any financial assistance. In addition, it was emphasised that the responsibility to protect the swifts was not down to the Council alone and that it required a whole community response.

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On the next Local Plan, a point was made that the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee would not have the resources to examine it in great detail. Therefore, the Administration was encouraged to clarify what group would be used or set up to help work on the Emerging Local Plan and discuss the inclusion of policies such as Swift Bricks.

Members were also reminded that Members Bids could be used for Swift Brick projects in their Wards.

The Chairman issued a point of clarification around the recommendation, stating that if it the recommendation to not support the Motion was not approved by Council, the original Motion by Councillor Marsh would be taken to the Executive as they had responsibility over the Council's buildings and formulation of Planning Policy.

Overall, although Council agreed with the principle of installing swift bricks in Council owned properties, as there was no budget allocated to this project and there would be potential Planning Policy issues in its implementation, Council agreed to not go ahead with the originally proposed Motion by Councillor Marsh.

The Motion to not proceed with the Swift Bricks Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

10. Notices of Motion

There were no Motions submitted.

11. Members' Questions

A point of order was made by Councillor Ross Mackinnon. He challenged the decision to not hear a series of emergency questions relating to the leaked report about the pedestrianisation of Newbury Town Centre.

However, as the Chairman did not consider that these questions would be urgent, and that they could be put to the next appropriate meeting without any detrimental effects (the Executive Meeting on 21 May 2026), he did not allow these questions to be tabled.

Details of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Q&As](#).

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.02 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature