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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 11 JUNE 2026

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

Also Present: ,

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Nigel Foot

Councillor(s) Absent:

PART I

1. Declarations of Interest

In relation to Agenda Item 3 Councillor Vicky Poole commented that in her professional role as a director of Tender Response, she was aware that the company had previously supported a subcontractor to make applications to suppliers operating within the highways framework.

Councillor Poole clarified that the work was part of her company's general business activities and was not connected to West Berkshire Council, the procurement exercise being discussed, or any decision-making on the contract.

Councillor Poole commented that she did not believe that this amounted to a disclosable pecuniary interest or any other registrable interest in relation to the contract award, and confirmed she had no commercial, beneficial or personal interest in the outcome but was making the declaration in the interest of openness and transparency.

2. Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract

Councillor Stuart Gourley introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 3), which sought Executive approval to award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract covering the period from 1 October 2026 for an initial period of seven years to 30 September 2033, with the option to agree a further three-year extension period until 30 September 2036.

Councillor Gourley explained that the procurement had been undertaken via a two-stage process with initial selection, followed by initial tenders, negotiation, and final tenders. Further it was noted that a cross-party steering group had been involved in reviewing bidder innovation cards, with Member involvement described as positive by both administration and opposition members.

In response to a query from Councillor Ross Mackinnon it was clarified that the final evaluation criteria were based on 50% quality, 10% social value, and 40% price, and that the social value figure was specified by the public procurement regulations.

Councillor Mackinnon queried whether officers agreed with the Executive's decision in relation to the tender outcome. Councillor Jeff Brooks commented that the matter would be discussed in Part II of the meeting.

Councillor Dominic Boeck queried why the report had warranted an extraordinary meeting of the Executive. Councillor Gourley reported that the meeting had been required because the current contract ended at the end of September 2026 and the Council needed enough time for mobilisation and the required standstill period.

Councillor Boeck queried whether the contract should be delayed given the prospect of potential imminent local government reorganisation. Councillor Gourley explained that the Council had already extended the term by three years and consequently needed to proceed with procurement to ensure continuity of service.

Councillor Adrian Abbs supported cross-party involvement in the procurement process but suggested that future procurements should include a follow-up Member challenge session after officer recommendations were developed.

Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded the recommendations within the report.

Recommendations: (Vote to be taken in Part II)

- Award the contract for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract for the initial period covering 01 October 2026 to 30 September 2033 (with a three-year extension clause) to the successful bidder.
- Delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services in consultation with the Executive Director (Place) to:
    - finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments (such amendment shall not be substantial or material) to the terms of the agreement necessary to produce a final agreement for execution and to enter into that agreement; and
    - finalise and enter into an appropriate lease agreement required for the contractor's use of the Chieveley depot.

3. West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

Councillor Denise Gaines introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 4), which sought authorisation from the Executive to commence preparation of a new West Berkshire Local Plan and publish the Notice of Intention to Commence by 30 June 2026. It was clarified that Government had advised that the Council should not delay progress with the Local Plan on the basis of local government reorganisation.

Councillor Gaines commented that despite the previous Local Plan only being adopted in June 2025, the Council now had no choice but to begin preparing a new one.

Councillor Dominic Boeck noted that the cost of the new Local Plan was estimated at £2 million and queried whether that was an accurate estimate. Councillor Gaines responded that it was hoped that the work would be managed within existing planning budgets, however any extra funding would still need to be approved through the normal budget-setting process.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon queried why the decision was being reviewed and approved at an extraordinary meeting and thereby bypassing any public scrutiny. Councillor Gaines responded that the prescribed timetable was very tight, and that the Council needed to publish a notice of intention to commence by 30 June 2026, which meant that the meeting of Executive scheduled for 2 July would be too late.

Councillor David Marsh queried how large the proposed cross-party working group would be and whether it would be proportionate to representation, and include provision for substitutes. Councillor Gaines explained that terms of reference would be agreed following the meeting.

Councillor Patrick Clark seconded the recommendations within the report and welcomed the ability to provide more clarity to residents in relation to the process of developing a Local Plan.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- To endorse the establishment of an advisory cross-party member Local Plan Working Group which will be utilised to inform the preparation and approach to the Local Plan with full terms of reference to be established and agreed by the Working Group.
- That approval is given to publish the West Berkshire Local Plan timetable in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
- That approval is given to publish the Council's formal Notice of Intention to Commence the West Berkshire Local Plan on or before 30 June 2026 in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
- That authority is delegated to the Service Director for Development and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to:

I. Approve and publish updates to the timetable as may be necessary.

II. Prepare and undertake a scoping consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

III. Approve, publish and submit the required documents and statements for statutory Gateway 1.

IV. Approve evidence documents, reports and supporting data and analysis for publication.

V. After having regard to the advice of the Local Plan Working Group, to prepare and consult on the proposed Local Plan content and evidence prior to Gateway 2.

VI. Approve, publish and submit the required documents and statements for statutory Gateway 2.

4. Planning Enforcement Plan

Councillor Denise Gaines introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 5), which sought approval from Executive to adopt the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan. It was explained that the updated 2026 Plan was intended to make enforcement clearer and more proportionate, whilst focusing limited resources on the most serious cases.

Councillor Howard Woollaston queried whether the Council would have sufficient capacity and whether more enforcement officers were needed. Councillor Gaines responded that an additional person had been added to the enforcement team, a compliance officer had recently started, and the structure of the team had also been amended.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon referred to the category 4 cases and queried whether some breaches would never be enforced. Councillor Gaines commented that enforcement would always be determined on a case-by-case basis, and that the new category had been introduced to assist with prioritisation.

Councillor Mackinnon queried whether the proposals would amend and improve the service. Councillor Gaines responded that the ambition was to meet the new priority timescales, and that the Plan would be revisited annually to make sure it remained up to date and fit for purpose.

Councillor Patrick Clark seconded the recommendation within the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- To approve the recommended changes following public consultation and adopt the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan 2026.

5. New Procurement Strategy and "Think Local" Social Value Strategy

Councillor Vicky Poole introduced the report (Agenda Item 6), which introduced a new Procurement Strategy and 'Think Local' Social Value Strategy that would improve procurement and commissioning across West Berkshire with greater market engagement to encourage small and medium sized enterprises and the voluntary sector to work with the Council.

It was reported that the revised Strategy had been driven by changes in procurement legislation and was intended to enact those changes through a single Council Strategy.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon referred to section 2.1 of the Procurement Strategy and noted that it appeared unfinished and stated 'To be agreed'.

Councillor Mackinnon referred to the Social Value Policy introduced in 2021 and noted that the current report and Strategy made no reference to it and queried how the paper developed and improved the original Policy. Councillor Poole commented that it had been easier to start afresh. Councillor Poole further commented that the new approach was intended to be more robust and standardised. Instead of relying on written and more subjective supplier responses about social value, the Council wanted more measurable and qualitative commitments from suppliers.

Councillor Poole announced that a 'Meet the Buyer' event had been organised at Shaw House on 25 June 2026 to showcase the new Strategy and encouraged local businesses keen to conduct business with the Council to attend.

Councillor Jeff Brooks acknowledged that the unfinished section of the Procurement Strategy was regrettable and requested that the Executive Director of Resources review with officers to ensure that future reports were presented in final form, not draft. Councillor Brooks commented that he did not feel that the omission was a material reason to reject the Strategy because the substantive content was still within the document and consequently seconded the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED that:

- That Executive adopt the Procurement Strategy
- The Executive adopt the "Think Local" Social Value Strategy

6. All Age Autism Strategy 2026-2029

Councillor Patrick Clark introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 7), which sought approval to publish the All-Age Autism Strategy, a document that outlined the Council's commitment to ensuring that people living with autism in the district could lead rewarding and fulfilling lives, and that they, their families, and their carers received the support they need.

Councillor Clark clarified that the recommendation in the report as written suggested the Strategy was being adopted, when in fact Members were being asked to approve it for public consultation. Consequently, the revised recommendation was stated to be that 'the Executive agree that the All Age Autism Strategy shall be publicly consulted on and return to a later date for consideration of the consultation outcomes'.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that the Strategy appeared to have been rushed, highlighting some odd wording in the survey results and noting that it had not been reviewed by a Scrutiny Committee prior to Executive decision. Councillor Clark replied that the work had not been rushed and that consultation and development had started back in 2023.

Councillor Boeck requested assurances that additional funding was being allocated to the Strategy, however Councillor Clark clarified that it was the introduction of a new Strategy and not a commitment to spend additional money.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon queried why the report had been scheduled for an extraordinary meeting of Executive rather than for the next ordinary meeting. Sarah Clarke, the Monitoring Officer, responded that the report had been scheduled to allow the consultation to commence sooner and that the Strategy would return to Executive for consideration of those comments and decision.

Councillor Heather Codling seconded the recommendation within the report highlighting that the Strategy had been co-produced and noting that autism affected approximately 3,000 residents both children and adults.

RESOLVED that:

- Executive agree that the All Age Autism Strategy shall be publicly consulted on and return to a later date for consideration of the consultation outcomes.

7. Asset Optimisation Plan

Councillor Tom McCann introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 8), which sought approval from the Executive for the adoption and implementation of the Assets Optimisation Plan, which formed a key component of the Council’s Finance Improvement Plan agreed in December 2025 and supported the Council’s financial recovery and long term sustainability.

Councillor McCann noted that the main purpose of the Plan was to bring scattered information about council assets into one framework so that Members and officers could properly evaluate them, including cost, income generated, and how they might be better used.

Councillor Jeff Brooks referred to section 5.6 of the covering report and requested that section 4 (a) be strengthened so that capital receipts from any asset sales would not just support the capital programme and transformation but would also be reinvested into future income streams to help the revenue budget.

Councillor Howard Woollaston raised concerns in relation to governance and accountability, and queried membership of the Assets Board, and how Members and the public would be able to monitor any decisions. In response, Councillor Brooks explained that the Assets Board was an internal board and that any actual disposal decisions would still proceed through the Council’s normal governance routes.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon suggested that the formatting of the report appeared odd, contained a lot of corporate jargon and appeared to have been written utilising AI.

In response to a query from Councillor Dominic Boeck it was clarified that GPAW referred to the four themes identified by the Finance Improvement Plan; Growth, Prevention, Asset Focus and We Can.

Councillor David Marsh noted that the report was hard to understand and queried how ward members and residents would be involved where specific local assets were affected. Councillor Brooks responded that the report presented a high-level framework for categorising and reviewing assets, not a decision on specific disposals, and Members were invited to raise individual cases separately.

Councillor Iain Cottingham seconded the recommendations in the report and noted that that the Council had roughly £350 million of assets, and that the Plan had created a proper fixed asset register and would ensure that best practice was applied to ensure assets were being used effectively.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Approve the Assets Optimisation Plan as the Council's framework for the review, optimisation and disposal of its asset portfolio, as detailed at Appendix A.
- Note that the Plan forms a core component of the Finance Improvement Plan approved in December 2025.
- Delegate authority to progress asset optimisation and disposal proposals in accordance with the governance framework set out in the Plan and in accordance with the Constitution.

8. 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 & 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, specified in brackets in the heading of each item. Section 10 of Part 10 of the Constitution refers.

9. Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract

(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 10), which sought Executive approval to award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract covering the period from 1 October 2026 for an initial period of seven years to 30 September 2033, with the option to agree a further three-year extension period until 30 September 2036.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

Other options considered:

- Permission to go out to tender was sought from Procurement Board. The procurement options were set out in the procurement strategy.
- The single supplier term maintenance contract, procured via the Competitive Flexible Procedure, was the preferred option, supported by recent Berkshire and regional appraisals. The scale and complexity of the service favour a single, experienced provider with the resilience and resources typically found in national or regional suppliers.
- Opportunities for SMEs remain through subcontracting, social value initiatives, and local workforce delivery. The specification reflects West Berkshire's refreshed standards and asset management objectives, adopting an outcome-focused approach to drive performance, innovation, and continuous improvement, supported by a commercial model that incentivises collaboration and measurable social value.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN …………………………………………….

Date of Signature …………………………………………….