# DRAFT

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

# EXECUTIVE

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

# THURSDAY 23 JULY 2026

**Councillors Present**: Jeff Brooks (Chairman), Patrick Clark, Heather Codling (Vice-Chairman), Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley and Tom McCann

**Also Present:** ,

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Iain Cottingham, Councillor Justin Pemberton and Councillor Vic Poole

**Councillor(s) Absent:**

## PART I

### 1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

### 2. Corporate Transformation Programme 2026

Councillor Jeff Brooks introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 3) which detailed the output of the cross-party Policy Development Group, informed of the transformation projects proposed for further business case development, and set out the recommended sequencing for that business case pipeline based on the stated prioritisation.

Councillor Brooks explained that following a review by CIPFA, the Council had been encouraged to place transformation more centrally within its operations and increase the pace of delivery. A cross-party Policy Development Group (PDG) was established to identify opportunities for change and the report represented the outcome of that work.

The extraordinary meeting had been called to avoid delaying progress until the next Executive meeting in September.

Councillor Brooks challenged suggestions that transformation should be paused due to uncertainty around future council structures, and argued that improving services, reducing costs and modernising ways of working would place West Berkshire in a stronger position as it moved towards new unitary authority arrangements.

Gabrielle Mancini, Service Lead for Transformation, Customer and ICT outlined how officers had assessed and prioritised the list of ideas produced by the PDG. It was emphasised that officers had not altered the PDG's recommendations but had developed a delivery sequence to ensure resources were focused on the most achievable and beneficial projects first.

Councillor Heather Codling highlighted that several proposals aligned closely with mandatory national reforms in Children’s Services, with a recurring theme of need for greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention, helping families earlier to reduce demand on more costly statutory services later.

Councillor Tom McCann referred to the Council’s asset portfolio and stressed that asset optimisation was not simply about selling buildings but about reusing assets creatively, reducing service costs and generating income. Councillor Denise Gaines agreed and referred to the proposed works at Chestnut Walk, which was planned to be repurposed for temporary accommodation and consequently reduce hotel and hostel costs.

There was strong support for greater use of technology and Councillor Gaines highlighted recent improvements to the online planning portal which provided enhanced opportunities for residents and parish councils to track planning applications.

Councillor Patrick Clark highlighted the role of technology in supporting preventative approaches within Adult Social Care including technology-enabled care systems which were already being used in care settings.

Councillor Stuart Gourley discussed opportunities arising from the new highways contract due to commence later in the year, including financial savings, innovative working methods, improved road maintenance outcomes and potential lane rental schemes to incentivise quicker completion of works and generate income for highway improvements.

As a member of PDG, Councillor Adrian Abbs, expressed support for the report, but questioned the sale of assets like York House by the current administration when contrasted it with the retention of Chestnut Walk. Councillor Brooks clarified that the sale of York House occurred under the previous administration and was opposed by the current one, confirming consistency in the Executive’s approach to asset retention and repurposing.

Councillor Brooks requested that a Transformation update report be submitted to Executive in March 2027.

Councillor Codling seconded the recommendations within the report.

**RESOLVED that**: Executive

- Note the output of the cross-party Policy Development Group and the transformation workstreams identified for further business case development.
- Delegate authority to Executive Directors, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to develop detailed business cases for the prioritised workstreams set out in Appendix B.
- Following the development of Business cases, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive and S151 Officer in conjunction with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance to agree the projects to be implemented and the prioritisation for delivery.
- Note that where a sound business case requires Executive decision or delegated approval, a further report will be brought back to Executive. Where Executive delegation is not required, sound business cases will proceed through internal governance into delivery and benefits tracking through the GPAW boards.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.30 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** …………………………………………….

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