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Council

1 Establishment

- 1.1 West Berkshire District Council (usually referred to as “West Berkshire Council”) is a body corporate which derives its powers from statute.
- 1.2 The Council is the principal authority for the district of West Berkshire, which has a single tier of local government (and is also referred to as a unitary authority).

2 Scope of Role - Statutory

- 2.1 A unitary authority is responsible for the full range of local government services, such as education, transport, planning, social care, waste, trading standards, council tax collection, housing, and licensing.

3 Scope of Role – General

- 3.1 The Council operates an executive form of governance in accordance with the LGA 2000 and associated legislation.
- 3.2 Legislation reserves a number of functions to Council. Local authorities also have discretion to determine where responsibility for some functions will sit. All other functions are reserved to the Executive by law.
- 3.3 Thus some functions are the responsibility of the Executive, some are the responsibility of Council, and some are the responsibility of both the Executive and Council.

4 Membership

- 4.1 The Council is comprised of 43 District Councillors elected every four years.

5 Chairman of Council

- 5.1 In accordance with s3, LGA 1972, the Chairman of Council shall, unless they resign or become disqualified, continue in office until their successor becomes entitled to act as Chairman of Council.
- 5.2 During their term of office, the Chairman of Council shall not be elected as Chairman of any Body.

6 Meetings – General

- 6.1 Council Meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Meetings Procedure Rules save as set out/added to below.

7 Budget Meeting – Procedure

- 7.1 Budget papers will have been available to Members since the meeting of the Executive prior to the Budget Meeting.
- 7.2 Prior to the Budget Meeting, the Chairman of Council will invite the Political Group Leaders or their duly nominated representatives, together with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Finance, to a pre-council briefing to support the effective operation of the Budget Meeting.
- 7.3 The standard items of business (and see the Meetings Rules Table) shall (only) be to:
 - 7.3.1 elect a person to preside if the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Council is not present;

- 7.3.2 receive apologies for an inability to attend the meeting;
- 7.3.3 receive any declarations of interest from Members;
- 7.3.4 debate the proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS);
- 7.3.5 debate the proposed Investment Strategy;
- 7.3.6 debate the proposed Capital Strategy;
- 7.3.7 debate the proposed Revenue Budget.
- 7.4 Proposed Amendments to items on the Agenda must be tabled by the Political Groups, and:
 - 7.4.1 where there has been no substantive change to the item (eg excluding any minor grammatical, typographical, etc, amendments) following the meeting of the Executive prior to the Budget Meeting:
 - 7.4.1.1 must be submitted to the S151 Officer by no later than 17:00, five Clear Working Days before the meeting; and
 - 7.4.1.2 following submission, the S151 Officer will add an opinion to the proposed Amendments and will distribute to all Councillors at least three Clear Working Days before the meeting; or
 - 7.4.2 where there has been any substantive change to the item following the meeting of the Executive prior to the Budget Meeting:
 - 7.4.2.1 must be submitted to the S151 Officer by no later than 17:00, three Clear Working Days before the meeting; and
 - 7.4.2.2 following submission, the S151 Officer will add an opinion to the proposed Amendments and will distribute to all Councillors at least one Clear Working Day before the meeting.
- 7.5 Prior to an Amendment being voted upon, the Proposer of the Amendment may request that the Meeting Chairman permit that there be separate votes in respect of parts of the Amendment. Subject to any comments from the Council's Statutory Officers, it shall be within the Meeting Chairman's discretion to permit separate votes on items within a proposed Amendment.

8 Themed Debates

- 8.1 Themed debates may occur during the early autumn Meeting of Council.
- 8.2 The subject matter of themed debates are to be agreed at a meeting of the Political Group Leaders, to take place at least six weeks prior to the Meeting. Any theme to be debated should be of relevance to the residents of West Berkshire.
- 8.3 In the absence of agreement, the Chairman of Council will determine the subject matter for debate.
- 8.4 At the Meeting, the Meeting Chairman may determine that questions submitted will receive a written response in accordance with the Questions appendix in order to allow time for the themed debate.
- 8.5 The following guidelines shall be followed for the debate:
 - 8.5.1 the debate will be for a maximum of one hour;
 - 8.5.2 the Leader of each Political Group (or their nominated representative) will be invited to make opening remarks;
 - 8.5.3 there will be no formal time limit on speeches, but the Meeting Chairman will control the allocation of time during the debate, having regard to the political balance of the Council.