

DRAFT

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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2023

Councillors Present: Lynne Doherty (Chairman), Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Ross Mackinnon, Thomas Marino and Richard Somner

Also Present: Councillors Lee Dillon, Adrian Abbs, David Marsh and Tony Vickers

Members and Officers Present Remotely: Councillor Alan Macro

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillors Joanne Stewart, Howard Woollaston, Jeff Brooks and Erik Pattenden

Officers Present: Sarah Clarke (Service Director Strategy & Governance), Paul Coe (Service Director Adult Social Care), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources), Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) Eric Owens (Executive Director – Place), Lizzie Reeves (Project Manager - MC, OS), and Nicola Thomas (Service Lead – Legal & Democratic)

PART I

79. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Howard Woollaston, Jo Stewart, Jeff Brooks and Erik Pattenden.

80. Minutes

Councillor Lynne Doherty opened the meeting with reference to the devastating earthquakes that had hit the south eastern area of Turkey on the border of Syria in the early hours of Monday morning, noting how shocked and saddened all had been.

Councillor Doherty reported that West Berkshire Council had an outstanding record in supporting displaced people and pledged to continue to do so by contributing as appropriate to any national response.

Councillor Doherty commented that should any residents wish to provide individual support, the Disaster and Emergency Committee had launched a Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal bringing together 15 charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently. Councillor Doherty urged individuals to follow the advice of the Charity Commission to ensure that contributions were made safely.

Councillor Doherty reported that West Berkshire Council had updated its website with details of how to contribute should residents wish to donate.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

81. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

82. Public Questions

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

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83. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

84. **Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2023/24 (C4320)**

Councillor Lynne Doherty noted that Agenda Items 6, 7, 8 and 9 were all due to be debated and approved at Council on 2 March and as such, it had been agreed with Councillor Lee Dillon that Members of the Shadow Executive would only raise issues of clarification at the current meeting.

Councillor David Marsh queried the net yield on the commercial property investments. Councillor Ross Mackinnon reported that the gross income before costs was approximately £3.2m, and that net benefit to the council tax payer was £1m.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed and Councillor Richard Somner seconded the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 6).

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendations to Council for approval.

85. **Medium Term Financial Strategy (C4303)**

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed and Councillor Lynne Doherty seconded the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 7).

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendation to Council for approval.

86. **Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2023/24 to 2032/33 (C4315)**

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 8).

Councillor Tony Vickers queried why there were few projects beyond 2026/27. Councillor Mackinnon responded that the Capital Strategy had been revised to now cover a 10 year period and aimed to provide a more reliable estimate as to when the capital schemes would be built. Councillor Mackinnon commented that further schemes would come to the fore in the future which would then be included within the Strategy.

Councillor David Marsh queried whether a visitor information centre had been included within the budget, given Councillor Woollaston's previous support of such a project. Councillor Mackinnon agreed to clarify following the meeting.

Councillor Marsh noted that there was a budget of £200,000 towards the Newbury Town Masterplan for 2023/24 and then nothing further. Councillor Mackinnon explained that the £200,000 was for 'quick wins', and that as a long term scheme, future projects related to the Masterplan would be subject to capital bids as for any other scheme. Eric Owens, Executive Director of Place further added that funding schemes were also being sought from alternative third party sources.

Councillor Marsh queried how much of the £669,000 2022/23 allocation toward the Sovereign joint venture project had already been spent, and whether the £334,500 for 2023/24 was extra funding. Eric Owens commented that planning applications relating to the project had been processed through the system and approved. Councillor Mackinnon was unable to quantify the amount that had been spent in the current year.

Councillor Marsh queried how the panel that determined CIL bids was composed. Councillor Mackinnon responded that the panel was a mix of Officers and Members of the Executive, and that each bid was scored in accordance with the CIL criteria.

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In response to Councillor Marsh's question, Councillor Graham Bridgman declared an interest, as Director of a company that had been awarded CIL funding from the Council, but noted no involvement in the CIL panel or in preparing the CIL bid.

Councillor Adrian Abbs commented that recording a nil amount in any of the columns of the table could lead to the wrong conclusion and queried whether anticipated percentages should be included instead.

Councillor Dominic Boeck seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendations to Council for approval.

87. Revenue Budget 2023-24 (C4314)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed and Councillor Lynne Doherty seconded the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 9).

Councillor David Marsh referred to the £30,000 allocated toward Sports Hub running costs and queried whether the fact that it was recorded from September onwards suggested that the Hub would be up and running by then. Councillor Mackinnon agreed that this was a fair assumption.

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendations to Council for approval.

88. Capital Financial Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23 (EX4301)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 10), and noted that there would need to be £7.3m of re-profiling in the forthcoming year. Councillor Mackinnon commented that the trend to re-profile was not uncommon and referred to page 222 of the Agenda pack, noting that the re-profiling for 2022/23 was similar to previous years.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that he was happy to second the recommendation and noted that the paper reflected some of the important spending that the Council had committed to across the district in relation to education schemes.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the forecast outturn position on the 2022/23 capital programme.
- In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members are asked to approve:
 - (a) £7.3 million of planned expenditure to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 (project details in Appendix B).
 - (b) £39k of Council funding (i.e. debt funding) proposed to be brought forward from approved expenditure for financial year 2023/4 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix B).
- In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members are asked to note:
 - (a) £239k of external funding to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix B).

89. 2022/23 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three (EX4300)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 11).

RESOLVED that: Executive note the forecast £1m overspend. The overspend is after taking account of provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of

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budget setting, and amendments expected to be made before year end. Without this provision, the forecast would be an over spend of £7.7m.

90. **Contract Award for the North and East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Schemes (EX4266)**

Councillor Richard Somner introduced and proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 12), which confirmed the award of the contract to Hope & Clay Construction Limited, and was delivered in partnership with the Environment Agency and Thatcham Flood Forum with contributions from Thames Water and Thatcham Town Council, whom Councillor Somner thanked. It was noted that the pre-tender estimate had been substantially higher than the winning tender, but that the contracted company was very reputable.

Councillor Tony Vickers commented that he was pleased with the outcome, and whilst surprised with the amount of the winning tender given the current high inflation, hoped that it would set a trend for future contracts.

Councillor Adrian Abbs queried the amount of funding submitted by each of the partnership participants. Councillor Somner agreed to forward further information following the meeting.

RESOLVED that: Executive note the report.

91. **West Berkshire Council Central Energy Contract Procurement Strategy (EX4299)**

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter introduced and proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 13), which recommended a switch from the existing L6 trading basket to an L12 trading basket and to inform Crown Commercial Services prior to the 15 March deadline.

Councillor Adrian Abbs queried whether the Council had tested the market to ensure good value. Councillor Ardagh-Walter agreed that it would be prudent to test the market at some point in the forthcoming twelve months, however there had been insufficient time given the March deadline.

In response to a query from Councillor Tony Vickers, Councillor Ardagh-Walter commented that the Council was not yet at the stage of having surplus energy to sell on.

Councillor Richard Somner seconded the recommendation and acknowledged that the situation would require regular review, but appeared the right decision to be making.

RESOLVED that:

- Executive grants authority for the Council to switch from its existing L6 trading basket to the L12 trading basket by informing CCS before the identified 15 March 2023 notification deadline.

92. **Libraries Review Report (EX4106)**

Councillor Lynne Doherty explained that the report (Agenda Item 14), would not be debated as it was scheduled to be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission in March. The paper would return to Executive at a future date.

93. **Members' Questions**

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

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(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature