

DRAFT

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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 8 JUNE 2023

Councillors Present: Lee Dillon (Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Heather Codling, Martin Colston, Iain Cottingham, Denise Gaines, Janine Lewis and Alan Macro

Also Present: Councillors Ross Mackinnon, Dominic Boeck, David Marsh, Jo Stewart, and Richard Somner

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillors Jeff Brooks and Tony Vickers, and Councillor Howard Woollaston

Officers Present: Sarah Clarke (Service Director- Strategy & Governance), Paul Coe (Interim Executive Director- People), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director – Place), Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and Nicola Thomas (Service Lead – Legal & Democratic)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Jeff Brooks and Tony Vickers, and Councillor Howard Woollaston.

2. **Minutes**

Councillor Ross Mackinnon noted that Councillor Lynne Doherty's name had been misspelled in section 95 of the minutes.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that section 96 of the minutes incorrectly implied that Shadow Executive Members had a right to vote at the meeting.

Councillor Dominic Boeck referred to section 104 of the minutes and clarified that he had stated that 98% of children were admitted to schools of their parents' choice, rather than the 90% recorded.

Subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. **Public Questions**

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

5. **Petitions**

A petition was handed in by Mr James Matos, containing sixty-two signatures and relating to a request to move the bike rack and phone booth outside McDonalds at Northbrook Street due to anti-social behaviour concerns. The petition was referred to officers within the Place Directorate.

EXECUTIVE - 8 JUNE 2023 - MINUTES

6. Capital Financing Performance Report Outturn 2022/23 (EX4381)

Councillor Iain Cottingham introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 6), which noted the under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget. The report presented the provisional outturn position for financial year 2022/23.

Councillor Cottingham highlighted key projects of expenditure over the previous year, which had included investment in Newbury Rail Station development, highway improvement projects, investment in local schools and investment in schemes to help maintain a green district.

Councillor Cottingham thanked the financial reporting team for their hard work in preparing and publishing the Council's financial statements to meet the Government's revised and earlier deadline of 31 May 2023.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon commented that he was glad that Councillor Cottingham had mentioned the hard work of officers Joseph Holmes, Melanie Ellis, and Shannon Coleman-Slaughter and hoped that he would enjoy working with them.

Councillor Mackinnon referred to the financial implications section of the report commenting that an expenditure of £35.9m against a budget of £60.1m, would not leave an under spend of £20.6m. Joseph Holmes clarified that the expenditure figure had been transposed in error and should have read £39.5m, as referred to throughout the remainder of the report.

Referring to section 5.7 of the report, and noting Councillor Tony Vickers' previous criticism of the ten year capital programme, Councillor Mackinnon queried whether the current administration would continue to follow the long term capital budgeting process. Councillor Cottingham confirmed that the Executive would.

Councillor David Marsh queried whether there would be sufficient existing funds to complete the projects scheduled within the capital budget, given the recent impact of inflation. Councillor Cottingham confirmed that there would.

Councillor Marsh queried whether the Executive would aim to keep more strictly to its budget each year rather than creating such a large underspend. Councillor Cottingham responded that there would need to be a robust business case and a tangible benefit to the residents of West Berkshire to justify expenditure on capital projects.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that he had been unnerved by the response as the implication was that planned expenditure which had been reprofiled would no longer be spent. Councillor Cottingham clarified that he could not guarantee that all of the reprofiled money would be spent due to inflation and interest rate pressures, however there would need to be an appropriate business case for the expenditure to occur.

Councillor Mackinnon commented that one of the benefits of a ten year budgeting process was the flexibility to reprofile and allow a long term view.

Councillor Adrian Abbs seconded the report.

Resolved that: Executive

- Note the provisional outturn on the 2022/23 capital programme.
- In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members approve:
 - (a) £17.1 million of planned expenditure to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 (project details in Appendix B).
 - (b) £736k of funding proposed to be brought forward from approved expenditure for financial year 2023/24 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix C).

EXECUTIVE - 8 JUNE 2023 - MINUTES

7. **2022/23 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Four: Provisional Outturn (EX4380)**

Councillor Iain Cottingham introduced the report (Agenda Item 7), which detailed the revenue performance of the Council during 2022/23, noting a provisional management accounting outturn of £4.71m overspend. Councillor Cottingham reported that following use of the reserves that had been set aside to support this, the overspend totalled £0.77m, which would reduce the Council's general fund reserve to £7.2m, which was just above the minimum level set.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon commented that the outturn represented an improvement to the Quarter Three figures.

Councillor Mackinnon noted that at the Council budget meeting in March 2023, Councillor Adrian Abbs had promised an emergency budget if elected, and queried when this would occur. Councillor Lee Dillon responded that the Executive would utilise the financial levers available to it and that if an emergency budget was required then one would be scheduled.

Councillor Jo Stewart queried whether there were any initiatives being adopted in Adult Social Care to address agency costs, and offered to work with Councillor Alan Macro to assist him. Councillor Macro responded that initiatives were underway to recruit more social workers and welcomed the offer of assistance.

Councillor David Marsh noted the lack of reserves and queried how they would be increased. Councillor Dillon commented that the report under discussion related to the previous quarter, however the existing MTFS had scheduled £1m to reserves for the forthcoming three years to help reduced the funding gap.

Councillor Dominic Boeck queried whether the recruitment and retention policy that had been introduced to Children and Family Services the preceding year was starting to work. Councillor Heather Codling confirmed that a member of staff was in post to oversee the recruitment and that there had been interest from external candidates.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the provisional management accounting outturn of £4.71m overspend. After using the reserves that were set aside to support this, the overspend totals £0.77m. This will reduce the Council's general fund reserve to £7.2m, which is just above the minimum level set, with further planned and unplanned removal of earmarked reserves to support the 2022/23 outturn position.

8. **2022/23 Performance Report Quarter Four/Year end (EX4292)**

In the absence of Councillor Jeff Brooks, Councillor Lee Dillon introduced the report (Agenda Item 8), and thanked officers for delivering the past administration's Strategy, but noting that the current Executive would be developing a new Council Strategy that would be bought to Council in the autumn.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon expressed thanks to the Executive Directors and officers of the council for producing a solid performance over the previous four years, particularly during the uncertain time during the Covid pandemic. Councillor Mackinnon expressed hope that the new administration would set similar challenging targets.

Councillor Richard Somner noted a number of red ratings against the Planning Service, however requested that Members recognise the importance of the Service Improvement Plan, and the hard work that had been undertaken by officers to build a better Planning Service. Councillor Dillon agreed that Planning played a crucial function within the district and that all were committed to ensuring that it provided the best service it could which

EXECUTIVE - 8 JUNE 2023 - MINUTES

included supporting the Service Improvement Plan, albeit whilst looking at best practice across the country and potentially adopting further improvements.

Councillor David Marsh commented that he was disappointed in the missed targets for maintaining a green district and requested improvement. Councillor Adrian Abbs responded that he had already discussed with officers initiatives to deliver an improved performance.

Councillor Jo Stewart referred to Birchwood Nursing Home and thanked all of the teams involved in the work and action plans that had been undertaken to improve the home.

Councillor Dominic Boeck queried the new Executive's plans to improve the number of schools within the district with a good or better rating. Councillor Dillon clarified that the paper referred to past actions and the performance of the past administration.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas, good results for the majority of the measures relating to the council's priorities for improvement, and remedial actions taken where performance is below target.

9. **Delivery of the Local Authority Housing Fund (EX4336)**

Councillor Denise Gaines introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 9), which sought an increase to the number of housing units provided through the Local Authority Housing Fund scheme from seventeen to twenty-seven. The units would be provided to house displaced persons. It was noted that at least 40% of the capital funding of the project would be funded by Central Government which would consequently limit the Council's financial exposure.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon commented that it was an excellent scheme, noting that it had originated under the previous administration and so was fully supported.

Councillor David Marsh agreed with Councillor Mackinnon and queried whether long standing empty properties could be considered as possible stock for future schemes. Councillor Gaines agreed and commented that she was supportive of the proposal and would investigate, where possible.

Councillor Martin Colston seconded the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Delegate to the Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with Housing and Property Services, delegated authority to negotiate, agree to purchase and enter into purchase documentation for each individual property identified for the Local Authority Housing Fund above £300,000 within the overall funding envelope of £9.25m (rising from the previous £6m allocated).
- Approve the increase of housing units to be provided through the scheme from 17 properties to 27 units
- Allocate a further £3.25m in total of funding from the Capital Strategy to deliver the additional 10 housing units of which £1.3m if Government funded.
- Note the refurbishment of the WestPoint House property to support this scheme
- Approve the setting of rents at the Local Housing Allowance level for scheme 1 (subject to confirmation from the Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services) and Social rent for Scheme 2; otherwise rents will be set at Social Rent across both schemes.

EXECUTIVE - 8 JUNE 2023 - MINUTES

- Delegate to the Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with Housing and Property Services, delegated authority to enter into individual licences or the appropriate.

10. Hackney Carriage Tariffs - 2023 (Post Consultation) (EX4298)

Councillor Lee Dillon introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 10), which proposed modifications to the table of taxi fares, following consultation with the trade.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon commented that he found the report difficult to interpret and requested that future iterations of the report clarify the percentage increases proposed.

Councillor Richard Somner requested clarification in relation to section 2.2 of the report as to which option was being adopted. Councillor Dillon clarified that option 6.1(b) 'Approve the revised table of fares at Appendix D as drafted, without modification' was the option that was proposed for approval.

Councillor Adrian Abbs seconded the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Consider the objections and comments received during the statutory consultation as set out in Appendix A;
- Approve the revised table of fares at Appendix D as drafted, without modification; and
- Confirm the date of 19 June 2023 for the table of fares to come into effect.

11. Members' Questions

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

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature