

DRAFT

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

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 27 MARCH 2025

Councillors Present: Billy Drummond (Chairman), Tony Vickers (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks, Nick Carter, Patrick Clark, Martin Colston, Iain Cottingham, Carolyn Culver, Paul Dick, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Clive Hooker, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Janine Lewis, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Biyi Oloko, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Vicky Poole, Christopher Read, Matt Shakespeare, Richard Somner, Stephanie Steevenson, Joanne Stewart, Clive Taylor, and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director - Children's Services), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director - Place), Nicola Thomas (Deputy Monitoring Officer and Service Lead - Legal & Democratic), Melanie Booth (Group Executive – Liberal Democrats), Jake Carpenter (Group Executive – Conservatives), Sam Chiverton (Zoom Host), Darius Zarazel (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Honorary Alderman Rick Jones (attending online), Honorary Alderman Tony Linden, and Honorary Alderman Graham Pask

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeremy Cottam, Councillor Louise Sturgess, Councillor Martha Vickers, Councillor Heather Codling, Councillor Laura Coyle, Councillor Jane Langford, Honorary Alderman Hilary Cole, Honorary Alderman Anthony Stansfeld, Honorary Alderman Graham Bridgman, Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles, Honorary Alderman Kieth Chopping, Honorary Alderman Paul Bryant, Honorary Alderman Adrian Edwards, and Honorary Alderman Mollie Lock

PART I

1. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that he had attended 16 different events since the last ordinary Council meeting on 28 November 2024. Specifically, he highlighted his attendance at the Community Champion Awards, put on by West Berkshire Council, the King's Award for Voluntary Service, and a number of Christmas events over the holiday period.

The Vice-Chairman also attended several events in the Chairman's absence, including the grand opening of Keevill Outdoor Space in Speenhamland and the Memorial Service for US Servicemen in Greenham Common.

2. Minutes

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Billy Drummond and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

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MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Billy Drummond and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Denise Gaines declared an interest in Agenda Item 10, as she was a Member of Hungerford Town Council. However, as this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest, she determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

4. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to Council.

5. Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

6. Membership of Committees

There were no proposed changes to the membership of Committees.

7. Motions from Previous Meetings

Council was informed about the responses to the following Motions:

- That Councillor David Marsh's Motion on the reinstatement of a companion bus pass scheme was responded to at the Executive meeting on 13 February 2025; And
- That Councillor Antony Amirtharaj's Motion for the fair management of public open space in new developments was scheduled to be responded to at the Executive meeting on 3 July 2025.

8. Updates from Committees

Council noted the meetings that had been held since the last ordinary meeting of Council as laid out in Agenda Item 9.

9. Hungerford Neighbourhood Development Plan

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the Hungerford Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Justin Pemberton and seconded by Councillor Stuart Gourley:

"That Council resolves that:

- A) The submitted Hungerford NDP be subject to a six-week consultation under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- B) Following the six week consultation, the Hungerford NDP be sent for independent examination under Regulation 17 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)."

Councillor Pemberton introduced the report and highlighted that all NDPs were subject to consultation and independent examination, and if approved at a referendum, would carry planning weight and take precedent over non-material policies.

NDPs allowed local communities to shape future growth in their areas and protect the things that made them unique. Some of the key focuses of the Hungerford Plan included

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promoting sustainable growth, supporting efficiency standards for homes, promoting heritage, and fostering a vibrant high street. As the Hungerford NDP had taken seven years to reach this point, Councillor Pemberton encouraged Council to approve the recommendations and allow it to proceed to the consultation stage.

Council noted the hard work that had been done by the Steering Group, agreeing that the NDP document was well written and structured. Although suitable land for development in Hungerford was limited as a result of a unique statute, Members noted the NDP had allocated two sites for 55 dwellings to 2041, as was required by the Local Plan.

Members highlighted the vision section of the Plan, welcoming the community spirit that it demonstrated, and the policies around housing mix and play areas. They emphasised that NDPs were unique in so far as they were driven by the local community and provided individual residents the chance to contribute to shaping the future of their community. However, although they carried planning weight, NDPs could not rule out areas for development.

In response to a point about the difficulty that small parish councils could have in producing a plan, Members were informed that councils could work together to produce a joint NDP and thereby share resources.

Council thanked the Steering Group for their work and encouraged them to continue to communicate as much as possible with residents in order to ensure that all feedback was taken on and that the plan was fully representative.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations and submit the Hungerford NDP to the six-week consultation and independent examination.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

10. **Statutory Pay Policy 2025/26**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning the Council's Statutory Pay Policy for 2025/26.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Iain Cottingham:

"That Council:

- A) Adopt and approve the Statutory Pay Policy Statement for publication.
- B) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to update the pay scales highlighted in Appendix 1 of the policy to reflect any pay award agreed during 2025/26."

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted a correction to points 4.6 and 6.1 of the report. He confirmed that the report had already been through the Personnel Committee who were satisfied for it to come to Council.

The Statutory Pay Policy was a regular annual item, and Members were assured that the Council had been through a robust exercise in its preparation and that pay was proportionate to comparative councils across the country.

Some Members noted that there was a lack of detail in the report regarding pensions, something that could help with talent acquisition. As Council agreed that more information could be provided about this, it was agreed that more information about pensions be added into future years' reports.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

11. Constitutional changes

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning changes to Part 3, Meeting Procedure Rules, and Part 13, Code of Conduct, of the Council's Constitution.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Martin Colston:

"That:

- A) Part 13 Code of conduct Appendix A be deleted.
- B) Part 13 Code of conduct Appendix E be adopted as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- C) Part 13 Code of conduct Appendix G be deleted.
- D) Part 13 Code of conduct Appendix H be adopted as set out in Appendix 2 to this report.
- E) Council delegates to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Constitution Review Task Group the power to update Parts 13 of the Constitution to ensure that this reflects the new rules, and to make any minor additional corrections to the parts of the Constitution to ensure consistency in terminology and presentation.
- F) The updated version of Part 3 - Meeting Procedure Rules be adopted.
- G) Council agrees that the changes to the Constitution detailed in this report, take effect from 1 April 2025."

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that the Council's Constitution was under continual review and was a live document. The cross-party Constitution Review Task Group had proposed changes in order to make the Constitution easier to navigate and better reflect the current environment.

The key changes proposed were around the Code of Conduct and complaints process. In order to speed up and make more efficient the determination of Code of Conduct complaints against Members, it was proposed that the Advisory Panel stage be removed, and that complaints subject to external investigation would instead proceed straight to the Governance Committee.

Council noted another proposed change, about the inclusion of a Leaders Annual Report at the annual meeting of Council. This would provide the Leader of the Council ten minutes to outline the progress made over the past year as well as an opportunity for questions to be asked by Opposition Group Leaders.

Overall, Members agreed that the proposed amendments to the Constitution as proposed by the Constitution Review Task Group, and recommended for adoption by the Governance Committee, were appropriate. Therefore, it was agreed to approve the recommendations as presented in the report.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

12. Member Development Programme

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 13) concerning the Member Development Programme (MDP).

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Vicky Poole and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

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"That Council:

- A) Approve the proposed Four-Year Plan for Member Development.
- B) Approve the proposed Member Development Programme 2025/26.
- C) Authorise the Service Lead - Legal & Democratic to regularly review and amend these documents where necessary throughout the Municipal Year to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose.
- D) Encourage the Group Leaders to use all reasonable endeavours to secure attendance by Members at all relevant training as detailed within the Programme.

Councillor Poole introduced the report and highlighted that the MDP was traditionally an annual item, but that the current report had taken a broader scope than usual. Council was presented with the expected Member Development Plan across a typical four-year Council term. The contributions of the cross-party Member Development Group were also noted, as they had helped develop the new format, scope, and sessions proposed.

Each session in the plan was reviewed in order to ensure that it was providing sufficient value at the time it was being scheduled during the four-year Council term.

Council noted that the primary change in the MDP was the focus on including virtual training. Although in-person training was still a feature, as many sessions as possible would be provided through a new learning portal which would allow Members to complete sessions in their own time. Members also highlighted recommendation D and encouraged Group Leaders to promote attendance and completion of training sessions.

Some Members noted that a contact list of key Officers would be very valuable for handling casework and would ensure that questions went to the correct person. In addition, a session on engaging with technology was also proposed as this would assist those Members who were not as familiar with using the current suite of Council technologies.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report and with the recommended approach to Member Development, they agreed to approve both the Four-Year Plan for Member Development and the Member Development Programme for 2025/26.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

13. **Leaders Update on Membership of Executive**

As required in Part 5, Section 4.7 of the Constitution, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeff Brooks, updated Council on changes made to the composition of the Executive.

Council was informed that Councillor Louise Sturgess had stepped down and that Councillor Justin Pemberton had taken on the Economic Development and Regeneration Portfolio, in addition to the Public Safety and Community Engagement Portfolio.

14. **Notices of Motion**

There were no Motions submitted.

15. **Members' Questions**

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

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(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.12 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature