

# DRAFT

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## RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2026

**Councillors Present:** Carolyne Culver (Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Laura Coyle, Erik Pattenden, Christopher Read, Richard Somner, Howard Woollaston and Alan Macro (Substitute) (In place of Jeremy Cottam)

**Also Present:** Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Executive Director (Resources)), Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director - Place), Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director for Finance, Property and Procurement, Section 151 Officer), Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Councillor Dominic Boeck (Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Martha Vickers (Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Heather Codling (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services), Councillor Iain Cottingham (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources), and Vicky Phoenix (Principal Policy Officer - Scrutiny)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Ross Mackinnon and Councillor Jeremy Cottam

#### PART I

##### 1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 10 November 2025 and 25 November 2025 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chairman.

##### 2 Actions from previous Minutes

Members reviewed the actions from the previous meetings. The following points were noted:

- **253** – it was noted that the business case and viability review for the solar farm would be concluded by the end of March 2026.
- **266** – this action, in relation to the Chestnut Walk Joint Venture, had been completed.

**Action: This would be communicated to the resident who raised a query on this matter.**

Members resolved to suspend standing orders to permit members of the public to address the Committee.

- **116/143** – Ms Paula Saunderson requested an update on this matter which related to pollution of the Northbrook stream. She queried if mud testing and camera inspections had taken place, and whether meetings were taking place between the three risk management authorities (West Berkshire Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water). Ms Saunderson highlighted the new DEFRA policy, Building A Safer Future Together, which included indicative actions to address legacy pollutants. The policy envisaged partner agencies working together to manage legacy contamination. Ms Saunderson urged the Council and partners to do everything within their power to mitigate this growing 30 year old problem. She referenced sources of

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funding that could be accessed to assist with this work, such as the new National Housing Delivery Fund which could hopefully be used to free up brownfield lands which were part of the problem.

**Action: Councillor Carlyne Culver requested that a response be provided to Ms Saunderson on this matter.**

- **274** – Mr Paul Morgan clarified his request for information on contract awards permitted by officers under delegated authority, the value of which were in excess of £2.5m. This was a relatively recent change and Mr Morgan was concerned that such decisions were being made without being subject to a sufficient level of transparency and scrutiny. Contract awards of this value were previously subject to detailed reports. Mr Morgan felt that the justification for making this change had not been adequately evidenced. Sarah Clarke, Executive Director (Resources), confirmed that a briefing note was being prepared which would be provided to this Committee at its next meeting on 17 March 2026. She would take note of Mr Morgan's comments in finalising the briefing note.

Members resolved to reinstate standing orders.

**251** – as agreed at the special meeting held on 3 February 2026, information on capital receipts had been circulated to the Committee. Councillor Culver gave thanks for the provision of this information which clarified expenditure, savings and cost avoidance. Figures were noted as follows:

- Expenditure                      £3.3m
- Savings                            £581k
- Cost avoidance                  £1.2m

It was also noted that approximately £7m had been saved in agency costs with staff added to the Establishment in some cases.

Income of £875k had been foregone between 2023 and 2025.

The 2025/26 Q3 report showed a variance of £1.1m for Transformation. The Q3 report also referenced a saving of £1.9m related to care homes.

Councillor Culver reiterated the need expressed at the previous week's meeting for this information to be held in one place for future monitoring. She clarified that Transformation was being reviewed by the Committee in response to concerns raised by both CIPFA and KPMG. Scrutiny of Transformation work would be returned to once the 2025/26 budget had been finalised.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **4 Petitions**

There were no petitions received at the meeting.

### **5 2025/26 Q3 Financial Performance Report (EX4676)**

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources) presented the report (Agenda Item 6) which outlined the financial performance of the Council's revenue and capital budgets following the Q3 2025/26 outturn.

The forecast Q3 revenue outturn was £8.5m/4.5% adverse to the budget. Total net revenue was forecast at £192.0m in the Q3 outturn, vs £183.4m in the budget.

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Following the Q2 reprofiling of £22.5m of capital budget, approved by the S151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, the revised position at Q3 for the expected capital expenditure in 2025/26 was £50.8m against an updated budget of £59.2m resulting in an underspend of £8.4m.

The report noted that in December 2025, a revised Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) request of £20m had been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This sum would enable the Council to maintain the required S151 recommended General Fund level at outturn in order to support the 2026/27 revenue budget and provide greater resilience to the reserves in future financial years.

The Q3 revenue outturn position, which had increased by £1.7m from Q2, was predominantly made up of the following areas:

- Adult Social Care overspend of £4.1m, which included £1.9m in relation to care homes.
- Children's Social Care overspend of £3.7m which included placement costs (£2.8m).
- Transformation, Customer and ICT (£1m).
- Finance, Property and Procurement (£800k).

The report also outlined the primary drivers for the £1.7m increase to the outturn position.

The Government had advised that it would be focusing on reducing costs of external placements.

Turning to capital, Councillor Cottingham highlighted that the weighted average cost of borrowing was 3.89%. The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rate stood at 5.6%. The Council was looking to maximise short-term borrowing and avoid higher long-term rates, alongside ensuring compliance with the requirement that no more than 30% of borrowing was short-term.

Councillor Cottingham concluded by highlighting the very recent Government announcement which proposed that it would meet 90% of existing costs being incurred against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) placements. This could be in the region of £27m. The full detail of this announcement needed to be analysed.

A number of questions were asked by the Committee the responses to which were as follows:

- Concerns were raised about the sustainability of projected borrowing which would increase over the course of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It was noted that this depended on the Council's ability to service debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)). There was therefore a reliance on the continued availability of EFS from Government.
- Controls on non-statutory spending were discussed and Members were advised of the Financial Review Panel which was in place to scrutinise expenditure (and had been for some time). However, Councillor Cottingham explained that it was the Administration's policy to maintain a broad range of services, such as libraries, sport, and culture, rather than cutting non-statutory services. This was despite the Government's unfair funding review.
- Shannon Coleman Slaughter (Service Director – Finance, Property and Procurement) explained that spend panels reviewed all non-contracted expenditure to ensure it was essential and supported by a sound business case.
- Demographic modelling had been undertaken for Adult Social Care. There was an ageing population, many of whom would need care in years to come. The importance

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of early intervention and preventative investment, particularly in dementia care, was emphasised.

- The increasing reliance on EFS across local authorities was noted. The Local Government Chronicle had reported that a third of local authorities were in receipt of or planning to request EFS.
- Concern was voiced at the reducing level of Business Rate retention, with the majority of this funding going elsewhere in the country. The Council only expected to retain 13p in the pound in 2026/27.
- The increase in average costs for care providers was attributed to factors such as National Insurance uplifts, inflation, and renegotiated contracts. Costs could be reviewed, alongside care provision being maintained. A reduction in self-funding contributions was noted, possibly linked to cost of living pressures.
- The recent government announcement regarding funding for the DSG/SEND deficits was returned to and it was queried if this only related to historic debt. Councillor Cottingham reiterated that the full detail of this announcement would be analysed and explained that the potential financial benefit had not been taken into account in budgets. Councillor Heather Codling (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services) added that, after reviewing the Government statement, the Government would meet 90% of costs incurred to the end of the 2025/26 financial year, subject to meeting certain conditions, which included a SEND reform programme. There was however uncertainty about deficits incurred between 2026 and 2028.
- The Portfolio Holders advised that in-year financial pressures and/or mitigations had not led to reduced capacity or raised thresholds for service provision. The closure of a specific SEND unit was attributed to staffing issues rather than funding.
- The fact that the continued ownership of care homes had not been budgeted for as a contingency was queried and it was acknowledged that, with hindsight, this should have been the approach. However, final negotiations were ongoing when the previous year's budget was being set.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted. It would next be considered by Executive on 12 February 2026.

### 6 **Medium Term Financial Strategy: Financial Years 2026-2030 (C4678)**

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 7). Councillor Iain Cottingham (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources) explained that the purpose of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was to determine financial planning assumptions for future years and align these with the Council Strategy to ensure that strategic objectives were delivered. The MTFS highlighted the overarching key issues facing the Council's finances and referenced the scenarios and wider uncertainties concerning the Council's future revenue streams in light of national and local economic factors.

Councillor Cottingham drew attention to the projected EFS funding requirement that was set out in the report - a revised EFS request of £20m for 2025/26.

The report highlighted a significant reduction in the funding settlement over the period of the MTFS. This was particularly concerning when considering increasing costs and with the risk of needing to fund, for example, a high cost placement.

It was noted that projections were based on a worst-case scenario with regard to EFS. If the announced SEND/DSG override materialised then this would improve the position. A realistic approach had been taken to financial forecasting.

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There was an increasing reliance on Council Tax. A 4.99% Council Tax increase was proposed for 2026/27.

A number of questions were asked by the Committee, the responses to which were as follows:

- It was only possible to increase Council Tax in excess of 4.99% via a referendum or by making an application to Government as part of an EFS request (without triggering a referendum). It was noted that this was generally permitted for local authorities with historically low council tax levels.
- The Section 151 Officer recommended a General Reserve Fund of £10.5m. The forecast closing balance for the current year was £15.8m, giving headroom of £5.3m.
- The requirement for a £15m annual savings target was questioned for future years, when compared to £4.5million being identified for 2026/27. Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive) confirmed that the savings requirement needed to increase to reflect the reality of the Council's financial situation and the need to meet EFS conditions.
- Concerns were raised about the growing increase in EFS as a percentage of the capital financing requirement (CFR). The sustainability of operating with such high levels of borrowing was questioned. In response, it was explained that while EFS as a percentage of CFR was increasing, as a percentage of the overall revenue budget it was less concerning. The need to focus on the proportion of the budget funded by EFS, and to reduce this over the MTF5 period, was emphasised.
- The point was made that if the Council had been able to retain its business rates then it would not have been necessary to apply for EFS.
- The roles of the Finance Improvement Group and Financial Review Panel were discussed. The Finance Improvement Group would oversee the Finance Improvement Plan (with external representation for accountability and challenge), with the aim of reducing EFS requirements. The Financial Review Panel was internally focused and met on a weekly basis to review day-to-day expenditure and consider opportunities for in-year savings.
- The increasing proportion of revenue spent on debt interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) was identified as a growing concern. This would continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted. It would next be considered by Executive on 12 February 2026, followed by Budget Council on 26 February 2026.

### 7 **Treasury Management and Investment & Borrowing Strategy (C4679)**

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 8). The report sought to consolidate the Investment and Borrowing Strategy for 2026/27 by detailing how and where the Council would invest and borrow in the forthcoming year, within a particular framework. The Strategy was monitored throughout the year, with a mid-year report considered by the Governance Committee, as well as an annual report being presented to Members.

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources) drew Members' attention to paragraph 6.15 which referenced the Prudential Code. This showed that the liability benchmark in 2027/28 would exceed the capital financing requirement (CFR). This would be closely monitored on an ongoing basis.

He explained that borrowing requirements would increase for capital financing. This was forecast to reach £470m by 2028/29.

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Councillor Cottingham concluded by stating that these figures did not take account of the potential SEND/DSG funding override.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted. It would next be considered by Executive on 12 February 2026, followed by Budget Council on 26 February 2026.

### 8 **Capital Strategy and Supporting Programme: Financial Years 2026/27 - 2029/30 (C4681)**

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which outlined the Capital Strategy and the supporting funding framework, providing a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributed to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Portfolio Holder for Finances and Resources) outlined the vision of the Capital Strategy which was to develop the Council's core strengths with a focus on Social Care, Education and local infrastructure improvements such as road enhancements and flood prevention. The majority of capital spend was directed towards these priority areas.

The capital programme's financial breakdown was outlined. This was made up of £10.4m of Council funding and £35.8m of external funding committed for the next financial year. External funding included grants and contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and from Section 106 agreements. The importance of an affordable capital programme was emphasised and that grant funding was ring-fenced for specific purposes.

The importance of ongoing investment in infrastructure was discussed, with the point made that underinvestment could have long-term negative impacts on the area's attractiveness to families and businesses. It was important to attract residents to the district and encourage them to remain.

The Council's success in securing external grants was noted, this was particularly important in the current financial climate. Officers were praised for their work in this area, although it was acknowledged by Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive) that Government funding was often targeted at areas with higher deprivation, limiting West Berkshire's opportunities.

The Council's capacity to continue to apply for grants was questioned. In response it was advised that while it was not financially possible to appoint dedicated officers for this purpose, officers did submit good quality bids for grant funding which achieved much success. Success in securing grants for highways and environmental projects were particularly highlighted. The potential to access grants from Homes England was raised.

The need for clearer reporting on the capital programme was raised, with a suggestion that it would be of benefit to be able to distinguish between annual, ongoing, and multi-phase projects/expenditure in future reports. The value of tracking long term investment in assets was discussed, with the view that this could inform future business cases and reveal patterns in maintenance and replacement needs.

It was noted that the Council's accounting system could track spend on a ward by ward basis which would help to understand levels of investment across West Berkshire.

The adequacy of capital investment in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision was questioned. It was discussed that demand for SEND places was high and it was felt that implications arising from the Covid-19 epidemic had contributed to this demand. Councillor Heather Codling (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for

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Children and Family Services) explained that the Council aimed to expand provision to further enhance inclusion and to enable pupils to attend their local school.

Councillor Cottingham added that placement decisions were made based on what was best for the individual, especially those who were vulnerable, rather than on cost. He added that investment in Education was a key priority of the Capital Strategy with expenditure focused on statutory requirements and projected need.

The importance of CIL funding was highlighted, and it was confirmed by Mr Holmes that the capital programme was based on an average of £3-4 million in CIL receipts per year. The use of CIL/Section 106 grants was restricted, but grant funding was always considered for capital works prior to the Council's own borrowing.

The retention of the Members' community bids fund was welcomed, with the view that it enabled delivery of tangible ward projects and helped to foster parish partnerships. It was noted that the process for accessing these funds was being streamlined to reduce bureaucracy and ensure fairer, more agile distribution.

Questions were raised about the Playing Pitch Action Plan and the 3G pitch at Faraday Road. Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director – Finance, Property and Procurement) confirmed that feasibility funding was included for the action plan, and the 3G pitch was agreed for the in-year capital programme and would roll into next year's budget.

The funding and business case for the solar farm project were discussed. It was confirmed that alternative funding sources, such as the National Wealth Fund, were being explored. The primary aim of the project was carbon reduction, not yield, and a robust business case was being developed to satisfy scrutiny and government requirements.

The Chestnut Walk project was discussed, with clarification provided by Shannon Coleman-Slaughter that only the capital element (Section 106) was shown in the capital programme, while other funding streams were documented elsewhere.

Ongoing running costs for derelict buildings, such as business rates, security, and insurance, were explained. Clare Lawrence (Executive Director for Place) advised that the Chestnut Walk site was recently broken into.

The Chestnut Walk project was Council-led following the closure of the joint venture with Sovereign.

The procurement of a new social care case management system to replace Care Director was discussed. It was confirmed that the new system, Mosaic, was due to go live in mid-April and would improve efficiency and functionality.

The shop mobility scheme in Newbury Town Centre was discussed, with it being confirmed that there was a low-cost annual membership and affordable hire fees for users.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted. It would next be considered by Executive on 12 February 2026, followed by Budget Council on 26 February 2026.

### 9 **Financial Year 2026/27: Revenue Budget (C4680)**

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 10). The report detailed the budget proposals for the 2026/27 financial year and supporting Council Tax proposals and resolutions.

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources) advised the Committee that this budget had been an incredibly challenging one to set. A considerable

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amount of work had been undertaken and a robust process followed in order to bring it forward. There had been focus on statutory services within Adult Social Care and Children's Services, where increased pressures were being felt.

Non-statutory services would however be maintained for residents, even though this meant there was the need to seek Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). The Administration wanted to maintain such services.

The proposed General Fund net budget requirement for 2026/27 was £210.9m. This was an increase from £192m (2025/26 Q3 outturn).

Attention was drawn to the results of the resident consultation. The level of response was relatively low, but responses identified roads/highways as the top priority, followed by Education and Children's Services.

A question was asked regarding the 'Collection fund deficit on Council Tax'. It was clarified by Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director for Finance, Property and Procurement, and Section 151 Officer) that the Council Tax collection rate had fallen. The cost of living was a significant contributing factor. These figures were derived from statutory returns, comparing anticipated collections with actual year-end outcomes, with the resulting deficit accounted for within the MTFS.

Councillor Cottingham acknowledged that the Council could be more robust in pursuing outstanding Council Tax debt, but efforts were on working with residents and supporting those in need of financial support. However, there was also the need to balance fairness to all taxpayers.

The issue of parish precepts was raised, noting that some parishes had managed to keep increases to a minimum, but it was queried whether these would need to increase should greater devolution be sought. Councillor Cottingham explained that services would not be devolved to parishes without funding. It was clarified that any devolution of services to parishes would be "pull" from parishes rather than "push" to. This linked to local government reorganisation and the potential for more proactive collaboration with parish councils. This would help to ensure that devolution empowered rather than distanced local communities.

The potential for unintended consequences of savings elsewhere in the budget was raised, such as increased referrals, exclusions, or care costs for children and young people. It was explained that the Council had protected external costs for children's services, with a £4.4 million increase in the budget for that area. Detailed analysis had been undertaken between colleagues in Finance and Children's Services to ensure that budgeting was realistic.

It was noted that transformation funding had enabled investment into the commissioning team and this was allowing the Council to commission care placements in expectation of need and helping to control costs. Positive relationships were also being built with providers. Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive) added that the Government had introduced a new prevention grant for children, with prevention a key aspect to achieving long-term financial sustainability.

Discussion on the importance of modelling the impact of savings in one area on outcomes in another was continued. Mr Holmes explained that analysis was ongoing to ensure that a saving identified in one area did not have a negative impact on another service provided to residents, which could result in additional costs being incurred in future. Reference was made to work with Public Health in order to achieve a 'health in all policies' approach as a way of preventing this.

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It was queried whether the areas of risk facing the Council had been sufficiently taken into account and whether costs could exceed assumptions. In response it was explained that the budget included a 3.5% salary increase and a 4.8% increase for some Adult and Children's Social Care services. The budget was described as being both prudent and realistic, with provision for known risks such as the continued operation of care homes and resource centres. The potential was however acknowledged for unexpected pressures to occur, for example from a high-cost residential care placement.

The schedules of fees and charges were discussed, noting that Public Protection Partnership (PPP) discretionary charges were increasing by over 7%, while West Berkshire's own discretionary charges were rising by 4.8%. It was explained that the PPP's fees were agreed jointly with Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Councils as part of the joint partnership. These fees were also influenced by the average hourly rate for service provision.

The issue of planning enforcement fees was raised and it was felt that charges could be brought in cases of upheld enforcement breaches. It was explained that all fees and charges were being subject to a comprehensive review and there was the potential to extend these as it was important to ensure that cost recovery was being achieved. However, Clare Lawrence (Executive Director for Place) explained that planning fees were set nationally and were restricted. New legislation could increase the criteria for planning fees, but it was currently not possible to issue a charge for enforcement work or for the development of the Local Plan. Fines for enforcement breaches could be levied, but these were at a low level and did often serve as a deterrent. The Council could access proceeds of crime funding in certain cases, and had done so successfully in the past.

It was noted that other charges for planning services included provision to levy a charge for providing advice not covered by any of the listed categories. The Committee felt the use of this could be explored for the setting of planning fees.

The ability of the Planning Service to cover its costs was discussed, with it being confirmed that, at present, planning fees did not cover the full cost of processing a planning application, especially for minor and household applications. It was hoped that new legislation would allow local authorities to set fees at a level that achieved greater cost recovery.

It was noted that the Council was highly dependent on Council Tax in comparison to many other local authorities. A growth in Council Tax from development would be beneficial, although a concern was raised that Council Tax income might not be sufficient to cover increasing costs of a growing population. It was suggested that modelling on this point could be explored by scrutiny in future.

The potential for further scrutiny of revenue-raising opportunities was discussed, which could take place through a task and finish group.

The results of the resident consultation were referred to. While it was noted that roads and transport were the top concerns for residents, people-related services (such as social care) consumed the largest share of the revenue budget. It was suggested that the Council could do more to communicate this to residents to help widen understanding of this point.

The need to utilise the Council's assets was discussed, with Shaw House cited as an example where greater commercial use was being promoted. Mr Holmes confirmed that asset utilisation was a key theme in the Finance Improvement Plan, and that the Council was actively seeking to increase income and reduce costs from its property portfolio. This included, but extended beyond, the disposal of assets.

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The importance of consulting staff for ideas on savings and income generation was discussed. Mr Holmes confirmed that staff were encouraged to come forward. A staff suggestion scheme was in place, with ideas reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team every four weeks. The role of technology, such as AI, in improving productivity and generating savings was also being explored.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted. It would next be considered by Executive on 12 February 2026, followed by Budget Council on 26 February 2026.

### **10 Appointment of Task and Finish Groups**

The Chairman introduced the item on appointment of Task and Finish Groups (Agenda Item 11). There were no draft terms of reference to approve, and no changes to the membership of existing task and finish groups were proposed.

### **11 Task and Finish Group Updates**

Councillor Chris Read provided an update on the work of the Project Management Task and Finish Group (Agenda Item 12).

The group held its last meeting on 9 February 2026 and discussed its draft report. The report was predominantly focused on Care Director and i-Trent with 22 recommendations proposed. The report would be finalised once any comments had been received from witnesses to the review.

The report was scheduled to be received by the Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2026. The Executive would then be asked to respond to the recommendations.

Councillor Read gave thanks to all involved for their work on the review. Councillor Carlyne Culver added her thanks.

### **12 Executive Forward Plan January 2026 to April 2026**

The Committee noted the Council's Forward Plan for the period up to 30 April 2026 (Agenda Item 13).

### **13 Corporate Programme**

The Committee considered the Corporate Programme (Agenda Item 14) and made the following comments:

- A closure estimate date was needed for the Future Care Home Strategy.
- It was noted that some of the projects had closed and should therefore be removed from the list of current projects for future meetings.

### **14 Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Work Programme (Agenda Item 15) and noted the items provisionally scheduled for the next meeting on 17 March 2026:

- Waste Strategy/update
- Swift Bricks (consideration of Council Motion)
- Pedestrianisation
- Briefing note on contracts awarded under delegated authority
- Receipt of the Project Management Task Group report

It was noted that the Playing Pitch Strategy was scheduled for the Executive on 19 March 2026. It could therefore be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 17 March.

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The Business Support Review was due to be completed during the summer of 2026. It could therefore be scheduled for scrutiny in the autumn.

Councillor Richard Somner explained that he had been contacted by a number of residents with regard to the introduction of 20mph zones. Decisions on these were expected to be via Individual Member Decisions and the date(s) for these would be identified.

The need to promote public consultation exercises was highlighted in order to encourage responses, in particular from local residents.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 9.12pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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