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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY 21 MAY 2026

Councillors Present: Patrick Clark, Heather Codling (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Iain Cottingham, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Tom McCann, Justin Pemberton and Vicky Poole

Also Present: Councillors Ross Mackinnon, Dominic Boeck, Howard Woollaston, David Marsh, Adrian Abbs, Paul Kander and Martha Vickers

Officers Present: Melanie Booth (Group Executive), Toby Bradley (Service Lead – Financial Management), (Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Sarah Clarke (Executive Director – Resources), Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director – Place), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and Martyn Sargeant (Service Director – Strategy and Governance)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeff Brooks

PART I

1. Portfolio Holder Announcements

Councillor Heather Codling reported that the previous Friday, officers had sent the draft Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Reform Plan to the Department for Education as part of the national reform programme.

If approved it was reported that the Plan could bring up to £27 million in government funding to write off 90% of the existing high needs deficit.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2026 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. Public Questions

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

5. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

6. Extended Pedestrianisation Hours in Newbury

Councillor Stuart Gourley introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 7), which presented the outcomes of the public consultation conducted during the first six months following the introduction of the experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO), summarised the feedback received and recommended a way forward. Councillor Gourley reported

that a large amount of data had been gathered on traffic, economic impacts, footfall, dwell time and consultation responses, and that the recommendation was to end the current trial on 14 September 2026 and deal with any future pedestrianisation through a refreshed Newbury Town Centre Masterplan.

Councillor Adrian Abbs commented that he had supported the principle of pedestrianisation but had been disappointed that alternative options such as one-way access, short-stay bays, and pick-up and drop-off points had not been trialled. He suggested that an ETRO by law should have allowed the Council to change the scheme whilst it was running. Councillor Gourley responded that, on the advice received, the particular order could not be altered or ended immediately and that a formal revocation or modification process was required.

Councillor Abbs queried why, when opposition was so strong, the scheme would remain in place for several more months. Councillor Gourley responded that the Council had always promised a decision in spring 2026, and argued that whilst many respondents objected to the current version of pedestrianisation, comments suggested some still supported pedestrianisation in principle if implemented differently.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon queried why the full Beauclair report had not been published with the Executive papers and questioned when input from Thames Valley Police had been sought in relation to safety concerns voiced by residents. It was confirmed that the Beauclair material had been added to the consultation page on the Council's website, and Councillor Justin Pemberton commented that Thames Valley Police had been contacted in the summer of 2025 and had reported no noticeable increase in crime or antisocial behaviour.

Councillor David Marsh criticised the launch of the trial, the choice of 11pm as the cut-off, the lack of visible public campaigning in favour of the scheme, that there had been no serious attempt to talk to local businesses, and the limited accommodation for disabled or mobility-restricted users. In reply, Councillor Pemberton commented that he had spent a substantial amount of time discussing the scheme with businesses.

Councillor Gourley noted that Newbury BID had also run a number of late night shopping events during the trial and suggested that it had been run to test assumptions, gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, and support events and late-night activity in the town centre whilst the Council learned what worked and what did not.

Councillor Gourley clarified that the current trial would end in September 2026, and any future version would be considered through a refreshed masterplan and further consultation.

Councillor Pemberton seconded the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive approves

- Removal of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and reverting the pedestrianised timings to 10am – 5pm from September 2026.
- That future proposals for pedestrianisation be taken forward through a review of the Newbury Town Centre Masterplan ensuring that pedestrianisation is considered in the context of a more holistic vision for the town centre.
- That the Council Motion submitted by Cllr Adrian Abbs on 16th October 2025 which can be seen in Appendix C be considered in the context of the Newbury Town Council Masterplan and through any future engagement with residents and stakeholders.

7. Adoption of the Playing Pitch Strategy

Councillor Nigel Foot introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 8), which recommended the adoption of the final Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) 2026-2041. It was noted that the report had been fully reviewed at Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee the previous week.

Councillor Howard Woollaston noted that his comment at Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee that the PPS was 'woeful'' may have been harsh, however argued that it lacked specifics on sites, finance, business plans and achievable objectives, and commented that it did not provide enough certainty about what the Council wanted to deliver. Councillor Foot expressed disappointment in the tone of the question and highlighted that the PPS covered a 15-year period and so had to evolve. He commented that the PPS had three main aims; to protect existing pitches, enhance pitches that had fallen into disrepair, and provide new pitches where needed.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon queried what guarantees there were that new or improved facilities would remain accessible to grassroots clubs and local residents, rather than being dominated by higher-paying users, and also asked what the council expected to deliver directly over the next three years. Councillor Foot referred to the planned artificial grass pitch at Faraday Road, and noted that delivery would be shaped by the steering group and the wider strategy process rather than a fixed short-term programme

Councillor Paul Kander queried whether the £1.25 million for the Faraday Road 3G pitch was included within the PPS figures. Councillor Foot responded that it was not and clarified that the 3G pitch was funded separately from CIL receipts, whilst the PPS had a 2025/26 capital budget of £193,510. It was explained that future investment would come forward through later capital budget decisions as sites and projects were identified

Councillor Denise Gaines seconded the recommendation within the report, highlighted that the PPS was aligned with the Local Plan and noted that of the three aims previously mentioned by Councillor Foot, only the 'provide' element would necessarily mean new pitches, whereas 'protect' and 'enhance' would often relate to existing sites

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Adopt the final Playing Pitch Strategy 2026-2041.

8. Review of Ethical Investment Policy Relating to the Council and Berkshire Pension Fund

Councillor Vicky Poole introduced a report (Agenda Item 9), which provided a response to a motion presented to Council at its meeting of the 16 October 2025.

RESOLVED that:

- Executive are informed of the outcome of a review that has taken place in response to the Motion submitted to Council on the 16 October, and the Petition submitted on the 27 November relating to investments and that no further action will be taken.

9. Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report 2024/2025

Councillor Stuart Gourley introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 10), which presented the Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report covering the period from July 2024 through to July 2025. It was noted that the report had been discussed at the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee the previous week.

Councillor Gourley commented that the report showed significant delivery, including a 20% reduction in Council carbon emissions compared with the previous year and a 38% reduction against the 2019/20 baseline.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon suggested that the report stressed activity more than outcomes, and queried what the clearest measurable results were on emissions, biodiversity and energy savings. Councillor Gourley referred to the carbon reduction figures and said these had come from measures such as HVO and solar panels, but also acknowledged that future reports should include clearer performance indicators, particularly in relation to biodiversity.

Councillor Dominic Boeck queried how many EV charging points had been rolled out in rural communities. Councillor Gourley responded that he did not have the figure to hand but would provide it.

Councillor Mackinnon queried how resilient the strategy would be if the Grazeley Solar Farm project did not proceed, and queried what alternatives existed if that project failed. Councillor Gourley accepted that it was a risk and commented that the Council would need to refocus on decarbonisation work in schools and leisure centres, whilst remaining committed to the Grazeley project if the business case proved viable.

Councillor Nigel Foot commented that he was proud of the Council's achievements to date and seconded the recommendation within the report.

RESOLVED that:

- Executive note the latest 2024/2025 Progress Report on the Environment Strategy (as included in Appendix C) and agree its publication on the Council's website.

10. Disposal of Ramsbury Drive Play Area to Hungerford Town Council

Councillor Nigel Foot introduced a report (Agenda Item 11), which considered Hungerford Town Council's request for the leasehold transfer, and all future maintenance responsibility, of Ramsbury Drive Play Park not including the open space.

Councillor Denise Gaines seconded the recommendation within the report, noting that she was a member of Hungerford Town Council, which already ran two main play areas in Hungerford and commented that she was delighted it was taking over this smaller but important play area.

RESOLVED that:

- The land is transferred to Hungerford Town Council (HTC) on a long lease of at least 75 years.

11. Adult Social Care Self-assessment

Councillor Patrick Clark introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 11), which shared the self-assessment document developed in line with the requirements of the Care Quality Commission's programme of Local Authority Assurance.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon referred to paragraph 5.8 of the report, which identified the need to reduce waiting times and improve the timeliness of assessments, care planning and annual reviews. Councillor Mackinnon queried how this would be actioned.

Councillor Clark replied that improving waiting times was clearly a priority, that emergency cases were being responded to as soon as they came in, and that the overall waiting numbers had come down over the past year.

Councillor Mackinnon queried whether there was any data to evidence the improved waiting lists. Councillor Clark confirmed that such data existed, although noted that the

manner in which it was recorded had changed since the move from Care Director to Mosaic.

Councillor Mackinnon referred to the administration's 2022 Manifesto commitment to providing care packages through earlier initial care assessments and queried whether the pledge had been met. Councillor Clark responded that whilst progress had been made, he would have preferred more.

Councillor Nigel Foot seconded the recommendations within the report and commented that the report reflected the hard work and commitment of council officers and staff.

RESOLVED that:

- That the self-assessment is endorsed for sharing with CQC when required.
- That the self-assessment is published to raise awareness of the work undertaken by council services.

12. Response to Emotional Wellbeing Task Group

Councillor Heather Codling introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 13), which provided a formal response to the working group recommendations relating to children and young people's emotional and mental health support, highlighted the significant changes in the operational landscape and identified where recommendations could not currently be delivered due to resource constraints or responsibilities resting with other system partners.

Councillor Codling apologised that the report had not come to Executive sooner and noted that the position had changed significantly since the task group began its work, particularly because the Integrated Care Board had withdrawn £100,000 of funding for the Emotional Health Academy and the mental health support team was now solely ICB commissioned. Councillor Codling noted that this would mean that some of the original recommendations could not be delivered as drafted.

Councillor Codling further proposed an additional recommendation to refer the report to the Health and Wellbeing Board in order to inform its work on adult and children's mental health

Councillor Martha Vickers commented that the task group had been very disappointed by the delay and that, without Councillor Codling's explanation, the written report appeared negative. Councillor Vickers commented that the task group had expected a genuinely collaborative response, including input from the ICB and Public Health, rather than a response mainly from Children's Services. Councillor Vickers felt that referral of the report to the Health and Wellbeing Board would be positive and noted that she would be following its progress.

Councillor Dominic Boeck suggested that the recommendations of the task group appeared to have been passed around between committees and queried when the matter would be addressed properly, arguing that talking about partnership working without resources was meaningless when children's wellbeing was not improving on its own.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon commented that there appeared to be a theme of producing wish lists and then relying on partners and voluntary organisations to fund them which he suggested was not good enough for an issue as fundamental as children's mental health. In response Councillor Patrick Clark queried where Councillor Mackinnon would suggest that additional funding would come from. Councillor Mackinnon suggested a meeting with Councillors Codling and Clark to discuss the matter further.

As Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Councillor Nigel Foot confirmed that adult and children's mental health was one of its three major priorities and provided an assurance that the matter would remain under scrutiny. Councillor Foot seconded the recommendations within the report.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Acknowledge the operational changes affecting the delivery of mental health and early intervention emotional well-being services in West Berkshire.
- Agree the responses that are set out at paragraph 5.16 of this report.
- Agree that several recommendations fall outside the remit or current resource capacity of West Berkshire Council Children's Services and should be referred to the appropriate system partners (specifically the ICB, Leisure, schools, and commissioned providers.
- Endorse the position that further delivery against these recommendations will require:
    - Additional resource from the ICB; and/or
    - Cross system agreement through the Family First Partnership and Best Start/Family Hubs programme.
- Refer the report to the Health and Wellbeing Board to assist with informing their ongoing work.

13. Bond Riverside 13B, C & D

Councillor Justin Pemberton introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 14) which informed the Executive that the marketing exercise for the potential disposal of the Council's freehold interest on 13B, C & D Bond Riverside had been completed. Following an independent formal valuation in order to satisfy Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, the report proposed progression to disposal of the freehold.

Councillor Denise Gaines seconded the recommendations within the report.

Recommendations: (Vote to be taken in Part II)

- That the Executive considers the financial information and legal advice contained in this report and supports the disposal of 13B, C & D Bond Riverside.
- That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director Place, working with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, s151 Officer and Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services, to conclude negotiations and enter into contracts for disposal.

14. Members' Questions

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

15. Scrutiny Review of Called-In Decision: Response to Council Motion: decisions following public consultation

Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED that:

- For Executive to be informed of the outcome of the scrutiny review of this called-in decision. The Scrutiny Committee resolved to let the decision stand as per the Executive's resolution. It could therefore be implemented with immediate effect.

16. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of

exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 3 & 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, specified in brackets in the heading of each item. Section 10 of Part 10 of the Constitution refers.

17. Bond Riverside 13B, C & D

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person)

(Paragraph 5 – information relating to legal privilege)

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 18), which informed the Executive that the marketing exercise for the potential disposal of the Council's freehold interest on 13B, C & D Bond Riverside has been completed. Following an independent formal valuation in order to satisfy Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, the report proposed to progress disposal of the freehold.

RESOLVED that: the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

Other options considered:

- That the council purchases the leasehold interest and redevelops 13B, C & D itself. This option is not practical and highly risky. The Council would need to borrow the capital at a time of high interest rates and the Council has limited experience and capacity to deliver regeneration itself without considerable risk to itself.
- The Council could choose to market the freehold of the whole of the Bond Riverside Estate (excluding the football ground). While there has been an indication that there may be some appetite to purchase the freehold of the whole site, the likelihood of receiving a realistic offer is uncertain and while the site is marketed, the current offer could be withdrawn undermining the ability of the Council to secure a capital receipt and the potential to support regeneration on this part of the estate.
- The Council could determine to retain the freehold and continue with the current arrangements. This option has been discounted in view of the benefits of securing a capital receipt and the potential to support regeneration.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 9.35 pm)

CHAIRMAN ……

Date of Signature ……