DRAFT

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

RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 MAY 2026

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

Also Present: Sarah Clarke (Executive Director (Resources)), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director - Place), Kofi Adu-Gyamfi (Service Lead - Climate Change), Andrew Alty (Network Manager - Highways), Emily Ashton-Jelley (Principal Environment Delivery Officer), Richard Howroyd (Service Lead - Procurement and Commissioning), Drew McHenry (Principal Sport and Leisure Officer), April Peberdy (Service Director - Community Services), Martyn Sargeant (Service Director (Strategy & Governance)), Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Councillor Jeff Brooks, Councillor Nigel Foot, Councillor Stuart Gourley, Councillor Owen Jeffery, Councillor Paul Kander, Councillor Stephanie Steevenson, Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer (Scrutiny & Dem Services)) and Jude Thomas (Sport and Leisure Manager)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeremy Cottam and Councillor Erik Pattenden

PART I

1 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

2 Items called-in following the meeting of the Executive on 19 March 2026 and the Individual Decision on 27 March 2026

a Called-in report - EX4761 - Response to Council Motion: decisions following public consultation

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 3a) which outlined the call-in request for the Committee to review the Executive decision of 19 March 2026 concerning the response and action taken to a Motion presented to Council on 16 October 2025. The Motion related to decisions made following public consultation.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, Leader of the Council, made the following points in support of the Executive's decision:

- He explained that the Council had enhanced the information available on the website, with residents able to access consultation responses. Residents could also identify whether a proposal proceeded modified, unmodified, was not proceeded with, or was still pending.
- Consultation responses were often not a simple yes or no. Additional comments were often received and needed to be taken into account.

The following points were made by the call-in Members:

- Councillor Ross Mackinnon felt that the Executive's response did not address the core of the Motion. He stated that the aim of the Motion was to improve levels of transparency for residents. In cases where a decision taken by the Council went contrary to the view of the majority of respondents to a consultation, those individuals should be informed and told the reasons why. This was the change the Motion was seeking in order to better inform residents.
- Councillor Mackinnon made reference to some recent consultations for which the response was a straightforward yes or no. An explanation should be given in those cases where the majority consultation response was not followed.
- Councillor Richard Somner pointed out that the Council would issue a press release on decisions made that were supported by residents. Therefore, residents should be informed when this was not the case.

Councillor Brooks made the following points in response to those comments:

- Consultations were not referendums on an item. Responses went beyond yes or no, the comments received were considered and helped to improve services.
- All consultation responses were published.
- A register existed of decisions made and the reasons why.

The following points were raised in the debate:

- The register was noted as an important addition as this assisted residents with accessing information. A view was given that information following consultation exercises was published, thereby providing transparency. There was concern that additional steps could incur costs and create duplication.
- Further support was given to the Executive's response to the Motion. The complexity of some consultations being highlighted.
- Points were made about accessibility and inclusivity. Additional data to what was being provided would benefit all residents and give greater transparency to decisions.

(Councillor Laura Coyle joined the meeting at 6.55pm).

- While it was the case that consultation responses were not binding, residents should be informed of their outcomes.
- It was acknowledged that information was published, but it was not necessarily straightforward to find. Legislative requirements might be met but access should be improved and simplified.

At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor Mackinnon proposed that the decision should be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration in light of the points made. This was seconded by Councillor Somner.

The proposal failed at the vote.

Councillor Alan Macro then proposed that the Executive's decision should stand. This was seconded by Councillor Chris Read. This proposal was approved.

RESOLVED that the Executive decision of 19 March 2026 would stand.

b Called-in report - ID4628 - Parking Review Amendment Order No 37 (Lower Way in Thatcham)

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 3b) which outlined the call-in request for the Committee to review the Individual Decision (ID) of 27 March 2026 concerning the decision in relation to Lower Way in Thatcham for the removal of the No Waiting At Any Time restriction and the double yellow lines.

Councillor Stuart Gourley, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways, made the following points in support of the ID:

- He explained that these were originally temporary measures installed during Covid under emergency legislation. The ID was about whether or not to make them permanent.
- Resident feedback received during the consultation process had differed on this matter.
- The decision taken to remove these measures was therefore finely balanced, but the decision to remove the No Waiting At Any Time restriction and double yellow lines was taken based on the officer recommendation and because of other mitigations already in place.
- As there were conflicting views amongst local residents, the retention of these measures could be of concern for some.

The following points were made by the call-in Members:

- Councillor Owen Jeffery stated that he did not have a strong view on this matter. He had however been in receipt of resident communication asking that the matter be reconsidered. He therefore requested that the issue be called-in for scrutiny review.

Councillor Justin Pemberton, speaking as Ward Member, made the following points:

- The consultation responses had been close to being evenly balanced and he did not have a particularly strong view either way as Ward Member.
- As Ward Member, he regularly received reports of speeding traffic on this stretch of road. Development in the area had also led to the creation of additional access points and additional traffic movements.
- On balance, Councillor Pemberton felt that the measures should be made permanent. He did not feel that parked cars, not currently in place due to the double yellow lines, should be relied upon as a form of traffic calming.

Andrew Alty, Network Manager for Highways, stated there was no evidence that the double yellow lines had caused either an increase or a decrease in speeds, nor an increase in accidents. Dedicated cycle facilities were available on Lower Way, and this was the only stretch of Lower Way with double yellow lines.

Mr Alty confirmed that the consultation responses were finely balanced, consisted of ten supporting comments, seven objections and one neutral response.

The following points were raised in the debate:

- That retention of the double yellow lines would allow for the overtaking of cyclists to happen more safely.
- It was considered that this was a technical matter and one that should be determined based on the expertise of the Council’s Highways Officers.

A proposal requesting that the No Waiting At Any Time restriction and the double yellow lines be retained was not supported.

Councillor Richard Somner proposed that the decision made in relation to Lower Way in Thatcham be reconsidered at ID. This was seconded by Councillor Chris Read and, at the vote, was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the decision made in relation to Lower Way in Thatcham would be reconsidered at ID.

3 Playing Pitch Strategy

The Committee considered the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) 2026-2041 (Agenda Item 4) which was due for determination at the Executive on 21 May 2026.

It was noted that the draft PPS was publicly consulted on at the end of 2025 and consultation feedback was used to produce the final document. The final PPS had received support from the PPS Steering Group, which consisted of Sport England, national governing bodies of relevant sports and Council officers. Members of the Steering Group, which also included Councillor Nigel Foot as Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside, had noted that the final PPS had very little material change to the draft version.

Councillor Foot provided some background to the development of the PPS. It had been commissioned in October 2024 and a consultant employed for its production. The PPS was produced in line with the Sport England Framework and covered a range of sports: football, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rugby union, tennis and netball.

The document was proposed as a long-term evidence-based PPS and was built around three categories: protect, enhance and provide. Inclusivity was a key aspect of the PPS.

Councillor Foot continued to describe the different stages in the production of the PPS which included the consultation period. Much of the consultation feedback, as already indicated, was supportive.

Subject to Executive approval, implementation of the PPS would begin and its delivery would be monitored by the Steering Group on an ongoing period.

A number of questions were asked and points covered during the debate on the item. These included:

- Concern was raised that the PPS lacked detail, with no detailed mention of businesses cases, budgets or action plans. It was questioned how much progress could be made with the capital funding indicated in the report over the next three years of £1.3m. In response, Councillor Foot explained that this was a strategic document and as such did not contain that level of detail at this stage. The detail on delivery and costs would be considered and worked through by the Steering Group and the PPS/delivery plans would be kept updated over time and published to keep residents informed of progress.
- Members asked about progress at specific sites, including Henwick Worthy and Faraday Road. Officers advised that the plan for Henwick Worthy had yet to be finalised and costings confirmed. Plans for Henwick Worthy would also link in with the wider considerations for North East Thatcham. It was added that consultation feedback had led to the PPS referring more clearly to the need for supporting infrastructure in order for clubs to be sustainable.
- Councillor Foot clarified that plans for infrastructure, such as a clubhouse, were being taken forward for Faraday Road.
- In response to funding concerns, it was confirmed that partnership funding and grant funding would also be available in addition to the Council’s budget. It was also difficult to detail budgets as funding was considered for projects on a case by case basis.
- Members sought assurance that 3G pitches created on school sites would be accessible to community groups and clubs. Theale Green School was specifically mentioned with a concern that a 3G pitch at the school could displace other sports currently played there. Councillor Foot responded by referring back to the three main

categories of the PPS, with the intended approach to protect existing provision, enhance underused or poor-quality sites, and provide new facilities where major housing growth would increase demand.

- Environmental concerns about artificial grass pitches were raised and Sport England's involvement involved in decisions on these pitches was queried. Officers explained that Sport England's involvement would continue as part of the Steering Group and they would be able to comment on planning applications for, for example, artificial grass pitches as a statutory consultee in the planning process. Councillor Foot added that artificial pitches enabled use throughout the year.
- The flexibility that the PPS would enable was praised as this would allow for different sports provision in future. The ability for additional public access was also strongly supported.
- The specific mention of lacrosse and a lacrosse club in the PPS was queried, i.e. whether the sport had a strong enough following for this and whether it was appropriate to highlight an individual club. Councillor Foot responded that lacrosse had a genuine local presence, particularly, but not exclusively, at St Bartholomew's School. There was demand for lacrosse. The PPS was evidence-led and numerous clubs had been factored into plans. Liaison with existing and future clubs would be ongoing.
- Members were pleased to note that consultation responses had informed the PPS, i.e. in relation to enhanced infrastructure.
- It was felt that the provision of a delivery plan at this stage would have been beneficial in order to highlight those projects that had already been delivered as part of the PPS, as well as showing timelines and targets for ongoing and future projects. In response, officers clarified that the delivery plan was under creation and it would soon be possible to share it with residents. It would include delivery that had already taken place. However, it would be too soon to provide this at the Executive on 21 May as it would need to be finalised with partners on the Steering Group.
- A view was given that greater urgency was required in the PPS in order to deliver pitches and enable use at earlier stages. Officers advised that pitches/sites were being identified but were not able to be confirmed for this stage of the PPS.
- Returning to funding, Members felt it would be useful to understand the funding streams for individual projects. Officers explained that matched funding was often a requirement when applying for grant monies. There was also a need to meet a stringent set of criteria before funding would be awarded.

Councillor Foot reiterated the point that this was a strategic document that focused on the three categories of protect, enhance and provide. This would be followed in ongoing delivery. He also added the importance of inclusivity in delivery in order to encourage improved health and wellbeing across Council services.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman highlighted the following key points:

- The need to maximise local use of facilities and avoid sites sitting empty.
- The need for greater clarity to be included in the PPS/delivery plan on the use of external funding to help deliver projects.
- That sports facilities should be widely available for community use, not just for specific clubs.
- For clarity to be provided on the timescales for the Faraday Road clubhouse/other supporting infrastructure.
- The importance of publishing progress with the delivery plan so that stakeholders and scrutiny could track and monitor progress.

Action:

- **For clarity to be provided on the timescales for the Faraday Road clubhouse/other supporting infrastructure.**

RESOLVED that the remaining key points would be forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

4 Environment Strategy Annual Report

The Committee considered the Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report (Agenda Item 5). The report provided an update on the activities that had been undertaken since the Environment Strategy was last considered by scrutiny in April 2024. The progress report covered the period from July 2024 to July 2025.

The report noted that the progress report was part of the ongoing work of the Council to address climate change, make biodiversity enhancements and promote environmental sustainability in West Berkshire.

The report included a summary of achievements as well as an update on the Council's carbon footprint for 2024/25. It also outlined how existing and new projects would assist the Council in achieving Net Zero by 2030. It was noted that the Council's carbon emissions had reduced by 38% when compared with the baseline year of 2019/20.

Councillor Stuart Gourley, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways, highlighted the following achievements:

- Continued expansion of solar provision on Council assets.
- Ongoing use of HVO fuel for waste vehicles.
- Ongoing rollout of EV charging points across West Berkshire, including on-street charge points that Members had recently been notified about.
- Additional recycling at the kerbside.
- The adoption of the Local Transport Plan.
- Environmental benefits in the Local Plan.
- Activities to improve nutrient neutrality and biodiversity.
- The continued operation of the Community Climate Change Forum.

Councillor Gourley took the opportunity to thank residents for the efforts they were making on a daily basis to improve the West Berkshire environment. The Council was making good progress in reducing its carbon footprint.

A number of questions were asked and points covered during the debate on the item. These included:

- EV charging tariffs and whether they could be lowered. It was noted that there had been much investment in EV infrastructure and providers needed to recoup their costs. Costs could also vary depending on the charging speed of different charge points. However, officers advised that prices would be monitored over time.

- It was confirmed that local residents and parish councils would be consulted on local charge point locations.

- There was much support for the Strategy, but there was concern that this report covered 2024/25 and it was queried when the 2025/26 report would be ready. Councillor Gourley acknowledged this point and advised that data collection was improving. West Berkshire Council was however in advance of the national picture.

- Councillor Gourley confirmed that the Council remained committed to the Grazeley Solar Farm, with its business case being reviewed. The revised business case was expected to be finalised by the autumn. It was noted that the business case for the Grazeley Solar Farm was on the Committee's Work Programme.

- Members were eager to ensure that the Council worked closely with all schools, including academies, on reducing their carbon footprint (regardless of the fact that the emissions created by academy schools did not count towards the Council's footprint). Councillor Gourley assured the Committee that the Council would work with all schools to help them reduce their carbon emissions.
- Councillor Howard Woollaston gave thanks on behalf of Lambourn residents for efforts to ensure that nutrient neutrality requirements were reflected as part of planning applications/developments.
- Officers explained that alternative energy sources, such as biogas, were being explored. Greater use of anaerobic digesters could be looked at in future, but it was important to ensure economies of scale were achieved.
- Members sought assurance that sufficient watering of newly planted trees was taking place. Officers advised that this was one area where they were working closing with local communities.
- It was confirmed that the natural capital market work for biodiversity was paused rather than abandoned, and that the Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework would first go through a six-month trial.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman highlighted the following key points:

- That future annual reports should come through at an earlier stage, noting that work was taking place to gather data at an earlier point in the year.
- That scrutiny would review the Grazeley Solar Farm business case when it was further developed.
- The Council should continue to work proactively with schools, including academies, on reducing carbon emissions.
- There should be a proactive approach to tree watering and maintenance.

RESOLVED to note:

- The 2024/25 progress report on the Environment Strategy.
- The additional information provided in relation to biodiversity duty reporting.

5 Procurement Governance

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 6) which provided further information on the Council's arrangements for overseeing procurement activity following the briefing note provided to Committee at its previous meeting.

These reports had been produced in response to a scrutiny request on this area from a member of the public which raised concerns about a lack of transparency for large contract awards.

Councillor Vicky Poole, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Governance and Commercialisation, explained that a new Procurement Strategy was expected to be finalised in the near future and would help to address any remaining points of concern. The new Strategy had been developed in response to the tightened requirements of the Procurement Act 2023. Scrutiny input on the Strategy was welcomed.

A number of questions were asked and points covered during the debate on the item. These included:

- Richard Howroyd, Service Lead – Procurement and Commissioning, explained that public procurement was highly regulated and that the Council carried out a significant level of spend analysis as part of its procurement processes.
- Mr Howroyd explained that the Procurement Act 2023 gave more scope for negotiation, including through the competitive flexible procedure, while below-threshold procurements already allowed more room for negotiation, provided openness, transparency and fairness were maintained.
- Reference was made to the Highways Term Maintenance Contract and it was confirmed that the decision on this would be taken at an upcoming extraordinary meeting of the Executive scheduled for 11 June 2026.

Members then gave consideration to the questions posed within section 5.1 of the report.

‘Can scrutiny request that all future high value contracts must be supported by a formal and detailed written report?’

- A view was given that the request for this was a consideration for the new Procurement Strategy.
- Business cases for larger projects should be carefully reviewed.
- It was noted that information available at certain stages of a procurement project could not be made publicly available. However, there was some concern of a lack of public transparency for high value contracts.
- It was highlighted that business cases were often agreed earlier through budget-setting and at the pre-procurement phase. The level of information provided in a business case could be increased.
- It was explained that gateway processes were being reviewed as part of the new Procurement Strategy, including contract management and governance processes.

‘Can scrutiny undertake a review of why contract awards, since July 2023, were considered under Part II?’

- Members did not feel this was a task for scrutiny to undertake.
- Mr Howroyd explained that his focus was concentrated on the process, and improvements to it, moving forward. However, he considered, upon review, that governance requirements had been met with these previous contract awards.

‘Can scrutiny clarify and document the approval process required to approve large contracts?’

- Mr Howroyd explained that officer training was taking place to ensure Constitutional requirements were being met for the approval of contracts. This information could be shared with Members.

‘Can scrutiny recommend that all contracts over £2.5m were once again individually highlighted on the Forward Plan?’

- Mr Howroyd explained that this could take place. However, he reiterated that procurement was highly regulated and needed to follow legal processes.

Councillor Carolyne Culver proposed that scrutiny recommend that all contracts over £2.5m would be individually highlighted on the Forward Plan as it was felt that this would increase transparency for larger contract awards. This was agreed by the Committee.

Members also noted that it would be useful for greater clarity and visibility to be provided for larger contracts, and that information should be provided at an earlier stage in the process than contract award as this would enable Members to have more meaningful input into the process. It was also felt that public transparency could be improved at appropriate stages of a procurement.

It was noted that contract standing orders would be reviewed through the constitutional review process.

RESOLVED to:

- Note the information provided in response to the scrutiny proposal from a member of the public.
- Recommend to the Executive that all contracts over £2.5m would be individually highlighted on the Forward Plan as it was felt that this would increase transparency for larger contract awards.

6 Task and Finish Group Guidance

The Committee received an update on the development of the guidance document for scrutiny task and finish groups (Agenda Item 7).

The requirement for greater guidance was highlighted at a meeting of this Committee and followed consideration of the Sports Hub task and finish group. It had been agreed that the three scrutiny chairmen would be involved in this work with officers.

Councillor Carolyne Culver requested that the guidance be considered by this Committee prior to approval in order to allow for input from Scrutiny Members. It should be considered alongside the feedback already provided by the Scrutiny Chairmen on the guidance document.

Sarah Clarke (Executive Director for Resources) explained that the guidance was based on statutory scrutiny guidelines.

RESOLVED that the guidance document would be provided at the next meeting of the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee in June 2026.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 9.45pm)

CHAIRMAN …………………………………………….

Date of Signature …………………………………………….