Item 12: Notices of Motion

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on the 15 October 2026

(a) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Tony Vickers:

Protecting UK Farming

Council notes:

This Council thanks DEFRA for the recently announced extra support for English farming but recognises:

- That farming is the backbone of the West Berkshire rural economy, directly sustaining around 1,000 jobs, supporting some 10,000 more and generating significant (circa £50million per annum) economic value annually while providing a critical service by putting food on the tables of the county's residents;
- That farming is central to our district's cultural identity and that this shared heritage unites Berkshire with our Ridgeway neighbours and the rest of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape;
- That farming is an industry which this Council is proud to support;
- That food security is both a national priority and a local responsibility, thus West Berkshire's farming community can play a key role in ensuring local communities have access to locally grown, affordable and nutritious food, particularly for households experiencing food poverty;
- That farmers and rural landowners in West Berkshire are custodians of the vast majority of our District's natural landscape and operate to some of the highest environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards in the world - with more than half engaged in agri-environmental schemes - and that it is important they are not placed at a competitive disadvantage by imports produced to standards that would not be permitted for domestic producers. The Council supports the principle that food imported into the United Kingdom should meet standards equivalent to those required of British farmers.
- That the decisions farmers make in our countryside can significantly mitigate the impacts of climate change, in particular by conserving and improving soil depth and quality and the special biodiversity supported by it on our chalk downlands.
- That likewise the decisions farmers make in our countryside can help protect our waterways and countryside from pollution by runoff.
- Concerns raised by farming organisations regarding the impact of changes to inheritance tax arrangements, agricultural support schemes and post-Brexit trade agreements.
- That there is an opportunity to strengthen ties between farmers, rural communities and local organisations including this Council, to build a more

resilient local food system that works for residents and supports the long-term sustainability of farming.

Council resolves:

1. To engage with farmers, rural communities and businesses across the West Berkshire area and report back within 12 months on the issues identified and any actions the Council could take to support the sustainability of the rural economy.
2. To request that the Executive review the support currently provided by the Council for farmers' markets, local food producers and the rural economy, and identify opportunities to strengthen that support through economic development, tourism, skills and apprenticeship initiatives.
3. To request that the Executive consider opportunities to increase the use and promotion of locally produced food through Council services, partnerships and community initiatives, including through the development or expansion of Farm to Fork and similar programmes where appropriate.
4. To support and promote Open Farm Sunday and other initiatives that connect farmers with schools, food banks and community organisations to strengthen food security and improve public understanding of farming and food production across Berkshire.
5. To request that the Executive investigate opportunities and support the founding of community-supported agriculture schemes and local food partnerships that give residents a direct relationship with farms.
6. To request that the Executive work with farmers to develop initiatives that enable them to contribute surplus produce to those most in need, reducing food waste while supporting households facing food poverty.
7. To support farmers to develop initiatives to protect the countryside and waterways to minimise environmental impacts and protect waterways from pollution and runoff
8. To write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing the Council's support for maintaining high environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards in food production and for ensuring that British farmers are not undercut by imported food produced to lower standards.

(b) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

<u>Cool Spaces for Summer 2027</u>

Council notes:

- There were several heat waves in 2026, resulting in unnecessary excess deaths. This trend is likely to continue in the future.
- During the cost-of-living crisis several ‘warm spaces’ were established across the district.

- Many of these warm spaces have evolved into community cafes which continue to operate to this day.
- Based on UK Health Security Agency advice, WBC issues alerts and comprehensive advice to Members and residents during periods of excessive heat or cold.

Council resolves to request that the Executive:

1. Investigate the establishment of 'cool spaces' across West Berkshire in preparation for summer 2027.
2. Identify council owned properties that could be made available and which can be advertised as cool spaces during periods of extreme heat, subject to operational feasibility and available resources.
3. Work proactively with stakeholders across the district to identify spaces that they own, manage or hire, which the council could help advertise as cool spaces.
4. Consider how existing Council communication channels can be used to widely advertise these cool spaces to the public.
5. Report back to the Executive and Members on the proposed arrangements before 1 May 2027

(c) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

<u>Questions at Scrutiny</u>

Council notes:

- 30 minutes is allocated for public questions at Council and Executive.
- Members of the public are allowed to submit questions to the new Highways Improvement Group.
- There is no provision for a public questions agenda item at our scrutiny meetings. Currently we must suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak.
- Many other councils allow a public questions agenda item at their scrutiny meetings.

Council resolves:

1. To allow time for a public questions agenda item at scrutiny meetings.
2. Public questions must relate to the meeting's agenda items or the committee's work programme, to ensure that the relevant Members and officers are on hand to respond.
3. That the relevant Members and officers consult with the three chairs of scrutiny about the details of how this can be implemented.