MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON THURSDAY 28 MARCH 2013 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.40 PM

Present:- David Lee (Chairman), Keith Baker, Alistair Corrie, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Jorgensen, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Anthony Pollock, Angus Ross, and Rob Stanton

PART I

135. MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21 February 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

136. APOLOGIES
There were no apologies for absence.

137. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
There were no declarations of interest.

138. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to appropriate Executive Members.

138.01 Question
Jim Brandie had asked the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing the following question which in Mr Brandie’s absence was deemed to have been put and a written answer provided:

How many staff are employed at the Forge and how many are medically qualified to pronounce on the health (mobility) of applicants for a Blue Badge?

Answer
From the 1 April 2012, the Legislation for Blue Badges prescribes that the eligibility of those applying because of a "permanent and substantial disability that causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking" be confirmed by an independent mobility assessor.

The Department of Transport’s view is that eligibility decisions are fairer and more objective if mobility assessments are undertaken by professionals who have been specifically trained in mobility and who are independent of the applicant. It is therefore important that local authorities use assessors who have been appropriately trained in mobility assessments, who hold appropriate professional qualifications and who are not open to bias because of a personal or commercial connection to the applicant.

The regulations define an 'independent mobility assessor' as a person who:
• is recognised by the issuing authority as holding a professional qualification, the obtaining of which involved them being trained in the assessment of a person’s ability to walk;
• is recognised by the issuing authority as having the expertise necessary to assess the applicant’s ability to walk on behalf of the local authority;
• has never been employed or engaged as a provider of medical services to the applicant, where 'medical services' includes all forms of medical treatment and investigations to establish whether treatment is needed, but does not include an assessment conducted to establish whether the applicant is eligible for services provided by a local authority (including the provision of a Blue Badge);
• is not, in the opinion of the local authority, precluded by reason of personal or commercial relationship with the applicant from providing an independent assessment of their ability to walk.

It is down to the issuing local authority to determine what professional qualification(s) an independent mobility assessor should hold. However, the Department of Transport would expect that many local authorities would use occupational therapists and physiotherapists as they have been specifically trained in the assessment of mobility. In order to practice under either of these titles a person must be registered with the Health Professions Council.

Wokingham Borough Council uses Occupational Therapists to carry out the independent mobility assessment, five of whom are employed by WBC and eight by Optalis.

138.02 Question
Phiala Mehring asked the Executive Member for Children’s Services the following question:

Forest school is already experiencing unprecedented numbers of pupils choosing to study at our sixth form. We also have more applicants than places for Year 7 (2013), this is before the increased cohort sizes or the impact of the SDL’s is felt. Would it not make sense to work together with Forest in developing a sixth form block on our extensive fields to help mitigate the looming problem of the lack of secondary school places? This would have the added advantage of enabling Forest to increase capacity in the Lower School potentially increasing intake by one to two forms and therefore alleviating some of the imminent stresses within secondary education in Wokingham.

Answer
We welcome the interest from Forest and note their request for additional investment for a new sixth form block. A number of Secondary schools in the Borough now have expressed ambitions to the Council to expand their sixth form offer and it is important that schools work together on this. We would like to work together with Secondary Heads through the Federation to agree a clear vision of their sixth form delivery and we will continue to offer our support to the Secondary Head federation in their conversations. I note that as a new Academy Forest School will be able to apply to the Department for Education directly for capital funding to meet their needs.

In our strategy we are prioritising development of a new school in the South East to meet the clear need for school places in this area. We will as part of our strategy discuss contingency plans to meet demand with current schools and we would welcome further conversation with Forest School on this matter.

Supplementary Question
The engagement at this point is very important, because with different schools going off and being academies, there is a kind of diversity amongst all the schools. With Forest at the moment, we are one of the very lucky schools that has the land to enable us to build on the site. I absolutely agree that it has to be in conjunction with other schools and the
Secondary Heads Association, but my question would be, is this something we can get going fairly quickly as we are hugely under pressure now? It is something that is escalating quite rapidly.

**Answer**

I would welcome continued engagement. In terms of the numbers coming through, the numbers that you have got in terms of 16 year olds is 111, 17 year olds is 81 and 15 for the 18 year olds. This is a fairly steady at 207, not a massive number. Looking across the Borough overall from our 11 year olds to 15 year olds, this is again a fairly steady number. The growth over the years from 11 to 15 year olds is fairly static at the moment. But as I said, I would welcome continued engagement.

**138.03 Question**

Ian Sheppard asked the Executive Member for Children’s Services the following question.

Given the level of public support and the desire of the local community, as evidenced by the petition submitted on 21 March 2013, and the fact that the White House site has now been added to the Community Asset Register on 22 March 2013, would the Council now please answer the following question. Why was the White House School site ruled out as a potential primary school site, given that the criteria stated in the Primary School Strategy/Site Selection Document is, we now believe, flawed?

**Answer**

We do not agree that our decisions are flawed. In October 2012 the Council agreed a new Primary School strategy to ensure sufficient places in Primary Schools across the Borough for the next three years. This strategy sets out where we will need new school places and focuses on important key principles; including a focus on developing new schools.

Further reports have been approved through Executive and Council agreeing the sites of the schools to be built and opened for September 2013/14. These include a focus on additional provision in Charvil, Woosehill, Winnersh and Shinfield. Over 2,000 parents, residents and stakeholders were involved in the development of the strategy and the detailed option appraisal of priority areas and development of our priority action plan for 2013/14.

As an Authority, our challenge is to meet the differing and at times competing community demands for school places. Without the proposed new schools set out in our strategy we will not meet our sufficiency duty as a Local Authority. We cannot afford to fail in this legal duty.

We see the development of new schools as set out in our strategy and the proposed Free School as complementary to each other. We need the planned schools to meet basic need and fulfil our statutory duties regarding sufficient places. We welcome the proposed free school in Evendons as we believe this will enhance parental choice.

I welcome and appreciate those parents who made the time to sign the petition. We need to remember that the petition did not say that other schools were not needed. The petition asks for us to recognise community opposition to housing on the former Whitehouse site and to support the Whitehouse School to continue to be available as an educational school provision and not lost to the community.
The nomination of the White House School, 161 Finchampstead Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 3HD, by Wokingham Town Council as an Asset of Community Value as detailed within Chapter 3 of the Localism Act (2011) was approved by Wokingham Borough Council on 22nd March 2013.

This decision will give the Department for Education and the Evendons Free School group the time they need to consider funding a Free School in the Evendons area including the purchase of appropriate accommodation.

It is a shame that you have not been able to be involved over the past year in our extensive community engagement where the strategy and the reasons for our choices have been discussed in some detail. I hope you will be able to stay involved as we develop our strategy and implementation plans in the years to come.

**Supplementary Question**
In the light of the White House site now being registered as an Asset of Community Value which is a historical first for Wokingham, how is the Council going to actively help us to secure the future of this site?

**Answer**
I will task my Officers to meet with you and other Evendons representatives to discuss the potential next steps.

139. **MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS**
In accordance with the agreed procedure, the Chairman invited Members of the Council to submit questions to appropriate Executive Members.

139.01 **Question**
Barrie Patman asked the Executive Member for Highways and Planning the following question:

Regarding the Eastern Relief Road, can the Executive Member give us an update on the visit of Mark Prisk and the injection of £24m?

**Answer**
We have been working with the University of Reading on funding of around £24.7 million to secure the early delivery of the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road. The money is part of a £474 million Local Infrastructure Fund designed to stimulate economic development and get sites moving. The money will be in the form of a loan to the University of Reading repayable by them.

To announce that this bid was successful, Mark Prisk MP, the Minister of State for Housing visited Shinfield on 12 March 2013. The Relief Road is a vital part of the vision for the South of M4 Strategic Development Location. This road will help alleviate the impact of increased traffic caused by the developments by removing through traffic on the A327 in Shinfield. The road will link the A327 south of Shinfield with the Black Boy roundabout and will include a new road bridge over the M4. The money will allow the relief road to be built at an early stage of the SDL development, and so will help alleviate the impact of construction traffic. It will also help accelerate the much need development of the University’s Science and Technology Park.
The loan can be seen as an endorsement to the Council’s Core Strategy and the hard decisions we have taken to ensure that development is accompanied by the infrastructure it needs. Wokingham is one of only four areas nationally which the government has helped since August last year. The other sites are in Kent, Exeter and Milton Keynes.

**Supplementary Question**
The work that is involved in this will naturally involve close work between the Borough Council and the Parish Council in the area and hopefully will produce the results that local people want. But, as a result of that, is there likely to be any financial commitment on behalf of the Borough or the Parish Council with regards to this relief road?

**Answer**
The loan is to the University of Reading and therefore they have the liability to repay it. However, the expectation is that as the other developers within the consortium bring forward their planning applications there will be Section 106 monies for highways which will be passed to Wokingham Borough Council as the planning authority and we will passport them straight to the University of Reading to allow them to repay it. The bottom line is that there is no financial liability in that sense.

**139.02 Question**
David Sleight asked the Executive Member for Highways and Planning the following question:

I am delighted to see the signs advising of our new station jointly funded by WBC and Network Rail and the new Station Link Road. Can the Executive Member give us an update on this development?

**Answer**
Great advancement has been made with our new link road following planning permission in January. Progress is on track for it to be open to traffic in the summer of 2014 with scheme completion by autumn 2014.

Work on the new station is also proceeding well and officers are meeting fortnightly, with Network Rail’s project team. As you know, it is an extremely complex build due to the many site constraints. The new station should be operational this summer.

Recent progress includes:
- Japanese knotweed removed from the site;
- Tree protection has been installed and trees scheduled for removal, felled and recycled;
- The first phase of site hoardings is complete with the remainder due following completion of remaining reptile mitigation and the erection of bat and bird boxes in April;
- Demolition of both properties is imminent and will take two weeks. Approximately 90% of the waste, by weight, will be recycled and 100% of concrete from the site re-used. This will reduce lorry movements and Co2 emissions. So we are fulfilling our green credentials on this development.

Other preparatory work will commence in June, prior to the main contract; due to be let in the autumn. Tender submissions are scheduled for the end of July and the Executive asked to appoint a contractor in September.
Finally, a very strong case has been made to the Department for Transport as part of its Pinch Point Funding Programme, to fund our new link road. The Department’s decision is expected this April.

**Supplementary Question**
Does the station development still include the replacement of the footbridge offering step free access from one platform to the other?

**Supplementary Answer**
There are certainly some developments going on regarding that issue. We will not be able to replace the existing footbridge because of its historic nature, but there will be other access within the station arena.

**139.03 Question**
Abdul Loyes asked the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing the following question:

Following on from the recent media interest in our Sheltered Units at Palmer Court, can the Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing please give us an update on the situation there?

**Answer**
You will know that we engaged with tenants at Palmer Court at a very early stage in our deliberations, and at a time when we had genuinely not come to any firm conclusions and were actively considering a number of options. We have listened to the concerns raised by the current tenants and their relatives, looked again at the useful lifespan of the existing building, and reviewed alternative options to increase the number of extra care units to meet the needs of our ageing society. We now believe there is a better alternative which will provide for a brand new facility, though I am not at liberty to disclose site options for reasons of commercial sensitivity. I am however, able to say that we believe that Palmer Court has another ten years before it needs to be redeveloped and we are happy to put on record that we will not look to move the residents in that time.

**Supplementary Question**
When you say review, is that after ten years?

**Supplementary Answer**
We believe that the building is coming towards the end of its natural life and after ten years it will need redevelopment. We know that at present it is not configured in the way that modern developments would be and it cannot be reconfigured so we would need to demolish and rebuild. We have given the commitment that we will not do that for at least ten years.

**139.04 Question**
John Halsall asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

I have read with interest that our joint proposal with Bracknell and Reading to achieve a City Deal has been successful. Can the Leader of the Council advise us what this means for our Borough and the next stages in the process?

**Answer**
We have been successful at this stage, but as with everything from Government there are always stages. Our City Deal proposal seeks to significantly reduce youth unemployment
and those young people not in employment, education or training by delivering streamlined and fully integrated provision that responds to the needs of both business and customers.

Key principles of the approach are that business plays an important role in identifying skills that are needed and that pooled funding streams are targeted with the input of local business and local authorities, which it is not at the moment, on the education and training that will meet these needs and equip young people for success. We have been successful at jointly presenting which Reading Borough Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council, business leaders and the Local Enterprise Partnership to Vince Cable, Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and we are one of 20 through to the next stage to obtain this particular status.

The bottom line is that we are seeking better outcomes for

- our young people by making it easier for them to develop the skills and access the education and training they need to take up the job opportunities our local employers are offering. Indeed our own Wokingham town centre regeneration will require substantial numbers of skilled craftsman as will the development of housing and the regeneration of Bracknell’s new town centre;
- our local employers – by providing them with a future workforce that have the skills needed to take their business forward will also benefit from this.

Next steps are to produce a negotiation document which develops our proposal further, outlining what we will deliver, the costs and benefits involved, and what we are asking for from central Government to enable us to deliver this.

We also have access to a wider ‘Core Package’ of measures that will help us to address some of the economic challenges we are facing, and we are working together as part of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership to develop this.

The negotiation document will be presented to a ministerial group in late July so we will have another interview in front of a number of ministers up in London and hopefully we will progress through that.

139.05 Question
Kate Haines asked the Executive Member for Children’s Services the following question.

Can the Executive Member for Children’s Services please update us on the Aspire Programme?

Answer
Aspire is on course to open in September. An advert for the centre manager is currently out with our secondary schools on a secondment basis. The staffing structure has been agreed and appointments will be made after Easter. A legal entity will be established to oversee the management of Aspire and employ any member of staff who is not seconded.

The majority of Secondary Head teachers have committed to purchasing places at Aspire and, if there are any spare places, they will offer those to schools in neighbouring authorities on a purchasing basis to ensure the viability of the programme.

This is an exciting opportunity for young people in the final years of secondary education to remain on the roll of their school but to receive a tailored curriculum off site, with some
of the week spent with businesses in the area. This will help them to be work ready and enhance their chances of employment when they leave school.

**Supplementary Question**
What curriculum will be provided in the Aspire building and will the building be ready for the school year 2013/2014?

**Supplementary Answer**
The plans for the building have been drawn up with Headteachers and the plans include multiuse open plan spaces, areas for traditional curriculum subjects such as Maths and, English and cultural spaces such as dance and music recording. The music recording facilities will be available for hire. There will be significant IT provision to offer enhanced learning in IT skills.

The schools and Officers in Children’s Services are working on the final curriculum offer, but England, Maths and IT will be at the heart of the offer. We expect the building to be complete for the beginning of September and an event to celebrate its opening will be held.

**139.06 Question**
Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

I welcome the interim SuD’s policy, but could I get clarification on how the policy will work in practical terms within planning at both the outline and full planning processes. In addition should the report not consider CIL and will there be any conflict in policy terms with the timing of the consultation overlapping the Local Plan Examination in Public and its draft policies?

**Answer**
The interim policy sets out how developers can work with the Borough to implement sustainable drainage schemes, (SuDS).

Where developers wish to implement a SuDS they will pay a fee to the Borough for us to check the design – this could be done at either outline or full planning application stage but is most likely to occur at the latter. The design will need to demonstrate that the proposed system is adequate for the site in terms of water management and also that the system is maintainable in the longer term.

Once the design is agreed and the developer chooses to install a sustainable drainage system the Borough will take on the maintenance of that system subject to the developer paying a commuted sum for that maintenance. Maintenance will be managed by the Borough’s drainage team.

It should be noted that this policy will likely have to be amended when the government publish their guidance on SUDS.

In addition, the report does not consider CIL and there may be some work done when CIL comes in so that systems do overlap.

**Supplementary Question**
The Government SuDS policy has left a policy vacuum, but this gives the Council an opportunity to put flood prevention at the fore of policy and planning by ensuring that the
SuDS adoption policy runs in parallel with outline planning permission so an outline planning permission would not be granted without a SuDS agreement in place. Does the Council support the principle of SuDS as part of the outline planning process and can the policy be bolstered further by clearly defining SuDS such that any developer will fully understand what the Council expects to see and how it will protect Wokingham residents from potential fluvial flooding?

**Supplementary Answer**
I guess that the simple answer to the first part of your supplementary question is yes. We were all disappointed that the Pitts report recommendation that SuDS be provided as a matter of policy was not taken up. We are taking the best possible steps within the planning and the drainage team to ensure that SuDS or other appropriate measures are well planned correctly implemented and have a soundly funded maintenance regime afterwards.

Section 3 of the policy refers to the way this policy fits with and refers to planning and building control policy. Generally developers have been positive about this policy and are keen to implement SuDS as well as work with the Borough in terms of on-going maintenance. So I believe that we have something we can work with pending the outcome eventually of Government guidance.

**140. INTERIM SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SuDS) POLICY**
The Executive considered a report relating to the development of an Interim Sustainable Drainage Systems Policy, (SuDS) and seeking approval for consultation to take places for a period of 4 weeks on the Policy.

The Executive Member for Environment highlighted that because of the lack of definitive Government policy on the introduction of SuDS it had been decided to introduce an interim SuDS policy until Government guidance was issued. It was noted that the proposed policy would be consulted on for four weeks. Attention was drawn to paragraph 1.1 of the policy which set out its objectives and paragraph 1.5 which set out the opportunity for developers to arrange for the adoption and maintenance of SuDS by a public body.

It was clarified that comments to the consultation were expected to mainly come from developers and landowners, but also the active residents groups in the Borough who had already been working with the Council on the issue.

**RESOLVED:** That the attached Interim Policy be agreed to go to consultation for a period of 4 weeks.

**141. SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION STRATEGY**
The Executive considered a report and attached Secondary School Provision Strategy relating to the need for a new secondary school to serve a rising school population within the Borough.

The Executive Member for Children’s Services commented that it was proposed to build a new school in Arborfield in 2015/2016 in order to meet rising demand from current levels of housing and the expected increased demand for school places as a result of developments associated with the Strategic Development Locations, (SDL) within the Borough. It was explained that the Strategy looked at current school populations, the migration and mobility of pupils in and out of the Borough and trends, place provision outside of the Borough’s boundaries. The strategy was divided into phases and external
funding from Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and central Government would contribute towards the overall cost of the school which was estimated to be around £17.4m. Members’ attention was drawn to the degree of engagement with the wider community that had taken place in the development of the Strategy.

Councillor Jorgensen requested that the accuracy of the origin of pupils by area attending the Bulmershe School as set out on Agenda page 37 be double checked.

Members strongly supported the development of the Strategy and proposed recommendations. The Strategy was felt to be a very significant development on which a great deal of careful work had taken place over approximately four years. It was noted that the current strategy would replace all previous strategies.

Councillor Baker referred to the arrangements for funding the strategy as set out in paragraph 7.6 and reminded Members that from April 2014, the Council would not be able to pool more than five Section 106 agreements, regardless of whether a Community Infrastructure Levy had been adopted or not.

RESOLVED: That the Executive:
1) Endorses the proposed Secondary School Provision strategy;
2) Agrees to provide additional capacity through new secondary school provision at Arborfield;
3) Agrees to continued contingency planning, including for the expansion of established mainstream (Academies and Maintained) secondary schools;
4) Agrees to continued investment in the maintained secondary sector in line with the Council’s agreed Medium Term Financial Plan to secure appropriate places for teaching and learning.

142. NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL SPONSORS: WINNERSH AND WOKINGHAM
The Executive considered a report relating to the arrangements for establishment of two new 210 place primary schools at the Smith’s Walk in Woosheill and Winnersh Farm sites following decisions taken by the Executive in December 2012. The report proposed the agreement of criteria for selecting which potential school provider would be recommended to the Secretary of State for Education as an academy sponsor/s and that Officers be authorised to reach agreement on the lease of the two sites together with another school site in Charvil.

The Executive Member for Children’s Services updated Members that planning permission for the schools had been agreed at the Planning Committee held on 27 March 2013. Four bids from providers had been submitted in relation to the schools by 20 March 2013 and these would be assessed by the proposed criteria.

RESOLVED That the Executive:
1) Agrees the decision making criteria for recommending a preferred academy sponsor or sponsors for the new schools on sites (subject to planning consent) at Smiths Walk and Winnersh Farm which it proposes to be established under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. These are set out in Appendix One;
2) Agrees to delegate to the Strategic Director for Children’s Services acting in consultation with the Lead Member for Children’s Services the decision to recommend a preferred academy sponsor or sponsors for the new schools on sites (subject to planning consent) at Smiths Walk and Winnersh Farm;

3) Notifies that preference to the Secretary of State for his consideration along with any other applications received and;

4) Authorises relevant Officers to reach agreement to lease each site, and the school site at Charvil, for the purposes of establishing the new schools under funding agreements between the Secretary of State and the relevant sponsors or Academy Trusts.

143. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2014-2015
The Executive considered a report relating to the agreement of amended admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and coordinated admission schemes to take effect for the 2014/2015 academic year.

The Executive Member for Children’s Services summarised the proposed changes relating to:
- Changes to the definition of Criterion B of the oversubscription to include social need;
- Deletion of the denominational oversubscription criteria in respect of primary and in-year admissions;
- Changes of wording relating to the sibling oversubscription criteria;
- Changes to the designated areas of the Colleton Primary School and Polehampton Infant and Junior Schools to merge the designated areas;
- Continuation of present arrangements for designated areas relating to the Walter Infant School, St Paul’s Primary School, Wescott Infant and Westende Infant School.

In response to a question, the Executive Member commented that she felt that there had been more clarity around the proposed admission arrangements and that Officers within School Admissions had been extremely supportive of parents this year. Feedback received from the consultation on the proposed arrangements had been considered in the drafting of the proposed arrangements.

RESOLVED: That the 2014/2015 Admission Arrangements for community and controlled schools and coordinated admission schemes be determined as set out in the Annexes to the report.

144. SELECTION OF PREFERRED REGISTERED PROVIDER (RP) PARTNERS
The Executive considered a report relating to the approval of four social housing providers in addition to Wokingham Housing Limited, as registered providers to work in partnership with the Council in the delivery of affordable housing in the Borough.

Members welcomed the inclusion of Wokingham Housing Limited in the list of providers and in discussion it was felt that Recommendation 2 should be reworded to make it clearer that Wokingham Housing Limited was included.

RESOLVED:
1) That the following Registered Providers (RP) be approved as Partners, in addition to Wokingham Housing Limited, for the next five years commencing on 1 April 2013, subject to satisfactory performance:
a) Catalyst Housing Limited  
b) Thames Valley Housing  
c) Housing Solutions Limited  
d) Sovereign Housing Association Limited

2) That the Council, its housing company Wokingham Housing Limited and the four RP’s enter into a Partnership Agreement. The Agreement will detail the expectations and responsibilities, and will outline the basis for regular performance monitoring.

145. PUBLIC HEALTH TRANSFER  
The Executive considered a report relating to transfer of public health functions, resources and commissioning activity to the Council from 1 April 2013.

Angus Ross commented that he looked forwarded to the transfer of functions as another mechanism to help the Council look after leisure and sport activity for the benefit of residents within the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the proposal for the arrangements for the receiving and management of Public Health functions by the Council from 1 April 2013 be agreed. This includes:

1) That the Council enters into a joint agreement with the other Berkshire Unitary Authorities for the provision of some public health services;

2) That the Director of Legal and Electoral Services be authorised to enter into the joint agreement on behalf of the Borough Council for these shared services;

3) That the Director of Health and Wellbeing represent the Borough Council on the Public Health Joint Advisory Board for Berkshire which will monitor performance and activity against contracts within the joint agreement;

4) That appointment of the Director of Public Health be noted and that the authority enters into an agreement with Bracknell Forest Borough Council under section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 by which Bracknell will place the Director of Public Health, as their employee, at the disposal of Wokingham Borough Council for the purposes of the authority’s public health functions.

146. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
The Executive considered a report relating to the production by the Council of a revised Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment which was a Government requirement.

The Executive Member for Highways and Planning commented that the approval of the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment would help the Council more successfully defend its position against planning appeals lodged by applicants for new traveller sites which the Council had considered to be unsuitable. The lack of a valid Assessment had been an issue identified by Planning Inspectors at appeals held in the last 12 months. It was considered that the Assessment would redress the balance between the need for traveller pitches and any harm caused by them so that possible harm would be the more dominant factor.

In addition a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan would be established to set out the delivery of pitches in line with the Local Development Scheme.
It was clarified that the production of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan would need to follow the same process as the Council’s Core Strategy which would involve public consultation and an Examination in Public, prior to formal adoption. The Plan would then be reviewed in a similar way to plans and strategies relating to residential development.

Councillor Haitham Taylor questioned what progress neighbouring authorities had made in the development of Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessments for their boundaries and Members were informed that it was felt that the Council was well in advance of neighbouring local authorities and that this would put the Council in a strong position.

RESOLVED:
1) That the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, January 2013, be approved as an evidence base and used to set local targets for new pitch provision; and

2) That the Officers progress with development of a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, that will set out how these pitch targets are to be met, in line with the Local Development Scheme, approved by Executive in June 2012.

147. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) PRELIMINARY DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE

The Executive considered a report relating to approval for consultation on a Wokingham Community Infrastructure Levy, (CIL) Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule. The Schedule would set out proposed rates of Community Infrastructure Levy to be charged on different types of new development within the Borough.

The Executive Member for Highways and Planning commented that it was intended that the CIL would be introduced by April 2014 and that the proposed recommendations represented the first of a series of procedural steps to achieve and these were highlighted to Members. Members were informed that the proposed charging rate was £365 per sq metre. Whilst this was reasonably high in comparison to some areas of the country, a rigorous process involving specialist consultants had been used to undertake viability testing and to challenge the legal aspects of the proposals.

In discussion, Members queried the arrangements around the crossover between the existing arrangement for planning contributions under Section 106 and the introduction of CIL. It was clarified that some areas of planning contributions including those in respect of affordable housing would not fall within remit of CIL as it was currently written. Once CIL was adopted it was an upfront charge on development that had to be paid. It was expected that there would be an increase in developers submitting planning applications in advance of the Council adopting CIL and already there was some evidence this was occurring now. However, due diligence would continue to be exercised.

Anthony Pollock referred to effect of CIL as a potential disincentive to development from 2014 and the impact of less development on the monies the Council received from the New Homes Bonus. The Executive Member for Highways and Planning responded that it had been estimated that if the proposed charging rate remained unchanged the amount of revenue raised would be approximately the same as under Section 106. Whilst developers would need to factor in the cost of CIL they would still have land assets that they would wish to realise the value of. However, it was recognised that CIL was a new regime and not all the possible dynamics were known at this stage.
RESOLVED: That
1) The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule at Appendix 1 be approved as the basis for a six week period of public consultation, as proposed, in accordance with the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

2) The Strategic Director for Development and Regeneration be authorised, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Planning, to produce the consultation documentation to accompany the CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule.

148. DRAFT AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT
The Executive considered a report that set out an update to the existing Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and to include reference to relevant aspects of the National Planning Policy Framework and to add further clarity around the Council’s approach to commuted sums.

The Executive Member for Highways and Planning commented that the document was largely the same as previously, but that it had been updated appropriately in light of a planning appeal decision in 2011. It was clarified that following consultation, the draft would be brought back to the Executive for decision.

Councillor Haitham Taylor queried what weight that might be given to the draft prior to its adoption by the Planning Inspectorate in the event of any future appeal. The Executive Member for Highways and Planning responded that this was largely down to the judgement of individual Planning Inspectors, but it would not carry full weight until adopted.

RESOLVED: That the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document be approved for public consultation.

149. S47 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988 (AMENDED)
The Executive considered a report requesting approval for the establishment of a policy and process to consider requests for business rate relief under Section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988.

The Executive Member for Finance commented that in the event of a request being granted it would be funded by the share of business rate revenue the Council retained.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Director of Resources in conjunction with the Executive Member for Finance be authorised to:
1) Approve a suitable scheme, to be developed by Officers, for the consideration and award of claims under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended by the Localism Act 2011;

2) Approve or reject individual claims made under the scheme going forward.

150. LOCAL AUTHORITY TRADING COMPANIES’ BUSINESS
The Executive considered a report which set out a proposal to approve the issuing of £50,000 of Redeemable Preference Share by Optalis Ltd in order to ensure the company could deliver upon its ambitions and show an equity surplus rather than an equity deficit.
The Leader of the Council commented that as was the case with many company start-ups, Optalis Ltd had incurred a loss in its first year of trading. Despite a profit in year 2 of £45,000, the company was due to record a deficit on its balance sheet of £39,000. In order to assist in the objective of Optalis selling its services and to improve its credit rating, the issuing of redeemable preference shares was considered to be appropriate. These could be bought back or taken back at any time in the future if felt necessary.

**RESOLVED:** That:

1) The issuing of £50,000 Redeemable Preference Shares by Optalis Ltd be approved;

2) The Executive recommend to the Special Council Executive Committee that it approve the purchase of the shares by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).

Please note that under Rule 6.3.34d) of the Council’s Constitution this item is not subject to call-in.

*These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

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