

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2014 FROM 7.30PM TO 8.40PM**

Present:- Keith Baker (Chairman), Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Pauline Jorgensen, John Kaiser, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Philip Mirfin, Anthony Pollock and Angus Ross

PART I

72. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 30 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Haitham Taylor declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 77 Future ICT Supply Options by virtue of the fact that her husband's company has dealings with Northgate. Councillor Haitham Taylor left the meeting during consideration of the item and did not vote on the matter.

Councillor Anthony Pollock declared a personal interest in Item 77 Future ICT Supply Options by virtue of the fact that he undertook work for an IT services business in London; however they did not have any interest in the contract under discussion. Councillor Pollock took part in discussion and voted on the matter.

75. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

75.01 Question

Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Can you tell me the number of children in the Borough who did and the number who did not; get their first choice of primary and secondary school places in September 2014 and how does this compare with September 2013?

Answer

Local authorities are required to provide the Department for Education with information relating to the admissions rounds on national offer day; which is 3 March 2014 for secondary and 16 April 2014 for primaries. This information is also advised in the Annual Report to the Office of the School's Adjudicator which is published on the in-year admissions information page at: www.wokingham.gov.uk/admissions.

First of all on to the primaries. 85% of children living in the Wokingham Borough were allocated to their first preference school and 98% to one of their four preferred schools to start in September 2014. 45 pupils were allocated to an alternative school as their preferred schools were full. For the September 2013 cohort; 83% were allocated to their first preferred school and 95% to one of their four preferred schools and 88 pupils were allocated to an alternative school.

Moving on to the secondary schools. 84% of children living in the Wokingham Borough were allocated to their first preferred school and 97% to one of their four preferred schools to transfer into secondary school in September 2014. 47 were allocated to an alternative school as their preferred schools were full. For the September 2013 cohort; 86% were allocated to their first preferred school and 98% to one of their preferred schools with 39 pupils allocated to an alternative school.

The Capita ONE admissions and transfers system is live and as such, constantly updates with new or revised applications when they are received; there is no requirement to run reports at other times of the school admissions cycle. Only one report was run in September 2014 for the secondary cohort which shows that 89% received their first offer and 99% received a preference and 10 children were made an alternative offer at that time. There are no comparable figures for September 2013 and no reports were run for the primary cohorts.

Supplementary Question

I was able to note down a few of the figures pretty quickly and it seems that it hasn't really changed very much from 2013 to 2014 as the percentage change is very small. Have you any idea why it is so small?

Supplementary Answer

It has changed a little bit. In terms of the actual cohort of children this has continued to grow in primaries and in secondaries but we have continued to increase the capacity within our schools as well to meet that; which is good news for all our pupils.

To give you some context what I would say is that currently 87.5% of our schools have been judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding and only 12.5% are requiring improvement; and at this point none are judged to be inadequate. I think that is something that at this moment our parents, our governors and our teachers can celebrate. It is a continuing trajectory going upwards and I think that this is something that I know that you might want to write about in your publications going out. This is a very good picture for all of our schools and for all of those children that I mentioned this evening who cannot get into their first choice and maybe got one of their fourth choices. For the very small proportion of children who didn't get any of their choices the very good news is that, as I said, 87.5% of our schools are good or outstanding and this is really, really, good news.

76. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

In accordance with the agreed procedure, the Chairman invited Members of the Council to submit questions to appropriate Executive Members.

76.01 Question

Tom McCann had asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question but due to his inability to attend the meeting the following answer was sent to him:

Item 81.00 Amenity Service Report - This recommendation has come to the Executive, yet the report on P.78 shows that the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that the service is still required and that the aspects of the service that are unsustainable need further investigation. Why have you not waited for the investigation to complete?

Answer

I am grateful for the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which helped develop a greater understanding of the service and its future. Since the report was drafted, a further meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been held where further detail was given to explain how it would be difficult for the service to continue in its current form particularly the unsustainable and unsafe elements. The Committee understood the reasoning behind this and asked for an update in 6 months. Although, the scrutiny process is extremely useful in shaping policy and holding decision making to account, it cannot and should not delay decisions which have a safety or legislative imperative. On this occasion, the Committee was able to add useful context to the discussion and was able to relay how valued the service had been. However, I must stress that the decision to recommend that the service ceases is based on the following grounds:

1. None of the waste that is collected is recycled and it therefore all goes to landfill.
2. The service attracts waste from contractors who should pay for the service and sometimes introduce hazardous materials
3. Identified safety concerns for those using or passing the sites which have been confirmed by Health and Safety Officers at both Council staff and Veolia.
4. The service will breach the 2011 Waste Regulations from 1 January 2015 in that none of the waste is separated for reuse or recycling.
5. The significant cost of the service.

We cannot continue to provide this service which fails so many health and safety, environmental and regulatory requirements, despite the benefits some residents have gained from it. We have a range of alternate services which we will ensure are given extensive and prominent awareness over the next few months.

76.02 Question

Prue Bray asked the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities the following question:

Item 82.00 Town Centre Regeneration Site Assembly - Only a few months ago you bought a town centre property in Bush Walk, now you are proposing buying another property in the town centre that wasn't in your original scheme. The landowners of Wokingham must be putting their prices up and rubbing their hands with glee knowing you may be in the market for town centre properties. Will this be the last property purchase by Wokingham Borough Council to be added to the cost of the Town Centre Regeneration?

Answer

I think first of all I must say that unlike the cartoon in today's Wokingham Times I am not seeking the Town Hall; so that can be clarified straight away. The Council considers all opportunities which arise very carefully and only acquires sites when they are necessary for delivering the Council's Vision and Priorities.

All purchases must be in line with the Council's Constitution and meet certain criteria to achieve best value for residents:

- They must be purchased at or below the property valuations, and such valuations are conducted both internally and through expert local property advice to ensure the agreed purchase price meets the Council's Best Value requirements

- They must deliver a clear benefit for the community and in the case of regeneration this being the delivery of a successful and improved town centre, but this also might be benefits such as meeting a need for additional sheltered housing or delivering additional leisure facilities such as the new sports pitches proposed for Grays Farm.

In terms of the purchases made for the regeneration project we have also seen many additional benefits arise:

- The purchase of 'Peach Place' in 2010 was primarily made because the private sector had failed over decades to successfully bring forward a deliverable scheme and there seemed little likelihood that it would ever happen. The Council is now in a position to actually deliver a viable and self-funding scheme which will regenerate the town centre and provide the variety of shops and leisure facilities within Wokingham that our residents tell us the town centre desperately needs if it is to thrive.
- The purchase of Peach Place has also allowed us to address the large number of vacant units which the previous owner had left within that part of the town, adversely impacting upon the rest of Wokingham and creating a very unattractive town centre experience. Following acquisition, we filled the units very quickly, in the main with local independent traders and have maintained tenants within them throughout the period.
- The purchase of Bush Walk earlier this year provided us with further opportunity to support our local independent traders; ensures that there was no third party adjacent to our holdings who could hold us to ransom in our scheme; with the site also benefitting from an increase in value upon us purchasing it due to its 'marriage value' with our adjacent holdings and that was substantial and immediate.
- In addition our commercial properties continue to generate a regular income stream for the Council which allows us to help make such purchases self-funding as well as generating surplus, non-tax payer dependent, income streams for the Council which can be used for the delivery of Council services and investing back into the community.

The property currently being considered will also provide substantial financial and community benefits for our scheme. This will become more apparent when we are able to advise which property is involved. Many of these benefits are in direct response to comments made by local residents during consultation on the Regeneration proposals and we will continue to review the town centre properties and attempt to acquire those that bring further benefits to the town and that can be acquired at the right cost.

The Leader of Council responded that:

Residents are constantly asking us to control the usage of retail outlets, typically betting shops, and you can only do that if you actually own the property so there are some fringe benefits of owning property because it gives us that control.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Bray asked a supplementary question which due to the exempt nature of the question was asked and answered in the Part II section of the meeting.

76.03 Question

Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Environment an exempt question relating to Item 84.00 Joint Waste Board Update. Because of the exempt nature of the question it was asked and answered in the Part II section of the meeting.

77. SHARED BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposal to set up a shared services arrangement for building control services between Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM).

The Executive Member for Resident Services advised the meeting that the joint service would be hosted by WBC and would require the transfer, under TUPE, of RBWM staff to WBC and also some of their data. A 12 month termination agreement with no fault was being proposed and in the event of termination staff would be TUPE'd back and this would provide flexibility if something changed in the future. Other benefits of the proposal were that there would be access to scarce skill and the ability to develop the service; whilst possibly making savings. It was noted however that a significant amount of any savings would have to be ring fenced for investment to save opportunities.

Councillor Jorgensen highlighted that her Executive Member title was incorrect in the recommendation and it was agreed to amend it.

Following a query Councillor Jorgensen confirmed that both authorities were members of the same pension fund and therefore there would be no increase in the Council's pension liability. Councillor Mirfin highlighted that the service had for a long time had difficulties and queried how it was proposed to market it to compete in the private sector as he felt that this was the only way that significant improvement could be achieved. In response Councillor Jorgensen confirmed that it would be advantageous if the service could be marketed but there was also a need to ensure that the service was not intruding in the private sector and restricting the ability of other people to trade in this market. In response to a number of other queries Members were informed that the detail of the contract was still being worked on and therefore information on a number of matters were not yet available.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the creation of a shared Building Control Service, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;
- 2) authority be delegated to the Director Environment/Director Finance and Resources and Executive Member for Resident Services to finalise and enter into the Services Agreement.

78. FUTURE ICT SUPPLY OPTIONS

(Councillor Haitham Taylor declared a personal and prejudicial interest.

Councillor Pollock declared a personal interest)

The Executive considered a report setting out options for the provision of future ICT services. It was noted that the current contract, which was entered into in 2010, would reach a break point in December 2015 and it was therefore necessary to consider the Council's future sourcing of its ICT.

The Executive Member for Resident Services went through the various options that had been considered which included: Option 1 - to extend the current contract with Northgate for a further two years; Option 2 - to initiate a procurement process to retender the whole of the IT service; and Option 3 - a mixed economy which would potentially use a variety of different suppliers depending on their particular skills to bring together an integrated

bundled service. The recommendation was to discard Option 2 and evaluate Options 1 and 3.

With regard to the four 'towers' of service as outlined in the report Councillor Mirfin felt that printing services should also be included as he felt that digitalising and paper reduction would be beneficial additions to the contract. Councillor Jorgensen highlighted the work that had already been undertaken in this area which included reducing costs by running a shared printing service with Bracknell Forest Council and also a project that was currently being worked on around Modern.Gov; which should reduce the amount of paper agendas and draft papers. Modern.Gov would also give the opportunity to provide a better service to the public as it would make it easier for them to access documents electronically. It was however acknowledged that not all members of the public had the ability or wished to access information electronically and therefore there was a need to ensure that they would still have access to the information they required in order to be fully engaged with the Council.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the proposed work and timetable for ensuring suitable future ICT provision, which will now concentrate on two main options detailed in the report, be noted and supported;
- 2) the decision and implementation of Option 1 or 3 be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Resident Services;
- 3) the intention of the Director of Finance and Resources to communicate the decision of the meeting to Northgate Information Solutions and the Council decision that it may not extend the contract (there is a contractual requirement to notify Northgate) both be noted.

79. SOUTH WOKINGHAM DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

The Executive considered a report relating to proposals to progress the South Wokingham Distributor Road which would provide a spine road to access the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location.

Members were reminded that a public consultation exercise had taken place from which 81% of the 304 people who responded were in favour of a central route. In contrast there was only a 12% preference for the Northern route and a 6% preference for the Southern route.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways advised that 86% of those supporting the central route requested a change to the proposals set out in the consultation i.e. a minor diversion south of Knoll Farm and this was referred to as Option B1. It was intended, subject to Executive approval, to undertake more detailed work on the central alignment in line with the consultation.

Councillor Ross wanted to highlight that there were still some sensitivities in the area including access to Grays Farm, following the purchase of the site to become a sports hub; the flood plain and revised access to Ludgrove School. Councillor Kaiser confirmed that some of the funds would be used to consider how access would be provided to Grays Farm and also Ludgrove School.

Councillor Jorgensen raised a number of issues relating to traffic noise. Councillor Kaiser emphasised that the Council was very keen to reduce noise levels and in order to mitigate noise the latest generation tarmac would be used. Also as part of the consultation with the Highways Agency on the proposals for the M4 the Council was asking for bunds or screening to be put in place to reduce noise to existing homes. It was also the intention to have a bund along most of the distributor road which would stop the noise from the A329; which is a concrete road and unlikely to be resurfaced in the near future.

The Leader of Council highlighted that for the third time, following extensive consultation exercises, the route favoured by residents had been chosen.

RESOLVED: That the allocation of funds to progress with the Central Route and associated works for the South Wokingham Distributor Road, including investigation of two minor route deviations: (a) south of Knoll Farm; and (b) west of Easthampstead Road, be approved.

80. ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Executive considered a report relating to the introduction of a banding scheme which would enable customers to have a much clearer indication of their position on the Housing Register (Waiting List). The proposals would streamline and modernise processes leading to improvements in efficiency which would benefit the Council and its customers.

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways highlighted that the demand for social housing in Wokingham currently outstripped supply and last year over 2,400 people were on the Housing Register with only 350 properties in the social housing stock becoming available to let. Councillor Kaiser advised that changes introduced in the Localism Act 2011 encouraged the Council to revise the Allocations Policy and clarify those who would have a realistic chance of being rehoused by giving a clearer idea of the housing prospect and enable sensible considered letting to deliver sustainable communities.

Members were advised that the current system for recording demand for social housing did not facilitate easy extraction and analysis of details of housing need. The new banding system would replace the existing points system and provide a mechanism for easily identifying detailed need. The Housing Allocations Policy would also provide a fair and transparent way for the Council to decide who should be allocated social housing and would require consultation with existing tenants, applicants to the housing register; and stakeholder.

Members were pleased to note that the ability to exercise discretion was still included within the Policy.

RESOLVED: That the Allocations Policy Banding Scheme be approved.

81. THE LODDON BRIDGE PARK AND RIDE

The Executive considered a report relating to the extension of the current contract of the Loddon Bridge Park and Ride until the early part of 2015 when the operation would be relocated to the new site at Winnersh Triangle.

RESOLVED: That the current contract be extended under the same terms and conditions until the park and ride operation can be relocated to the new site at Winnersh Triangle in the first part of 2015.

82. AMENITY SERVICE REPORT

The Executive considered a report relating to the proposed cessation of the amenity service provision which would ensure that the Council and its contractor meet current and upcoming Waste Regulations as well as financial, environmental and safety issues related to delivering the service.

The Executive Member for Environment advised of an error in the table under the “analysis of issues” section of the report which in the “Income from Parish/Towns” line should be amended to read -£12,800 and not -£1,800.

Councillor Ross went through the background of the service and explained the involvement of the towns and parishes over a number of years. He thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for considering the matter and highlighted their comments contained in the report. It was noted that the Committee did meet twice to discuss the matter and on the first occasion nine of the town and parish councils were represented so there was a lot of input from them at that time.

Whilst recognising the benefits of the service to residents Councillor Ross provided further information on the four issues which made the amenity service unsustainable which were:

- Environmental – that none of the 550 tonnes which were collected by the service ended up in landfill as there was no separation facility and no effective control to stop trade waste, which may include hazardous material, being put into the lorries;
- Safety – in recent risk assessments both the contractor and the Council had raised a number of safety issues;
- Regulatory – the EU Waste Framework for Technically Environmentally Economically Practicable (TEEP) which becomes effective from the beginning of next year states that materials eg glass, paper/card, etc have to be collected separately;
- Cost as outlined in the report.

It was however noted that approximately 25% of the people who used the lorries arrived by car and therefore were being asked to drive a bit further to one of the civic amenity sites.

It was proposed to cease the service with effect from 1 February which would provide time to work with the towns and parishes, who may wish to try to find a contractor willing to take on the service and meet all the environmental and regulatory demands, and also to get information out to the various users of the service.

Members wanted to ensure that whilst publicising the closure of the service information would also be provided about other services that could assist the public eg bulky waste collection, assisted collection for older people and home composting of garden waste.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the amenity service cease with effect from 1 February 2015;
- 2) those Parish and Towns Councils that would like to continue with the service be supported through direct procurement if suitable licensed third party provider can be found, recognising legal and environmental issues;
- 3) the decision be communicated effectively, highlighting the reasons and alternatives to this service as detailed in the report.

83. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION SITE ASSEMBLY

Due to the nature of discussions this item was considered in Part II.

84. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

85. MEMBER QUESTION

In accordance with the agreed procedure, the Chairman invited Members of the Council to submit exempt questions to appropriate Executive Members.

85.01 Following on from Minute 67.02 Prue Bray asked an exempt supplementary question relating to Item 82.00 Town Centre Regeneration Site Assembly. The answer was also exempt and is therefore not included within these minutes.

85.02 Lindsay Ferris to ask the Executive Member for Environment an exempt question relating to Item 84.00 Joint Waste Board Update. The answer was also exempt and is therefore not included within these minutes.

86. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION SITE ASSEMBLY

The Executive considered a report and exempt information relating to a proposal to purchase properties in the town centre which would enable the Council to implement improvements to the regeneration proposals in response to comments submitted during the statutory consultation period.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the town centre properties, as set out in the report, be acquired in line with the costs identified within the report;
- 2) any further related and subsidiary decisions if required to complete the transaction be delegated to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader and Executive Member for Regeneration; and
- 3) additional capital budget be allocated in line with the costs identified in the report.

87. JOINT WASTE BOARD UPDATE

The Executive considered an exempt report which provided an update on discussions held at a recent Joint Waste Board meeting.

RESOLVED: That a legal defence of the successful adjudication be agreed and a budget of £410,000 be approved.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

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