

DRAFT

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

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 2 MARCH 2017

Councillors Present: Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge (Vice-Chairman), Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb (Chairman), Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Derek Carnegie (Team Leader - Development Control), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Melanie Ellis (Chief Accountant), Shiraz Sheikh (Principal Solicitor), Andy Walker (Head of Finance) and Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor James Cole, Councillor Roger Croft, Councillor Sheila Ellison, Councillor Manohar Gopal, Councillor Paul Hewer, Honorary Alderman Royce Longton, Councillor Alan Macro, Honorary Alderman Joe Mooney, Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles and Honorary Alderman Alan Thorpe

Councillor Absent: Councillor Anthony Stansfeld

PART I

69. Chairman's Remarks

Councillor Quentin Webb stated that it was with great sadness and shock that the Council had learned about the accident involving the Leader of the Council and his wife Zelda. Members were asked to observe a minute's silence and reflection time.

The Chairman reported that since the last ordinary meeting of Council he had attended 29 events, the Vice Chairman had attended five events and Councillor Jeff Beck had covered one event on behalf of the Chairman.

70. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 8 December 2016 and the extraordinary meeting on the 7 February 2017 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chairman.

71. Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that in respect of items 15 and 16 (Capital Strategy and Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22 and Revenue Budget 2017/18): all Members had completed an Application for a Grant of a Dispensation in relation to "any beneficial interest in land within the Authority's area." The Monitoring Officer had granted the dispensation to allow all Members to speak and vote on this item.

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It was acknowledged that many of the Members were likely to be a user and or a member of their local library.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer noted that Councillors Billy Drummond, Lee Dillon, Mollie Lock, Lynne Doherty, Jeanette Clifford, Dominic Boeck, Hilary Cole, Rick Jones, Mike Johnston, Steve Ardagh-Walter, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Anthony Pick, Richard Somner, Adrian Edwards, Carol Jackson-Doerge, James Fredrickson, Howard Bairstow, Marigold Jaques and Dave Goff had declared a personal interest in item 16 (Revenue Budget 2017/18) by virtue of the fact that they were dual hatted Members and a number of proposals would affect them in that capacity. It was deemed that these interests would be personal.

Councillor Marigold Jaques was a trustee of the Citizens Advice Bureau. As she had a fiduciary duty to this trust she declared that, in respect of Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2017/18), as she had an Other Registrable Interest she would leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and would not take part in the vote.

Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge was a trustee of the Corn Exchange. As she had a fiduciary duty to this trust she declared that, in respect of Agenda Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2017/18), as she had an Other Registrable Interest she would leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and would not take part in the vote.

A number of other personal interests were also declared in relation to Item 16 (Revenue Budget 2017/18) and these were displayed in the Council Chamber.

Councillor	Outside Body	Other
Bale, Pamela	Governor of Pangbourne Primary School	Friends of Pangbourne Library
Edwards, Adrian		Friends of Wash Common Library
Bairstow, Howard		Friends of Wash Common Library
Jones, Rick	West Berkshire Mencap – WBC representative West Berkshire Disability Alliance	
Lock, Mollie	Member of West Berkshire Duke of Edinburgh Committee Governor of Mortimer St Mary's Junior School	Member of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council and its Library Working Party
Lundie, Gordon		Member of the Friends of Lambourn Library Group
Bryant, Paul	Greenham Common Trust Trustee	
Jackson-Doerge, Carol	Trustee of Berkshire Maestros, Trustee of The Water Mill Governor of Burghfield St Marys School	

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Councillor	Outside Body	Other
Doherty, Lynne	Husband Co-Opted onto Shaw-cum-Donnington Parish Council	
Crumly, Richard		Member of Thatcham Town Council Library Working Party

72. Petitions

(Councillor Howard Bairstow arrived at 6.36pm)

There were no petitions submitted to this meeting.

73. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public question and answer session was available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

- a) *A question standing in the name of Mr Nigel Whitson on the subject of the implementation of the improvements to the Bear Lane roundabout would receive a written response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport as he was not in attendance at the meeting.*
- b) *A question standing in the name of Mr Ian Waters on the subject of costs associated with the employment of temporary senior staff was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs.*
- c) *A question standing in the name of Mr Ian Waters on the subject of funding for the cycle path linking Newbury and Ascot was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.*
- d) *A question standing in the name of Ms Susan Millington on the subject of the potential to charge for bulky household waste disposal at the Waste Recycling Centre in Newtown Road was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment.*
- e) *A question standing in the name of Ms Susan Millington on the subject of pursuing fly tippers through the courts was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment.*
- f) *A question standing in the name of Mr Matthew Lowe on the subject of planned infrastructure changes for Kings Road was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.*

74. Membership of Committees

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised of the following changes to the membership of Committees since the previous Council meeting:

- Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge had replaced Councillor Ian Morrin as a Member of the Personnel Committee.
- Councillor Nick Goodes would replace Councillor Manohar Gopal as a Substitute on the Eastern Area Planning Committee.

75. Licensing Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Licensing Committee had not met.

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76. **Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Personnel Committee had met on 8 February 2017.

77. **Governance and Ethics Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 13 February 2017.

78. **District Planning Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the District Planning Committee had met on 15 December 2016.

79. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had not met.

80. **Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2017/18 (C3118)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 13) which set out the Council's borrowing limits as set out by CIPFA's Prudential Code and recommended the Annual Investment Strategy for 2017/18.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Anthony Chadley and seconded by Councillor Laszlo Zverko:

That the Council:

1. **“Adopts the 2017/18 Investment and Borrowing Strategy.**
2. Formulates the Treasury Management Policy in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 and CIPFA's Prudential Code and Code of Practice for Treasury Management”.

Councillor Chadley in introducing the report explained that the purpose of the Strategy was to confirm the Council's methodology in complying with legislation on how and where funds were borrowed from while ensuring risks were minimised. This activity was scrutinised on a regular basis by the cross party Treasury Management Group (TMG). The Strategy in essence required the Council to borrow money at the most competitive rates, and invest surplus funds where it was most attractive to do so.

In addition, the report sought approval to increase the Council's capacity to borrow funds by £50m to support the Council's strategy to invest in commercial property to generate income. It was however noted that the report only sought agreement on a new upper limit and that any additional funding could only be drawn down and used as and when it was required, and would be subject to Executive approval.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that while, in general, he supported the Strategy, he would like the TMG to look at the risks and opportunities of securing longer term investment. Investments spanning 24 or 36 month periods were not utilised on many occasions and were likely to generate better returns. Councillor Chadley agreed that this was something that the Group could look at over the ensuing twelve month period.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

81. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20 (C3119)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the rolling three year financial strategy which was designed to ensure that the financial resources, both revenue and capital, were available to deliver the Council Strategy. It enabled the Council

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to forecast and plan income and expenditure over a longer period than the annual budget. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) should be read in conjunction with the Revenue Budget 2017-18, Capital Strategy and Investment and Borrowing Strategy reports.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Anthony Chadley and seconded by Councillor Gordon Lundie:

That the Council:

“approves and adopts the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20.”

Councillor Anthony Chadley stated that it was anticipated that £340m would be spent over the following three years. It was therefore vital that a strategy was in place to direct that expenditure in order to ensure that essential services continued to be provided for the District's 150,000 residents. He acknowledged the volatility around budget setting in the current climate but stated that the Council, since 2010, had an excellent team, with a proven track record, for doing so. On average budgetary expenditure was within 0.35% of the budget and he thanked the Finance Team for ensuring that decisions were based on solid foundations.

Where possible the authority welcomed stability and had therefore accepted the four year settlement from Central Government. The Strategy also made sensible allowances for increases in inflation and pension costs and made provision for the revenue funding element of the Council's Capital Programme. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation explained that the Council had a legal obligation to set a balanced budget annually.

The MTFS assisted in identifying key areas of income, for example Council Tax and Business Rates, and planned expenditure, and this in turn assisted with identifying the funding gap. Opportunities were sought to identify innovative solutions while transforming the way services were delivered as well as ways to generate income.

Some of the areas being focussed on were detailed at section 8.3 (Appendix A), and included:

- investing in commercial property with the aim of generating income;
- investing in residential property with the aim of being more cost effective in the provision of our statutory housing duties; and
- working with communities, Parish and Town Councils and neighbouring authorities in order to deliver services in a more cost effective way.

The MTFS also considered the Council's reserves. The Authority's S151 Officer recommended a minimum level of 5%, which equated to £5.8m. Reserves were designed to ensure that the Council could meet unexpected and unforeseen demands and pressures. While it would be an easy choice to fund the gap by using reserves it was felt that this was a risk that the Council should not take. Councillor Chadley was therefore pleased to confirm that the reserves were being replenished and maintained at this prudent level.

Councillor Lee Dillon noted the financial challenges that the Council was facing and in particular the £23m funding gap over the following three years. He felt that the Council needed to look for more opportunities for income generation and stated that incorporating realistic income targets in the Strategy would be helpful. He also noted that on the table on page 59 of the agenda, reference was made to 0% increases in Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept in 2018/19 and 2019/20. While he did not want to burden the local tax payer he noted the need to balance reality and optimism.

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Councillor Pamela Bale congratulated Officers and Members for producing the Strategy. She noted the reference to Business Rates Retention in paragraph 5.2 of the Executive Summary. She noted that in 2017/18 the Council would only retain 22.7% of the Business Rates it collected. An increase in the percentage the Council could retain would have a significant impact on the Council's finances. She therefore urged Members and the local Members of Parliament to continue to lobby Central Government on the issue of Business Rate retention.

Councillor Graham Jones noted that, in response to comments from Councillor Dillon, the MTFs did include income targets but that these were expressed as a net figure. These could be looked at more explicitly. In respect of comments on increases to Council Tax, he did not want to institutionalise Council Tax increases and that other methods of reducing costs needed to be explored. This included asking Parish Councils to take on some of the burdens. He wished to record his thanks to the Parish Councils that had already or were considering taking on some of the burdens once they had identified issues that were important to their communities. He recognised that they did not take on these burdens lightly.

Councillor Gordon Lundie stated that in his opinion the MTFs was the most important of all the Council's financial documents. It told the story of where the Council's funding came from and predicted the future spending envelope. The Council anticipated revenue expenditure of £117m in 2017/18 and would be investing £150m in the Capital Programme over the next five years. He noted that funding was a difficult story for local government. In 2010 the Council had received £32m in Revenue Support Grant, in 2017/18 this would have dwindled to £3.7m and it would have completely disappeared by 2019/20. There had also been a steady decrease in the level of New Homes Bonus received and by 2018/19 the Council would no longer receive any Education Services Grant.

Councillor Lundie thanked the Executive and Officers for producing the MTFs which set out a balanced budget, invested wisely while keeping Council Tax as low as possible.

Councillor Chadley stated that the MTFs set out guiding principles and valuable information for the Council to base its decision making on and therefore urged all Members to support it.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

82. **Capital Strategy and Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22 (C3120)**

(All Members had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) which outlined the five year Capital Strategy for 2017 to 2022, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement and the Asset Management Plans for Property and Highways. The report also set out the funding framework for the Council's five year Capital Programme for 2017/18 to 2021/22.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Hilary Cole and seconded by Councillor Anthony Chadley:

That the Council:

“approves the Capital Strategy and Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22.”

Councillor Hilary Cole commented that she was very pleased to be asked to propose the Capital Programme. She stated that the Programme confirmed the Council's commitment to continued investment in the future of West Berkshire. The Programme would help to deliver the Council's key priorities of:

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- Improving educational attainment and closing the educational attainment gap (£66.7m);
- Making key infrastructure improvements in relation to roads (£50m);
- Regeneration and the digital economy (£1.5m) ;
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults (£11.8m); and
- Supporting communities to do more to help themselves (£3.8m).

Councillor Hilary Cole noted that the Council would be investing £150m over the following five years but at a cost of only £40m to the Council. The other £110m would be funded from Government grants, s106 and CIL contributions as well as other funding sources. She congratulated Officers on the outstanding work that they had done in order to secure grant funding. During the 2017/18 financial year the Council would also start investing £50m in commercial property in order to start generating additional income.

Councillor Hilary Cole noted that in paragraph 1.4 on page 72 the first bullet point should state £120m and not £120,000 million over the next four years. She asked Members to support the recommendation subject to this correction to the report.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that he had looked through the Programme on a line by line basis and wished to make comment on two items. He noted the inclusion of the item for Sandleford and was concerned about the risk around the scheduling of this item given the delays to the planning application. He was also disappointed that only £15k per annum had been set aside for regeneration in Thatcham.

Councillor Pamela Bale commented that the level of proposed investment was significant for an authority the size of West Berkshire. She was, however, pleased to see that the Council would continue to live within its means. She welcomed, in particular, the funding that had been set aside for road safety measures in Pangbourne.

Councillor Marcus Franks welcomed the £120m that would be invested over the following four years. He was pleased to see the inclusion of £93k for the energy efficiency programme. This project had already generated savings which had been paid back into the pot. He also noted that £30k had been set aside for community based capital projects. These schemes had already supported a number of communities across the District. He would also be making an announcement at the March District Parish Conference about a new fund related to the devolution agenda.

Councillor Jeanette Clifford welcomed the £50m investment in the highways infrastructure which was good news for the people and businesses of West Berkshire. The majority of this funding would be derived from S106 funding or from external grants. She noted that Officers were particularly good at putting together business cases in order to attract external funding and she thanked them for their endeavours.

Councillor Emma Webster welcomed the inclusion of funding for Members' Bids. She commented that while this was not a large sum of money it could make a huge difference to a community.

Councillor Alan Law reminded Members that West Berkshire Council was the second largest investor in the District. He did however caution that Members needed to be mindful of the level of capital expenditure and the associated revenue costs.

Councillor Lynne Doherty highlighted that £66.7m would be spent on education to ensure that there were sufficient school places and to maintain the existing schools. This did not only pertain to mainstream schools but would also support alternative provision of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) units.

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Councillor Anthony Chadley stated that this was a comprehensive investment programme which would see £150 million invested over the following five years. The Council would however only be contributing £40m of the £150m. He thanked Officers for the work they had put into producing the Programme and also for the work that they had done to secure external grants.

He stated that the investment would not only be about investing in roads and schools but also about being innovative and changing the Council's view on how property was utilised. He highlighted the fact that the Council would be purchasing property to provide additional accommodation to prevent homelessness. The Council could look forward to similar projects where property would be purchased to fulfil service needs, thereby reducing external costs.

He noted that the Council would also be purchasing commercial property to generate income, and the Council would look at other ways to use capital expenditure in order to save the Council money.

Councillor Hilary Cole stated, in response to the query from Councillor Dillon, that she did not see any reason why the new school in the strategy would not be delivered. In response to his other query she noted that Councillor Franks had already alluded to the fact that he would be making an announcement about funding for parishes at the March District Parish Conference. She asked Members to support the recommendations.

Prior to the vote being taken the Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (*SI 2014/165*) (2014 Regulations) came into effect on the 25 February 2014 and as a consequence the Council was required to record the names of Members voting for and against the budget proposals.

For the Motion:

Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

83. Revenue Budget 2017/18 (C3121)

(All Members had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item).

(Councillors Billy Drummond, Lee Dillon, Mollie Lock, Lynne Doherty, Jeanette Clifford, Dominic Boeck, Hilary Cole, Rick Jones, Mike Johnston, Steve Ardagh-Walter, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Anthony Pick, Richard Somner, Adrian Edwards, Carol Jackson-Doerge, James Fredrickson, Howard Bairstow, Marigold Jaques and Dave Goff declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that they were dual hatted Members and a number of proposals would affect them in that capacity. As their interest was personal and not an other registrable nor a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

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(Councillor Marigold Jaques declared an other registrable interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that she was a trustee of the Citizen's Advice Bureau. As she had a fiduciary duty to this trust she determined to leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and did not take part in the vote).

(Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge declared an other registrable interest in Agenda Item 16 by virtue of the fact that she was a trustee of the Newbury Corn Exchange. As she had a fiduciary duty to this trust she determined to leave the Chamber during the discussion of this item and did not take part in the vote).

(Councillors Marigold Jaques and Carol Jackson-Doerge left the meeting at 7.25pm and returned at 8.27pm).

The Chairman clarified the rules of debate for this item which had been agreed by both Group Leaders prior to the meeting. Both Leaders would be permitted to speak for up to ten minutes and their presentations should include the submission of any amendments. All Portfolio and Shadow Portfolio Holders would be permitted to speak for up to five minutes on the Motion and amendments with all other Members being allowed two and a half minutes to speak.

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 16) concerning the 2017/2018 Revenue Budget, which proposed a Council Tax requirement of £88.4m which, in turn, would mean a Council Tax increase of 1.99% in 2017/18 with a 3% precept ring-fenced for Adult Social Care. The Council Tax increase and Adult Social Care precept would raise £4.2m, leaving a gap of £4.7m to be met from savings and income in 2017/18.

The report also proposed the Fees and Charges schedule for 2017/18 as set out in Appendix H, the Parish Special Expenses as set out in Appendix I and recommended the level of General Reserves as set out in Appendix F and Appendix G.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Anthony Chadley:

That the Council:

1. "Approves the 2017-18 Council Tax requirement of £88.4 million requiring a Council Tax increase of 1.99% with a 3% precept ring-fenced for Adult Social Care.
2. Approves the Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix H and the appropriate statutory notices be placed where required.
3. Approves the Parish Special Expenses as set out in Appendix I.
4. Acknowledges and notes the responses received to each of the public facing savings proposals in the public consultation exercise undertaken on the 2017/18 budget and that the Transition Grant of £1.37m be allocated as follows:
 - a) £140k to Short Breaks
 - b) £30k to Citizens Advice Bureau
 - c) £200k to Libraries
 - d) £1m to be put into a Transformation Fund, to assist West Berkshire Council to transform and improve the way it delivers its services.

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5. Notes the following amounts for the year 2017/18 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (by the Localism Act 2011):-

- a) *64,084.15 being the amount calculated by the Council, (Item T) in accordance with regulation 31B of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), as its council tax base for the year.*
- b) *Part of the Council's area as per Appendix M being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates.*

6. Calculates that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2017/18 (excluding Parish precepts) is £88,366,272.

7. Agrees that the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2017-18 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, amended by the Localism Act 2011:-

- a) *£280,592,545 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2), (a) to (f) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.*
- b) *£188,154,769 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3), (a) to (d) of the Act.*
- c) *£92,437,776 being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above, exceeds the aggregate at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R).*
- d) *£1442.44 being the amount at 7(c) above (Item R), all divided by 5(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).*
- e) *£4,071,504 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per Appendix M).*
- f) *£1378.91 being the amount at 7(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 7(e) above by the amount at 5(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special items relates.*

8. Notes that for the year 2017/18, the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley and The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in Appendix M.

9. Agrees that the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables in Appendix M as the amounts of Council Tax for 2017-18 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings."

Councillor Graham Jones stated that he was presenting this speech in tragic circumstances. Much of what he was going to say was based on the draft speech that Councillor Roger Croft had put together in the weeks leading up to the meeting.

He stated that Local Government had changed completely in England in December 2015 when the four year Settlement was announced. The Council's budget was cut to an

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unprecedented depth. In fact West Berkshire Council was the third hardest hit unitary authority in the country.

In terms of the context of the 2017/18 Revenue Budget the Council would receive Council Tax and other income of £98m and the authority would collect business rates of £85m, a total of £183m. If the authority was able to retain all this income it would more than cover the £117m the Council needed.

However, nationally the country's finances remained perilous and therefore it was recognised that the Government's primary focus had to be to deal with the deficit. The Administration supported the principle of making Councils more locally financially accountable.

In 2011 the equivalent of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) the Council received was over £33m and in 2017/18 it would only receive £3.7m. In addition the Valuations Office Agency had cut the Council's business rate yield by £800k every year. Councillor Graham Jones reminded Members that Local Government as a whole in England retained 50% of business rates. In 2017/18 the Council expected to collect £85m in local business rates and would have to pass £66m back to Central Government. This represented a retention rate of only 22.7% and it was expected that this retention rate would continue to fall. Over the next three year period the Council would collect £2m extra in local business rates but would pass £3m extra back to Central Government.

To replace what had been lost in the cuts to RSG the Council would need to retain at least 38% of the business rates collected. It was with regret that Councillor Graham Jones had to announce a 1.99% rise in Council Tax for the forthcoming year.

The Acting Leader explained that nearly half of the Council's budget was spent on Social Care. He reported that 28,000 people in West Berkshire were over the age of 65 and this number continued to grow by 3.3% every year. The Council's challenge, working with partners in the National Health Service, was to both maintain quality and contain cost. The enactment of the Care Act in 2014 had created an extra financial burden on the Council of £3m per annum. The Council was promised financial relief for this extra burden but this had not materialised. It was therefore with regret, that in order to maintain the Council's commitments to older people, a 3% increased ring-fenced precept had to be levied to fund Adult Social Care.

Councillor Graham Jones noted that Children and Family Services (CFS) had undertaken a programme of fundamental change to implement service improvement subsequent to their Ofsted in May 2015. The overarching aim was to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families and a range of improvements had been implemented across the service. He thanked all those involved in that journey. A number of initiatives had been implemented including the creation of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the formation of a new Children In Care Team.

Councillor Graham Jones highlighted the fact that the Council would continue to help communities to help themselves and it had been encouraging to see communities come together to take over some of the services that were not statutory but that were valuable to local communities.

Councillor Graham Jones noted that the Council would continue to seek ways to generate income including the joint venture with Greenham Common Trust that Councillor Roger Croft was championing. He noted the collective decision to reduce the number of Councillors from 52 to 42, despite the additional work this would place on Members. He stated that this underlined how seriously Members were about transforming the Council.

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The Council's Reserves were being kept at prudent levels and no more. The Council had listened to views emanating from the public consultation and as a consequence the Council was proposing to allocate money from the Transition Grant to short breaks, CAB and Libraries. It was also being proposed that a Transformation Fund be set up to continue the necessary changes in the way services were delivered.

Councillor Graham Jones reminded Members of the requirement to set a balanced budget and he therefore commended the Revenue Budget to Council.

Councillor Anthony Chadley in seconding the Motion reiterated the inequality of how business rates were collected and re-distributed. He too was disappointed that the Council had been forced to increase council tax by 1.99% and also had to take up the Government's proposal of a 3% precept for Adult Social Care (ASC) He noted that around a third of the Council's budget was spent on ASC. The increases would generate an additional £4.2 million of income, against a funding gap of just under £9million and would mean that the Council would be able to minimise its savings requirement. There would, however, still be a need to generate £5m worth of savings in 2017/18 or other ways of generating income.

The Council had decided to protect ASC by ring-fencing 1% of the precept as an ASC Risk Fund to mitigate against the eventuality of increases in demand that was outside its forecasting model. Councillor Chadley commented that setting the budget had not been an easy task and year on year the Council would have to keep on searching for ways to meet the ongoing demand on its services. He commented that he had read all the budget consultation responses and thanked all those residents that had participated in the consultation process. Councillor Chadley commented that difficult decisions had to be made against conflicting needs and a perfect outcome for all was not possible.

He was pleased to note that, as a result of the consultation, transitional funding would be allocated as follows: £140k for short breaks for disabled children, £200k for libraries and £30k for the Citizens Advice Bureau. The remaining £1million would be allocated to a Transformation Fund.

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that the budget was being proposed against a backdrop of cuts to vital public services. He accepted that the Council had difficult choices to make with regards to fulfilling the legal responsibility of producing a balanced budget. His Group however disagreed on which services to cut to achieve this. He hoped that the local Members of Parliament had visibility of the list of 73 savings proposals and understood their impact. He hoped that this information was being fed back to Central Government.

Councillor Dillon noted that his Group had asked for transitional funding to be secured earlier for Short Breaks which would have mitigated some of the pain arising from the cuts. It would have provided assurance to those impacted some time ago rather than worrying for the many months as they had been.

He stated that CAB provided an invaluable service to residents across the District and with more and more assessments being needed to access services and benefits the Council should be seeking to support the CAB as much as possible.

Councillor Dillon welcomed the transition funding allocated to the library service but lamented that this funding should have been dealt with much earlier in the year. He was of the opinion that the misguided approach of proposing to close all the libraries in the first instance had contributed to the delay. His biggest concern was that the transitional money was being put into a transformational fund rather than being used now when it was desperately needed.

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AMENDMENT: Proposed by Councillor Lee Dillon and seconded by Councillor Billy Drummond

That the Council:

- (i) "That the car parking tariffs be amended as per the supporting appendix which effectively reduces the increases on the first hour by 10p, with some of the estimated shortfall being met by increasing the costs on some of the longer stay options. The estimated annual budget shortfall would be £23k to be funded from the Transitional Grant.
- (ii) That the Home to School Transport (HTST) Grant be reduced from £250 to £100 instead of zero, and the shortfall funded by use of the Transitional Grant of circa £7k.
- (iii) That the proposed £200k saving relating to drainage repairs and maintenance not be approved and instead the shortfall be met using the Transitional Grant."

Councillor Dillon stated that the proposal to increase parking fees by 20p in the first hour would disadvantage shoppers and would hurt local businesses. They were therefore proposing that the price should only be increased by 10p in the first hour and that the shortfall should be met from increasing the cost of longer stay options.

His Group were also proposing that reduction in the Home to School Transport Grant be more gradual and that for 2017/18 it should be reduced to £100 instead of £0.

He stated that the lack of maintenance of drainage had contributed to both the 1967 and 2007 floods and cutting this budget might jeopardise properties in the event of a future flood. He therefore requested that the reduction in this budget be reversed. Councillor Dillon requested that each of the amendments be voted on as a separate item.

He noted that residents were being asked to pay an extra 5% in taxes in 2017/18. He accepted that 3% would be spent on the funding crisis that the country was facing with regards to Adult Social Care which he felt was an area that needed a better solution. As residents were being asked to pay more for less he could not support the budget.

Councillor Jeanette Clifford stated that if Members were minded to accept the amendment in respect of car parking charges the proposal would have to be consulted on again. This would incur a cost as a result of lost income and it was estimated that this would be in the region of £20k. In preparing the budget much thought had gone into the preparation of the fee schedule and it was deemed fairer to increase the costs for short term parking rather than to charge those people parking all day. Research indicated that it was the availability of accessible parking that attracted shoppers to an area rather than decisions based on cost. The Council had a responsibility to build a whole budget and had to live within its means and while she was reluctant to increase parking charges it was necessary in the context of the overall budget. She would therefore not be supporting that amendment.

A lot of thought had also gone into the decision to reduce the drainage budget. This was a difficult decision, work would continue but with a smaller budget and the work would be undertaken in a different way. She understood the anxiety around this issue but felt that this was the right choice.

Councillor Tony Linden commented that difficult decisions had to be made and he could therefore not support the amendments.

Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that she found the amendments pertaining to Home to School Transport to be a little confusing. As she understood it the amendment pertained

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to the subsidy afforded to some parents on a fare paying scheme. The Council had spoken to that cohort of parents in 2015 as they were the first to be affected and they were therefore aware of the removal of the subsidy. It should be noted that other parents were already paying these costs. She could therefore not support the amendment.

Councillor Billy Drummond urged Members to support the amendments proposed by Councillor Dillon.

Councillor Dillon commented that even if parents were informed about the changes to the Home to School Transport proposals in 2015 the additional costs would still be difficult for some families to manage. He reiterated that the reports commissioned after the 2007 floods had stated that the maintenance of gullies had been a contributory factor to the floods. The Authority had a duty to protect property and life.

Councillor Graham Jones stated that he did not accept Councillor Dillon's extrapolation in respect of flooding. While he noted that the Opposition could point out problems the Administration had to identify solutions. He commented that it was not possible to allocate funding for Short Breaks prior to the consultation being concluded as the Council could be deemed to have predetermined the outcome of the consultation. Delaying the removal of the subsidy for Home to School Transport would merely defer the problem. He therefore did not support the amendments.

Each of the amendments were voted on separately.

Prior to the vote being taken the Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (*SI 2014/165*) (2014 Regulations) came into effect on the 25 February 2014 and as a consequence the Council was required to record the names of Members voting for and against the budget proposals.

For Amendment i):

Councillors Lee Dillon, Billy Drummond and Mollie Lock.

Against Amendment i)

Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

For Amendment ii):

Councillors Lee Dillon, Billy Drummond and Mollie Lock.

Against Amendment ii)

Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

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For Amendment iii):

Councillors Lee Dillon, Billy Drummond and Mollie Lock.

Against Amendment iii)

Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell, Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Each of the Amendments were put to the vote (as set out above) and declared **LOST**.

Members then returned to the Substantive Motion.

Councillor Rick Jones stated that new methods of working were already delivering savings in the Adult Social Care arena. Like most other areas in the country the Council was facing a growth in demand. The average costs of an Adult Social Care client was £17k per annum and £44k per annum for clients with learning difficulties. Clients with more complex needs could cost the Council significantly more each year. A relatively modest increase in numbers could have a big impact on the Council's finances. Although he regretted the need for the 3% increase in the ASC precept, savings had been taken as far as they could for the moment and this extra funding was therefore needed in order to set a balanced budget.

Councillor Marcus Franks stated that local government was having to do a lot more with a lot less. The Council was therefore seeking ways to reduce costs. This included the creation of shared services which reduced costs but also increased resilience across the authorities. The Council was also seeking to invest in property which would either generate income or offset costs. One of the themes of the budget was getting communities to help themselves and a new Building Communities Together Team was being created in order to facilitate this.

Councillor Franks commented that the CAB was a non statutory service but following the consultation it was agreed that £30k of transitional funding would be awarded to them again in 2017/18. The service would need to be transformed in light of the diminished funding. They were confident that they would be able to transform and adapt whilst continuing to deliver this valued service.

Councillor Mollie Lock commented that the Education Act required the Council to provide Home to School Transport for Post 16 children that had special education needs or disabilities. She stated that the proposed savings would have a profound effect on these vulnerable residents many of whom had complex physical needs. It would also cause additional financial and emotional strain on their families. These young people were also most likely to have to attend schools which were further away from their homes as their needs could often not be met at their local school.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that the library service was having to transform and the Council was in the process of consulting with the town and parish councils as well as community groups as to how this transformation could be achieved. New working models would be put in place as had been agreed at the Extraordinary Council meeting on the 7 February 2017.

Councillor Alan Law stated that while he supported the budget he was reluctant to support the Council Tax increase of 4.99% and he hoped that this was a one off

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increase. He noted that the single biggest cost to the Council was employee costs. He noted that the previous year the Communities Directorate had overspent their original staff budget by £4 million and then went on to overspend their revised staff budget by a further £2million. In 2015/16 they had also spent £5.2 million on agency staff despite only budgeting for £1m. He was of the opinion that when staff costs exceeded the budget in year cuts had to be made. He therefore urged the Administration to focus on staff budgeting and monitoring during the forthcoming year and requested that this information be incorporated into the quarterly performance monitoring data.

Councillor Emma Webster commented that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission would be looking at the impact transitioning from Children's Services to Adult Social Care had on vulnerable residents.

Councillor Lynne Doherty commented that Children and Family Services continued to build on its successes. The progress made in respect of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs was well documented. A new Children in Care Team had been established to look after the 149 children who were currently in care. Investment was being put into looking after children that most needed protection. Councillor Doherty reminded Members of the volatile nature of these frontline services.

She was particularly pleased to see that some of the transitional funding had been set aside for Short Breaks in recognition of the great work provided by this service. The Council was already working collaboratively with the Chief Executive Officer of Dingley's Promise to ensure that this service was not adversely affected by a diminution of funding from the Council.

In terms of Post 16 Transport for vulnerable children, the Council would continue to provide this service but while it would not be free, there were bursaries available that parents could apply for. It was felt that it would be preferable to consider each application on its own merits rather than apply a blanket policy.

Councillor James Fredrickson stated that the Administration was being forced to make real choices and had to base decisions on conflicting needs. The Council would have to make tough decisions now for the future.

Councillor Graham Jones commented that he had first presented a budget to Council in 2006. The challenges and expectations then were very different to now. The challenge in 2006 was to end the culture of increasing expenditure fuelled by council tax hikes which in West Berkshire became the highest cumulative rises in the country.

He explained that the challenge now was to not just spend money as carefully as possible but also to ensure that high quality vital services were maintained for the most vulnerable in society. The Council was forced to make tough decisions. As a Leader who presided over the lowest cumulative Council Tax rises in the Council's history it gave him no pleasure to be proposing the increase but he did so in the knowledge that it was the right thing to do.

Prior to the vote being taken the Deputy Monitoring Officer announced that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (*SI 2014/165*) (2014 Regulations) came into effect on the 25 February 2014 and as a consequence the Council was required to record the names of Members voting for and against the budget proposals.

For the Substantive Motion

Councillors Steve Ardagh-Walter, Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, Richard Crumly, Rob Denton-Powell,

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Lynne Doherty, Adrian Edwards, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mike Johnston, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Alan Law, Tony Linden, Gordon Lundie, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Garth Simpson, Richard Somner, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Against the Substantive Motion:

Councillors Lee Dillon, Billy Drummond and Mollie Lock.

The Substantive Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

84. Statutory Pay Policy 2017 (C3122)

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 17) which sought approval of the Statutory Pay Policy Statement for publication from 1st April 2017.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor James Fredrickson and seconded by Councillor Marcus Franks:

That the Council:

“approves the Policy Statement attached at Appendix C for publication in accordance with s38 of the Localism Act 2011.”

Councillor James Fredrickson commented that the Council was obliged to produce the document on an annual basis. The report was required to set out the remuneration of its chief officers, the remuneration of its lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and those that were not chief officers. The median salary at the Council was £27k per annum, the mean salary was £29.5k per annum and the highest paid employee was the Chief Executive who was paid £136k plus a £5k car allowance.

Councillor Mollie Lock commented that Members were happy with the report when it was discussed at the Personnel Committee. Concern had however been raised about the overlapping pay scales and Officers had been asked to review this and to provide more detail at the next Personnel Committee meeting.

Councillor Lee Dillon was pleased to see that all employees were paid at least the Living Wage although for some this was via a supplement. He stated that he would prefer to see these employees paid the Living Wage without the need for a supplement. He noted that staff were experiencing an unprecedented workload and it was important that they were compensated for the work that they did.

Councillor Graham Bridgman stated that currently the Council had 74 spinal points in its pay grading scheme and that he would like to see this reduced.

Councillor Marcus Franks explained that the pay grades were set nationally. Councillor Fredrickson stated that when he had discussed the issue of pay grades with the Head of HR he had explained that there would be cost implications with reducing them. Councillor Lock raised a point of order and stated that the Head of HR had stated at the Personnel Committee that this would not be the case. It was agreed that the Head of HR would provide a written response outside of the meeting.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

85. Public Sector Audit Appointments (C3211)

(Councillor James Podger left the meeting at 8.35pm).

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 18) which provided Members with the opportunity to discuss the merits of West Berkshire Council opting into the national

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scheme for auditor appointments for the financial year 2018/19 onwards. The report was discussed at the Governance and Ethics Committee meeting on the 13 February 2017 and they supported the Officer's proposal to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Keith Chopping and seconded by Councillor Anthony Chadley:

That the Council:

“agrees the invitation to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments.”

Councillor Keith Chopping explained that following the closure of the Audit Commission and the end of the transitional arrangements at the conclusion of the 2017/18 audits, the Council had to consider the options available for appointing external auditors. New arrangements had to be in place by 31 December 2017. Options available to the Council would be to adopt the national scheme for auditor appointments, establish a stand-alone Auditor Panel to make the appointment on behalf of the Council or exploring the establishment of local joint procurement arrangements with neighbouring authorities.

Members had discussed the options at both the November 2016 and the February 2017 Governance and Ethics Committee meetings and had agreed to recommend to Council the Officer recommendation to opt into the national scheme. Councillor Chopping noted that if the Council wished to accept the invitation of the Public Sector Auditor Appointments, it would need to do so by the 9th March 2017. To date around 160 authorities had already opted in.

Councillor Anthony Chadley felt that the recommendation was a sensible approach and encouraged Members to vote in favour of the officer recommendation.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

86. **Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh (C3114)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 19) which sought approval for the refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Rick Jones:

That the Council:

1. “Accepts the Health and Wellbeing Strategy refresh and agrees the priorities within it.
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board bases future commissioning decisions on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy”.

Councillor Graham Jones noted that a peer review of the Health and Wellbeing Board had taken place the previous year which had resulted in a number of recommendations. A number of changes were therefore being proposed including broadening the membership of the Board to include Thames Valley Police, The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Sovereign Housing. This was necessary in order to deal with the wider determinants of health and not to focus only on clinical issues.

It was also agreed that the existing Strategy had too many priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board to focus on and a compromise had been reached to highlight two specific priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board to focus on from October 2016 to October 2017, those being the reduction of harm related to alcohol and building community resilience.

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Councillor Pamela Bale noted that while the Strategy referred to the ageing population no mention was made about dementia groups and she asked if this could be addressed.

Councillor Emma Webster commented that she welcomed the inclusion of the RBFRS on the Health and Wellbeing Board in light of the extensive prevention work they undertook with vulnerable residents. She also noted that she was a Dementia Champion and encouraged more Members to take up this role.

Councillor Lee Dillon stated that he welcomed the decrease in the number of priorities. Councillor Adrian Edwards commented that he too welcomed the inclusion of the RBFRS on the Board. He noted that the fire fighters were required to maintain a certain level of fitness and he commented that this was something that everyone should aspire to. He stated that he would like to see the Council encouraging employees and Members to take part in more exercise and improve their fitness levels and make better lifestyle choices.

Councillor Rick Jones commented that he thought the revised Strategy was simple and clear and should lead to better integration of systems which would result in better outcomes for residents. He acknowledged that this was not a short term process and that there was a lot of work to be done.

Councillor Graham Jones thanked Members for their comments on and support for the Strategy. He concurred with Councillor Edwards that exercise was a great treatment for a range of medical conditions. He too welcomed the broader representation on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

87. **Members' Questions**

There were no Member questions submitted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.50pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature