

**AT AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held as a Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021**

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor John Story), The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Gary Muir)

Councillors John Baldwin, Clive Baskerville, Christine Bateson, Gurpreet Bhangra, Simon Bond, John Bowden, Mandy Brar, Catherine Del Campo, David Cannon, Stuart Carroll, Gerry Clark, David Coppinger, Carole Da Costa, Wisdom Da Costa, Jon Davey, Karen Davies, Phil Haseler, Geoff Hill, David Hilton, Maureen Hunt, Andrew Johnson, Greg Jones, Lynne Jones, Neil Knowles, Ewan Larcombe, Sayonara Luxton, Ross McWilliams, Helen Price, Samantha Rayner, Joshua Reynolds, Julian Sharpe, Shamsul Shelim, Gurch Singh, Donna Stimson, Chris Targowski, Helen Taylor, Amy Tisi, Leo Walters and Simon Werner

Officers: David Cook, Emma Duncan, Suzanne Martin, Kevin McDaniel, Barbara Richardson, Duncan Sharkey, Adele Taylor, Karen Shepherd and Adrien Waite

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received

85. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rayner declared a personal interest in the item 'Petition for Debate – Maidenhead Golf Course/Great Park' as several of the sites listed in Appendix 2 were owned by her family. She would not participate in the debate or vote on the item.

Councillor Price declared an interest in the item 'Petition for Debate – Maidenhead Golf Course/Great Park' as she was a member of the golf club. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that as Councillor Price's interest was a potentially prejudicial interest, she had granted Councillor Price a dispensation to enable her to speak on the item as a local member to facilitate the debate.

86. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**a) Alison Carpenter of Eton and Castle ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

I am concerned that the tone of the funding section of the leaflet is unreasonably focussing on potential costs to residents rather than the potential benefits. Can it be amended to show competencies will be tailored towards the available budget e.g., there is no precedent, as highlighted in section 6.36 for WTC to take on responsibility for street lighting?

**Written response from Councillor Cannon (Vice Chairman on behalf of the Community Governance Review Working Group) as per Part 2 C9.2 of the council constitution:** *Both the draft recommendations document and the consultation leaflet for the second stage consultation on the potential for a Windsor Town Council have been drafted by the cross-party Member Working Group following detailed*

*consideration of the responses to the first round of consultation and research undertaken into establishing a town council.*

*Whilst it is recognised that many respondents to the first round of consultation were supportive of the concept of a Windsor Town Council, some respondents raised concerns and questions about the potential costs of an additional layer of local government. The Working Group felt it was important to include in the draft recommendations a detailed explanation of how a town council is funded, the administrative costs of running a town council and the potential impact on the precept for services provided by a town council. Aside of the precept other opportunities for revenue raising are not guaranteed and therefore cannot be relied upon to meet the funding needs of the town council. Table 5 in the draft recommendations document lists the precept for a number of other town councils in Berkshire providing a realistic comparison of potential costs.*

*The aim of the leaflet is to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage people to respond, having considered all the information in the draft recommendations document which will be published on the website if approved by full Council. The leaflet includes a section on potential costs but also includes a section on the benefits of a town council therefore presents a balanced approach to the issue.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Carpenter Alison Carpenter asked what did the panel envisage in terms of other services that the principal council might look at transferring in the first year? What safeguarding was there to protect a Town Council from the borough offloading competencies and costs?

Councillor Cannon responded that the Working Group would be working with officers to understand what were the appropriate services to transfer to equate to the Special Area Expense that paid for the precept. The only service definitely being transferred was allotments as that was a statutory requirement. After the second consultation period, these would come back to the full Council to decide if they were appropriate.

**b) John Webb of Clewer and Dedworth East ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

Why is panel proposing to set YR1 precept at £34.31 when staff/overhead costs plus the cost of allotments (the only service that can be mandated for WTC initially) adds up to far less than £470k raised by precept?

Surely precept MUST only be set based on known costs and any additional competencies can ONLY be negotiated by elected town councillors/RBWM?

**Written response from Councillor Cannon (Vice Chairman on behalf of the Community Governance Review Working Group) as per Part 2 C9.2 of the council constitution:** *If a Windsor Town Council were to be established, elections would take place in May 2023. However the precept would need to be set as part of the overall council tax in February 2023. As no town councillors will have been elected at this point, it would be up to RBWM as the principal council, to set the precept for the first year of the town council's existence. The principal council is able to determine the services that will be provided by the town council in the first year and therefore determine the required precept. The assets and services transferred would include allotments as this is a statutory requirement, and other services to be determined. As*

*detailed in the draft recommendations, further significant work would be required by the council to determine which other assets and services would be appropriate for transfer in the first year and these would not necessarily be those currently covered by the Special Area Expenses Account.*

*Once a Town Council had been established, RBWM would work with the elected town councillors to discuss the potential for any future service or asset transfer.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Webb asked, having been forced to accept the competencies in year one, what provision was there in year two if the Town Council democratically decided to discontinue some of those services, would they revert back to the borough? Would it not make more sense if elected town councillors started with a bare bones set of competencies and then decided which competencies they would take on in year two?

Councillor Cannon responded that it was not for the embryonic Windsor Town Council to decide what to take on or not take on. The proposal would be what the council proposed would be the services taken on. Anyone standing for election to the Town Council would therefore be standing for election in this knowledge. Any discussions that would take place after would be between the Windsor Town Council and the borough about additional services or those they wished to surrender.

**c) Claire Milne of Old Windsor ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

Why is the wording formulated in a negative way to talk about increases rather than possibility of decreases of precept? There is no balance to this approach, as there are opportunities for other revenue raising which are not mentioned.

**Written response from Councillor Cannon (Vice Chairman on behalf of the Community Governance Review Working Group) as per Part 2 C9.2 of the council constitution:** *Both the draft recommendations document and the consultation leaflet for the second stage consultation on the potential for a Windsor Town Council have been drafted by the cross-party Member Working Group following detailed consideration of the responses to the first round of consultation and research undertaken into establishing a town council.*

*Whilst it is recognised that many respondents to the first round of consultation were supportive of the concept of a Windsor Town Council, some respondents raised concerns and questions about the potential costs of an additional layer of local government. The Working Group felt it was important to include in the draft recommendations a detailed explanation of how a town council is funded, the administrative costs of running a town council and the potential impact on the precept for services provided by a town council. Aside of the precept other opportunities for revenue raising are not guaranteed and therefore cannot be relied upon to meet the funding needs of the town council. Table 5 in the draft recommendations document lists the precept for a number of other town councils in Berkshire providing a realistic comparison of potential costs.*

*The aim of the leaflet is to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage people to respond, having considered all the information in the draft recommendations document which will be published on the website if approved by full Council. The*

*leaflet includes a section on potential costs but also includes a section on the benefits of a town council therefore presents a balanced approach to the issue.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Milne asked, if in the report there was a bare bones recommendation for the town council in the first year with limited competencies, why was it illustrated that the precept would be set at £34.31. She asked why could it not be illustrated as less, for example half that, £17.16, in the first year which would be more than sufficient to cover the running costs for a bare bones Town Council with just allotments and a few other things?

Councillor Cannon responded that if a Windsor Town Council was to come into existence they were entitled to the SAE which was £34. If that money transferred to the Town Council, this would leave a hole in the Royal Borough finances so the competencies and liabilities equivalent to that would have to move across at the same time. If they did not, the whole borough would have the liability for the matters which should be transferring to Windsor Town Council. The situation was that any extra layer of government came with a cost. As all parish councils knew there was a cost of administration. The council had to balance its books rather than penalise the whole borough for the benefit of the people in Windsor who would like a Windsor Town Council. Therefore the precept would be a minimum of £34.31 plus any costs of administration including clerk's wages. This was what the consultation would be about and all views provided would be taken into consideration by the Working Group who would then make a final recommendation to full Council.

**d) John Holland of Eton & Castle ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

Will the Windsor Town Council steering committee be consulted on the draft 2nd stage public consultation leaflet on the formation of a Windsor Town Council?

**Written response from Councillor Cannon (Vice Chairman on behalf of the Community Governance Review Working Group) as per Part 2 C9.2 of the council constitution:** *RBWM, as the principal authority, is responsible for undertaking the Community Governance Review pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, including determining the appropriate methods of consultation. In July 2020 the full Council agreed to set up a cross-party Working Group to steer the process and present draft and final recommendations to the full Council; the draft recommendations are being presented at the meeting on 2 March 2021. The final decision on the form of consultation therefore rests with full Council and there is no requirement to consult on the methodology with any external group or individual. The 'Windsor Town Council steering group' is an independent group not connected to RBWM.*

*If full Council approves the draft recommendation on 2 March 2021, the second stage of the consultation will begin immediately and run for a three month period. All interested parties, including the Windsor Town Council steering group, are encouraged to respond to the consultation in that period.*

Mr Holland confirmed that he did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

**e) Richard Endacott of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

There is a contradiction between information in section 6.31 of Appendix A and the leaflet which suggests the Town Council would be responsible for delivering of the following services: allotments and other services to be determined.

Can you confirm that services and assets taken on by a Town Council can only be determined once the councillors are elected?

**Written response from Councillor Cannon (Vice Chairman on behalf of the Community Governance Review Working Group) as per Part 2 C9.2 of the council constitution:** *If a Windsor Town Council were to be established, elections would take place in May 2023. However the precept would need to be set as part of the overall council tax in February 2023. As no town councillors will have been elected at this point, it would be up to RBWM as the principal council, to set the precept for the first year of the town council's existence. The principal council is able to determine the services that will be provided by the town council in the first year and therefore determine the required precept. The assets and services transferred would include allotments as this is a statutory requirement, and other services to be determined. As detailed in the draft recommendations, further significant work would be required by the council to determine which other assets and services would be appropriate for transfer in the first year and these would not necessarily be those currently covered by the Special Area Expenses Account.*

*Once a Town Council had been established, RBWM would work with the elected town councillors to discuss the potential for any future service or asset transfer.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Endacott referred to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (LGPIH) 2007 Section 9 said that where a community governance review was required to make any of the following recommendations, recommendations under section 87(6) as to whether or not a new parish should have a parish council, if the parish had 1000 or more local government electors the review must recommend that the parish should have a council. Therefore by law this CGR committee must recommend the formation of a town council. With this in mind, did the Chair agree that this section of the consultation should be framed in such a way to ensure all sections of the community were involved and that the newly formed council would start its fledgling life in the most positive manner possible?

Councillor Cannon responded that he did not have the detailed document in front of him but if what Mr Endacott had said was correct, the committee would recommend the formation of a town council. However it would be down to the full Council to decide whether or not it accepted such a recommendation. As he had not been sighted on the document Mr Endacott had alluded to he could not go into any more detail. He stated that the group would look into the issue and get back to Mr Endacott.

Written response provided after the meeting: *Section 87 of the LGPIH Act 2007 states:*

- (1) A community governance review must make recommendations as to what parishes or new parishes (if any) should be constituted in the area under review.

.....

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(4) The following subsections apply if the review recommends that a new parish should be constituted

.....

(6) The review must also make recommendations as to whether or not the new parish should have a parish council.

*It is accepted that for a parished area with over 1000 electors, a parish (or town) council should be established (rather than, for example, a parish meeting) if a review recommends that a parish be established.*

*If the outcome of the second round of consultation is that an additional layer of government (a parish) is appropriate for the currently unparished areas of Windsor, the draft recommendations proposed by the CGR Working Group and approved for consultation by full Council on 2 March 2021 clearly state that the appropriate body would be a town council.*

### 87. PETITION FOR DEBATE - MAIDENHEAD GOLF COURSE/GREAT PARK

Adrien Waite, Head of Planning explained that the item before Members was a petition for debate asking that a new park be created on the site of Maidenhead Golf Course, in order to create a green lung.

The golf course was the largest site allocation in the Borough Local Plan (BLP) which Council had voted to submit to the planning inspectorate last year, and had subsequently been through an examination in public. The site was in a sustainable location and if allocated in the BLP would provide significant provision of new housing. This included much needed family and affordable accommodation necessary to provide a home for existing residents and those who wished to live in the borough. It would also provide facilities contributing to the educational, leisure and recreational needs of residents.

The allocation within the Local Plan would seek to require the retention of existing areas of woodland and mature trees, the enhancement of local biodiversity, and the creation of new areas of publicly accessible green space to include a 'green spine' through the entire development. In essence the proposed allocation would create parks or equivalent open spaces, albeit this may not be of the type or scale of the park envisaged by the petitioners.

The proposed BLP was part of a well thought out spatial strategy based on extensive evidence and a process of public engagement. The evidence base considered by the Council previously included the Open Space Study 2019 which confirmed that Maidenhead was well served by public parks and gardens. The council was already expanding provision by establishing informal natural space at Battlemead Common and, were the site allocated in the BLP, this would further enhance publicly accessible space in the area.

The BLP had also been supported by a full sustainability appraisal which concluded that the loss of green space on the site needed to be weighed against other factors that would be delivered by the allocation and that the development would lead to strong positive effects for housing, health, community, transport, education and waste.

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In summary, the current proposal to allocate the site for the purposes in the BLP would lead to a high quality sustainable development which would incorporate green space and contribute to a variety of strong positive effects for all residents of the borough and be delivered within a 10 year timescale. As the largest site allocation in the BLP it was key to the success of the placemaking strategy for the borough.

Supporting the petition would undermine the ability of the council to proceed with its well thought out local plan. If the site was not made available for development, alternative sites would need to be identified to accommodate the development which would likely involve allocation of green belt sites such as those identified in Appendix 2. This would lead to a less sustainable pattern of development and overall a poorer strategy for development in the borough and less benefits for residents. It would also make it more difficult to resist speculative development through the planning process and make it harder to ensure the council delivered the best quality of place for all.

Supporting the petition would also have significant financial and legal implications as set out in sections 4 and 5 of the main report. Given there was a current lease on the golf course there was no prospect of a park being created for at least 20 years, whereas the proposed allocation would deliver significant benefits for residents within the next 10 years.

The recommendation of officers to Council was therefore that the petition could not be supported.

Tina Quadrino, Lead Petitioner, addressed the meeting. Ms Quadrino stated that the issue was dear to her heart and the hearts of the 4448 people from all over the borough who had signed the petition. These residents had signed up to a dream of what could be and it was in the power of the council to continue to protect the important piece of green belt land, just as was intended when a previous Mayor bought the land and entrusted it to the council for safekeeping many years ago. The town was in a very different space now than it was when the BLP was first created. Since then a climate emergency had been declared and rightly the borough had pledged to protect biodiversity and meet a carbon net zero target by 2050.

Since the BLP a global pandemic had occurred which would change the way people lived and worked forever. Shopping was predominantly online and home working had been shown to be effective for employers and employees alike. This meant that the need for commercial and office space would be reduced, freeing up many brownfield sites that would be ripe for development. Ms Quadrino stated that it was irreconcilable to mention carbon net zero in one breath and destroying green space in the next. For hundreds of years the piece of land had been acting as a green lung to combat air pollution, noise pollution and act as a carbon sink. And yet now, when it was needed more than ever, there were proposals to concrete it over. The green belt land that was leased by the golf club had been critical to the health and wellbeing, both mental and physical, of many Maidenhead residents in the last year.

The council had earmarked the land for housing and said there was nowhere else left to build. If the 2018 Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) numbers were used the borough was already there in terms of houses needed in the borough and this did not even take into account things like the Nicholson's Quarter that did not yet have planning permission.

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In summary, there was no need to build on the golf course to meet the current housing need. There was a climate emergency with a need to reach carbon net zero by 2050 and the global pandemic had changed the work/life balance forever, leaving many brownfield sites vacant and ripe for transformation to meet future housing needs. Ms Quadrino suggested that the only argument for putting a large village on the golf course was money. She was furious that the council was willing to compromise the future health and wellbeing of generations to get itself out of debt due to its own negligence. It was not enough that local services and libraries would be lost, at least these could be reinstated later. Once the green lung was gone, it would be gone forever. Ms Quadrino highlighted that the councillors were the custodians of the public land and not property developers. She asked if the council would answer to its residents, their children and grandchildren, when they witnessed the destruction of the green space and all the benefits that came with it. She asked if the council would take full responsibility for it and be remembered forever as the people who gave permission to build on the land. The arguments for keeping the space green were many and if in time it became a park for everyone, all the benefits could be amplified. More trees could be planted, biodiversity could be increased and more opportunities could be provided to allow people to access the space for exercise, education and so much more. Maidenhead Great Park would put the town on the map as a destination and be a key part of its sustainable transformation.

Councillor Hill proposed the following motion:

This Council agrees not to build on Maidenhead Golf Course and to keep our green lung with its trees and wildlife for the continued benefits to our community and future generations

Councillor Taylor seconded the motion.

The Head of Planning confirmed there was nothing he wished to clarify at this point in the debate.

In introducing his motion, Councillor Hill posed a number of questions:

- What price, the health of the children of the borough?
- What price, our physical and mental health?
- What price, clean air?
- What price, the oxygen we breathe? Trees and green plants were the oxygen factories.
- What price, our countryside and green space?
- What price, the environment, the planet, the survival as a specie?

Councillor Hill stated that all the above were more precious than money ever could be; there was always a way to fix the money. The sale of Maidenhead Golf Club was not about housing it was about money and nothing else. The Inspector for the BLP in a letter of 13 July 2020 clearly stated that the OAN between 2013-2033 had halved from 12,691 households to 6,382. The Freedom of Information (FOI) request 75675 stated that between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2020, 3,762 dwellings were completed in the borough. A further FOI 75771 stated that as at 31 March 2020 2,830 dwellings had planning permission but were unimplemented. The two figures combined to give 6,592 dwellings and exceeded the need detailed by the Inspector. Councillor Hill

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suggest there were more than enough planning applications in the current pipeline to satisfy the OAN without building on Maidenhead Golf Course.

Councillor Hill stated that he wishes to raise a critical and key question to the officers and Cabinet. Sections 4.6 & 5.4 of the paper stated that should RBWM breach its development agreement with CALA Homes to develop the site south west Maidenhead or should the BLP not be adopted or site AL13 was removed from the BLP the council would incur costs for breach of the agreement. Councillor Hill states that this was the first he had heard of any such penalty clause and wished for Council to know before they voted, the details of the penalty clause and the cost to RBWM and the tax payer. Councillors must be clear on the consequences of any vote they made at the meeting.

Councillor Hill asked on behalf of the 4448 residents who signed the petition just what had taken place in the negotiations with CALA Homes and just how did the council end up with a potentially penal contract when it was by no means certain that the BLP would be approved, that the Golf Club would vacate the site or that planning permission would be granted?

The vote was a fundamental question of democratic representation of the people. 4448 residents had put their names to the petition, the third largest ever recorded in RBWM. This was in the midst of a global pandemic when people had many more immediate concerns on their minds. If the council voted the motion down, it would be going against the will of people.

Councillor Werner commented that the council had a fantastic opportunity to do something really amazing for Maidenhead. His fear was that it was an opportunity that he could see the councillors opposite allowing to fall through their fingers.

The advantages of keeping the as green space were obvious. It is important for physical health and mental health. It was important for the world's biodiversity and it was important for the fight against climate change. Research had shown that access to green space was vital to health and wellbeing and with all the flats being built in Maidenhead town centre with little or no car parking, the site, only 10 minutes' walk away made it even more essential. As the borough came out of lockdown, he suggested it was the perfect opportunity to press pause on the 2600 homes that were proposed for the site instead of a great park. The council just did not know at this time how office use would change, potentially freeing up other sites across Maidenhead. Nor did the council know how home ownership would change. If people were not commuting so much into London but home working, he questioned if there was a need to sacrifice the vital green lung for our town.

Councillor Werner commented that Members had already heard from Councillor Hill about the number of houses required and in any case there were a large number of empty homes which he had been campaigning for the council to bring back in to use. With four and a half thousand people signing the petition it showed there was a massive desire in the community to protect the land. Finally he highlighted that this was one of the previous Cabinet schemes and he knew how keen the administration was to distance itself from the actions of that Cabinet. Councillor Werner suggested it was a great opportunity to say no to that legacy and abandon plans to build on the site. It was so important that the council stopped paying lip service to the green agenda and actually take action and this was an easy way to do it.

Councillor Coppinger thanked the organisers of the petition and everyone who has signed it. He explained that the golf course was part of a larger site which was referred to as AL13. It was the most significant site within the emerging Borough Local Plan for a number of reasons. It was the largest site with provision for 2600 houses which would meet the needs for affordable housing, family homes and also providing for educational, leisure and recreation needs. As the council owned the site, not only was it a very sustainable site but it would enable the council to significantly increase the public access because it had already committed to retain existing woodland and other mature trees, conserve and enhance local biodiversity and create new areas of public space including a green and blue spine running north to south.

The council had started a place making workshop for another major site in the west of Windsor. A number of local councillors were involved together with representatives of the community. The purpose was to get local input into what they wanted in the development and what they wanted it to look like. The council would shortly be starting a similar project for the golf course site.

Councillor Coppinger stated that he did fully understand why so many people wanted the park so he wanted to highlight what would happen if the council agreed. Firstly, the golf course would continue to lease the land and could do so until the lease expired in 2039, therefore it would be at least 20 years before anything could happen. He commented that no one had yet told him who would pay for the construction and upkeep of the park. By law the council had to have an approved BLP and even worse the current one was out of date. Developers knew this and were continually trying to push through inappropriate developments. It was expected that the plan that was in examination would be approved by the end of the year. If the council told the examiner that it could no longer meet the housing allocation that would be the end of the plan and the council would have to start again. The consequences were that every developer would descend on the borough and try to push through inappropriate development. Even worse the council would have to find other sites that it could build 2600 houses on. That was easy because it already had a list of green belt land that was available but unlike the golf course, they were not sustainable. They would all require transport links and would put pressure on local communities. He highlighted that the list included:

- 3 sites in Ascot and the Sunnings
- 11 sites in Bisham and Cookham
- 36 sites in Bray
- 2 sites in Clewer and Dedworth
- 3 sites in Cox Green
- 9 sites in Datchet Horton and Wraybury
- 5 sites in Eton and Castle
- 20 sites in Hurley and the Walthams
- 5 sites in Old Windsor
- 1 site on Pinkneys Green
- 1 site in Riverside
- 13 sites in Sunningdale and Cheapside

Except for a few sites close to existing developments most of the sites were not sustainable and would require transport to reach facilities such as schools, shops, and medical services. The council had committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and

he hoped and expected the target to be reached earlier. The golf club site helped the council achieve the target; any other option did not.

Councillor Coppinger reminded Members that at the last Council meeting he had spent some time talking about CIL and especially the type of site that developers wanted. This was one of those sites and because it was not in central Maidenhead the council would expect to receive somewhere between £26 and £35 million to pay for the necessary infrastructure.

In conclusion, Councillor Coppinger highlighted that the council had to build 2600 dwellings to meet the housing target. Building on the golf course was sustainable and enabled the council to maintain and expand the current green infrastructure. The council was committed to creating a new green and blue way through the whole of the development. All new properties would be built to meet the latest requirements for climate change. The council would receive the necessary CIL to pay for the infrastructure and would build a new school. If the proposals for the golf course did not go ahead, there would not be a BLP for maybe 3 years and at an additional cost of over a £1m. The council would have to build on the green belt across the borough. There would be no new school and many of the existing schools would not be capable of expanding. 2600 homes across a number of isolated sites was not sustainable. The Golf Club would stay until 2039. He still did not know who would pay for the new Great Park. Councillor Coppinger asked all Members to say no to the motion as it was wrong for the people of Maidenhead and it was wrong for the Borough

The Head of Planning clarified that the OAN that was set out in the council's evidence base for the BLP was 712 dwellings per annum which equated to about 14,240 dwellings over the plan period. The government had already advised that 2016 population projections could not be used for the purposes of calculating housing need. Using 2018 population projections would not make any meaningful change to the OAN. The government's more recent methodologies would result in a more standard methodology of housing need of about 754 dwellings per hectare. In reality if the council did not proceed under the current BLP, it would be faced with a higher housing number under current planning policy. In terms of the statement that the council had enough housing to meet its need, it was simply not correct. The annual monitoring reports that set out the level of delivery and the extensive evidence provided in the BLP examination clearly showed that the council did not have enough housing to meet its need. This was not just in pure numbers but also in terms of providing the types and tenures of housing to meet the needs of residents, including the need to provide larger family homes for residents.

Councillor Stimson referred to the placemaking workshops for another major site that were currently taking place. She was involved in the workshops in her capacity as Lead Member for climate change and sustainability. Also involved were residents who live adjacent or nearby to the site, one of the council's ecologists, the developer, other councillors and parish councillors, planners and a highly experienced urban designer who had worked on design review panels, written a book on "building for life" and taught urban design.

When the team started to work on the master plan for AL13, there would be a consultation process, and the Managing Director of the RBWM Property Company had confirmed that if there were any groups that wished to put forward proposals to make the development as sustainable as possible, she would ensure they were

heard. Just like the placemaking workshops that were happening for the Windsor site at the moment, Councillor Stimson confirmed that she planned to be involved in these as well. There were obvious advantages in building sustainability in at the onset. Beginning with the mature trees and existing woodland, the master plan would be built around them. There would be a focus on sustainable transport and how people would walk and cycle across the site. Consideration would be given to the low carbon district heating that would be used to heat AL13. Sustainability was not an afterthought, and there were plenty of examples around the country to be drawn from to show how it could be profitable and beautiful, and it was certainly healthier for the residents. Also, when consultation took place, it was possible to have less iterations of a plan, and hence save money for the things that really mattered, like affordable housing and sustainability.

Councillor Stimson explained that she had walked with Debbie Walker, one of the petitioners, on the golf course and knew how keenly many people felt about it. There was a tree at the top right corner that might well be the oldest oak in the area, and she believed Ted Green, formerly the Crown Estate's ancient tree expert, had been to admire it. Councillor Stimson explained that her father had a plus 4 handicap so she knew a thing or two about golf courses, having traipsed after him on countless rounds. Councillor Stimson stated that she loved the idea of saving the golf course, but it was just not practical. It was a site not in the floodplain, it was in the emerging BLP, and it was committed to development. What could be done was make it the best exemplar of sustainable living possible.

Councillor W. Da Costa stated that the BLP was the core plank in the Conservative administration's vision for the Borough. It set out a plan to sell off the borough's green gold land in order to balance the books, to desperately stave off the ruin caused by the council tax policies of the last 12 years. The council was tying itself in knots because of a failing BLP. This was preventing the council's ability to deal with the issues that threatened the very existence of the borough's children: misery, sickness and death caused by climate change.

Councillor W. Da Costa suggested that the BLP was incompatible with life. Yet the BLP should be a key document to reach zero carbon emissions quickly, to provide a safe haven in new buildings from 40 degree heat, flooding, and high snow levels. The BLP should dovetail in with a comprehensive Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) that planned to stave off extinction of UK species of plants and animals. The BLP should plan for health and wealth, rather than ignore the wellbeing of residents and wealth creation from a green building plan. A core part of that non-existent green BLP and thorough BAP should be the protection of the land on the golf course site.

Councillor W. Da Costa asked if Members cared about the future, and the life and death of the borough's children. If they did, he suggested that they should think again and vote for the motion to create and build on an oasis of wildlife and carbon sequestration. The council also needed to quickly create a new BLP that was compatible with life, life to the full.

Councillor Johnson endorsed the comments made by Councillor Coppinger and the Head of Planning. He felt that the debate was not actually about creating a new park for Maidenhead, but about the BLP. He therefore felt it was a very premature debate because the council was still waiting for the Inspector's comments following examination. Councillor Johnson saw the motion as a way to remove the site from the

BLP, which would damage the totality of the plan for the entire borough. The council would see a rise in speculative development and the council would lose control of where sustainable development would be placed. The golf course site was a very sustainable site close to the town centre, the railway station and existing infrastructure and community facilities. It was an ideal location for large scale residential development. Councillor Johnson highlighted that the key question was, if not on this site, then where? The administration stood committed to deliver the site in the BLP. It would provide housing opportunities for future borough residents, including affordable housing, green space and the associated educational and leisure infrastructure. If the site was not progressed through the BLP, the golf course would remain on the site. The council would not want to spend tax payer money to break the lease on the site so no park would be created for some time.

Councillor Davey asked why councillors had not previously been notified of the penalties detailed in paragraphs 4.6 and 5.4. He asked for the contract with Cala Homes to be shared with Members as a Part II document.

Councillor McWilliams commented that it was important to look at what the statisticians were saying. The ONS lower projections were based on the assumption that more people were living with parents or cohabiting in homes of multiple occupancy. This demonstrated that the demand for housing was falling as people could not afford to buy houses and/or rent houses and/or the type of housing they needed was not available. This did not mean the overall demand for housing was falling. Home ownership in the southeast for people aged between 20 and 34 had fallen from over 63% in the mid-1990s to less than 40% now. The number of 20-34 year olds living with parents rose 47% between 2006 and 2016. Over 30% of young men aged 20-34 were living with parents which was an astonishing figure and an indictment on the country's house building policy over the last 30 years. It was important to reflect on the implications for young people, for example they were not able to start a family until later in life. It forced everything to be pushed later in life. There was an impact of the lack of affordable housing in the borough on the housing service. Demand had increased 100% in the latest economic crisis which had put huge pressure on the organisation and the social housing stock was simply not available. This meant a greater reliance on temporary accommodation.

Councillor McWilliams stated that the golf course site was a once in a generation opportunity to right a historic wrong when it came to the delivery of affordable housing. The council and residents owned the land therefore when it was built on, it meant the council could deliver the social value that was often lost within private developments, through carbon neutral developments and the biggest increase in social housing in many years. It was wrong from a moral and a strategic point of view to support the motion as it would be throwing away an opportunity to support the vulnerable and the young in the borough.

Councillor Baldwin commented that by highlighting as Councillor Coppinger did the potential enormous return from CIL, he had also highlighted the lost opportunity of collecting CIL from Maidenhead town centre developments. In relation to Councillor Johnson's earlier question 'if not this site, then where?' Councillor Baldwin referred to a planning panel on which Councillor Johnson had sat before he had become leader and had voted against a development that would have generated 40% affordable housing on a redundant farmer's field, a site without the history of the golf course.

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Councillor Baldwin commented that he would welcome an explanation of the penalty clauses that existed with the Cala Homes contract before Members voted.

Councillor Bateson explained that the BLP process had started in 2011 when she had been the Lead Member; it had therefore been over 10 years in the making. If the golf course site was not included, the BLP process would have to start all over again at a cost of over £1m.

Councillor Sharpe stated that it was important to maintain as much green space as possible and keep an open lung for the town centre. One of the key ways to do this was to reduce the footprint of the buildings. Several towns were now building upwards to preserve green space. The council should review the plan for the area in light of this.

Councillor C. Da Costa requested clarification that the buildings would be for affordable housing and social housing. She commented that to go ahead with something because it cost money not to do so was not always the right thing to do. It would never be possible to get back a 100 year old tree therefore you could not put a price on it.

The Head of Planning referred Members to paragraph 2.8 of the report. The allocation in the BLP was seeking 30% of the homes for affordable housing and a large proportion would be family sized homes with gardens. There was a lot of work to do on the planning proposal so actual numbers could not be stated at this time.

Councillor Johnson requested a personal explanation as his decision making in a previous planning committee had been referenced. The application in question was not a site allocated in the BLP and had been recommended for refusal by the planning officers. He had voted at that meeting with a high degree of integrity and in line with the principles of the planning panel. The two were not comparable cases.

Councillor Walters commented that the main reason that young people could not get on the housing ladder was that they were unable to get mortgages, not just the lack of housing being available.

Councillor Taylor referred to a press release from 31 July 1953 entitled 'Action to Preserve Open Space', which explained that with a bid of £12,100 the Mayor Councillor T. A. Stuchbery had bought Maidenhead Golf Course when it was offered for sale by auction, together with other lands of the Desborough Estate. The Mayor had bought the land to prevent it falling into the hands of those less concerned about its future than local people. The press release explained that if the council desired, it could buy the land from the Mayor at the sale price. Immediately after the meeting the council had made a commitment to buy the land. They had taken the view that the land was scheduled as an open space in the development plan and that public ownership was the best way of ensuring that it remained an open space. Lord Desborough wanted the land to be for the use of the public, for recreation and to preserve open space. The Mayor and the council in 1953 agreed. Nearly 70 years later the council wanted to dismiss the wishes of the council on behalf of local people.

Councillor Taylor commented that the proposals would have a devastating effect on the ecosystem of the site. Even with the greatest care animals would be displaced and

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habitats destroyed. Green spaces were disappearing at an alarming rate. She asked the council to look to help local residents now, not in the future.

Councillor Hill reiterated that the land had been bought by the borough for residents to enjoy as an open space. 4448 residents had signed the petition and this had been during a pandemic. If the petitioners had been able to knock on doors the number would have been much higher. Going against the wishes of the residents was undemocratic. The motion he had proposed was not about building a Great Park but about keeping a green lung. Councillor Hill stated that he took issue with the comments by the Head of Planning as on the council website there was a letter from the Inspector dated 13 July 2020 that said explicitly that the housing need had halved for the period 2013-2033 from over 12,000 to 6,382. The FOI requests he had raised showed that 6000 houses had already been built and a further 2380 dwellings had planning permission but were unimplemented.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion proposed by Councillor Hill and seconded by Councillor Taylor, fell.

<b>Maidenhead Golf Course/Great Park (Motion)</b>	
Councillor John Baldwin	For
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	Against
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	Against
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Catherine del Campo	For
Councillor David Cannon	Against
Councillor Stuart Carroll	Against
Councillor Gerry Clark	Against
Councillor David Coppinger	Against
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	For
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Karen Davies	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	For
Councillor David Hilton	Against
Councillor Maureen Hunt	Against
Councillor Andrew Johnson	Against
Councillor Greg Jones	Against
Councillor Lynne Jones	No vote recorded
Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Councillor Ross McWilliams	Against
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor Helen Price	For
Councillor Samantha Rayner	Conflict Of Interests
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	For
Councillor Julian Sharpe	Against
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For

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Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	Against
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Councillor Simon Werner	For
<b>Rejected</b>	

The Mayor requested that Councillor Coppinger provide Members with information on the next steps with the BLP. Councillor Coppinger explained that the council had submitted answers to all the outstanding questions asked by the Inspector following the examination in public, and was therefore awaiting the initial report. Once received some time would be taken to fully understand it. A report would then be brought to full Council on any changes that were needed after going out to full consultation. The adoption of the plan would therefore likely be at the end of the calendar year.

### 88. REFERRALS FROM OTHER BODIES

#### i) Community Governance Review – Windsor Town Council – Draft Recommendations

Members considered the draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review (CGR) Working Group on the proposal for a Windsor Town council.

Councillor Shelim reminded Members that in July 2020 full Council had approved the Terms of Reference to formally commence a CGR to consider the formation of a town council for Windsor. This included the establishment of a cross-party CGR Working Group to manage the CGR process. The Working Group comprised five elected members: himself as (Chairman), Councillor Cannon (Vice Chairman), Councillor Davies, Councillor Hilton and Councillor Knowles.

Supported by officers from across the council, the CGR Working Group had held ten meetings. A first round of consultation was held between July and October 2020 to determine the appetite for a town council in the area. Following analysis of the consultation responses, the cross-party CGR Member Working Group had drafted a set of recommendations for the formation of a Windsor Town Council for consultation.

The draft recommendations, as detailed in Appendix A, proposed that the council was minded to consider the creation of a Windsor Town Council on the basis that the electorate and any other stakeholders remained supportive of the proposal in light of the additional detail provided regarding the potential financial impact and the possible transfer of powers and assets to a new town council. As the next step in the CGR process, a formal consultation was required to ascertain the level of support for a Town Council established under the electoral arrangements detailed in Appendix A.

Councillor Shelim thanked his fellow councillors from all parties for their help in concluding this stage of the review, including Councillor Story who had left the group when he had become Mayor. He also thanked the Head of Governance and the Electoral & Information Governance Services Manager for their help in putting together the report. Councillor Shelim thanked all those who had responded to the first round of the consultation; he looked forward to hearing more from residents as the process continued.

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Councillor W. Da Costa stated he was grateful for the opportunity to speak on what was an historic process for the future of the borough's globally recognised and, unique town. He commented that whilst some may frame the costs and benefits purely in monetary value, for him the social and cultural benefits of a Town Council sat equally alongside the economic factors for the wonderful local community. Politics needed to be accessible to all. Everyone, regardless of their social and economic background, needed a voice on how their community operated. A Windsor Town Council would by its very nature be more responsive than the borough to community needs and interests, particularly when taking into account the diverse needs of its residents. Whereas Borough councillors had to balance the competing needs and interests of the many communities across its extensive territory, a Windsor Town Council would have responsibility for a single community, united by a pride in the internationally renowned town and able to be uninhibited in advocating the interests of that community.

In the carefully managed, post-COVID recovery plan, a Windsor Town Council would exist at a scale that reflected people's patterns of social interaction and their identification with place. It could therefore act to facilitate community activities, organise and sponsor community events and promote community spirit and inclusiveness. Town councils played a vital role in supporting local clubs and organisations and provided significant grants to community groups

The proposal was not to run a competing local authority, or suggest a split from RBWM. The proposal sensibly aimed to provide additionally to the services and facilities operated by RBWM. A Windsor Town Council would have the flexibility to enhance service provision in the community, or to provide additional services, facilities or even simple features that lay outside the borough council's budgetary priorities.

The authority of a Windsor Town Council would come from its electoral mandate. Town councillors were accountable to the local electorate and may be removed at election time. A statutory constitution would give a relative security of existence, securing a continuity of funding from grant-making bodies. This means that town councils could plan on a longer-term basis and have more capacity to take on larger-scale projects, such as a Community Emergency Plan which he felt was sorely lacking. However, it was the ability of a town council to precept the council tax that was one of the most significant powers. Whilst they may be restricted in accessing funds in other contexts, the ability to precept provided a relative stability of income and a means of raising funds from the community, for reinvestment in the community for communal benefit. The level of precept was not set by an unaccountable group, but the precept was set by the community for the community, in other words the level set was totally up to the residents themselves.

This proposal for a Windsor Town Council brought a greater accessibility to politics to move beyond the rich or the retired and to bring decision making and democratic accountability back to those that mattered most, the residents who for too long had been under-represented by the nuance of being a minority of residents in RBWM, living in an unparished area. It was time to bring local decision making back to local people. Councillor Da Costa commented that although he supported the recommendation, he felt that the proposition had two significant areas of weakness. It did not give residents an idea of the possible range of precept, council tax and services, especially if the borough council sought to charge the town council for services it provided. He asked that the consultation documents clarified this point. Councillor Da Costa raised the question of who the "we" were. Not all Windsor residents would be able to have a say in the running of the Windsor Town Council as presented in the paper. They may have a say in what happened in Bray but not their

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home town. This was undemocratic and contravened the principles of localism. Councillor Da Costa asked Councillor Johnson to show that he was a friend of Windsor and commit to embarking on a process which would allow all Windsorians to have a say in their town.

Councillor Davey requested clarification of paragraph 6.20 which seemed to suggest the precept set would be double the amount currently paid, or he questioned whether it was just fake news by those who did not want to see a Windsor Town Council succeed. He asked if the reality was that the Town Council would, from year 2, set its own precept dependent on the services and projects they chose to take on. Therefore residents would not pay twice; they would pay the one amount to RBWM that included the precept that would be passed on to the Town Council.

Councillor Tisi welcomed the next stage of consultation. The Liberal Democrat manifesto of 2019 had included the proposal to ask residents if they wanted a town council so she was pleased that it was now happening. She had found when she had been door to door that there was an interest in some of the money coming back to Windsor and having more of a say in local decision making. People may not understand the financial details but they certainly understood the need to make decisions about things that happened to their town more locally. Councillor Tisi felt that the leaflet had a few issues with readability that could be improved, for example some clarity on the point about the precept, to avoid misunderstanding.

Councillor Hilton explained that he was a latecomer to the CGR Working Group having taken up the position vacated by Councillor Story when he had been appointed Mayor. For 20 years he had been a Councillor on the Sunninghill and Ascot Parish Council so had joined the cross-party working group with some experience. He thanked his fellow Working Group members for their open minded and considerate approach to drafting the governance review, and officers for their valuable assistance.

As a consequence of a petition started in September 2019 and ongoing debate on social media, in July 2020 the council decided to undertake a governance review on the formation of a Windsor Town Council, and not to wait for a valid petition to be lodged. Terms of reference for a review were published in July 2020 explaining the intention to consider the formation of a new town council for Windsor, and seeking comment from organisations and residents on the proposals contained in that document.

In total 69 responses were received, with 53 from the 20,500 electors that lived in the unparished areas of Windsor. It was the responses to this consultation that the CGR Working Group considered in drafting the CGR for a Windsor Town Council that was being debated. The Working Group had acknowledged the views of the first consultation that there should be one town council to cover the whole of the unparished area, that ward boundaries should reflect community interests and identities and that community governance should be effective and convenient.

The proposal for 21 Town Councillors reflected guidance from both Aston Business School and the National Association of Local Councils. The warding proposals met the desire for wards to reflect individual communities and to ensure equal representation. There was a small error in the report in paragraph 6.13 on page 48. With a total of 20,593 electors and 21 councillors the average number of electors per councillor was 980 and not 904. The number of electors proposed for each ward was within plus or minus 16% of this number which the Working Group believed to be acceptable.

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There had been some debate on the level of the precept for a new Windsor Town Council and the final consultation stated this would be at least £34.31, equal to the current Special Area Expense. The Special Area Expense covered the cost of a number of services including street lighting, recreation grounds and open spaces. It was unlikely that all of the services would be transferred. Should a decision be taken to establish a Town Council, in the interests of fairness and to avoid cross subsidies, a portfolio of services that cost the equivalent of the Special Area Expense would be agreed with the incoming Town Council. The minimum cost would be £34.31 plus any staffing and accommodation costs.

The powers available to a town council would be the same as a parish council. Should the recommendation be made to form a town council it was proposed to hold the first elections on 4 May 2023, alongside local government elections. Much thought had gone into the CGR for a Windsor Town Council and the Working Group had been at pains to provide a balanced view. The Group commended the Governance Review and the associated consultation to Council for approval. The Working Group was making no recommendation at this stage; its job was to manage the process and make the final recommendation to Council once the latest consultation was completed.

Councillor Davies stated that she was really pleased to be taking part in the CGR to offer residents the opportunity to say whether they would like a Windsor Town Council. It had been a very interesting and positive experience so far and she reassured residents that the process had been transparent, collegiate and guided by both national legislation and guidance and officer expertise. She had gained a renewed appreciation for the excellent work of the current parish and town councils across the borough.

Councillor Davies felt there was a very positive case to be made for the value for money which a Windsor Town Council would bring. The Working Group heard from the very successful Chippenham Town Council which ran a lot of services. She had also been inspired by hearing about the extra things which parish councils across the borough did for their residents, to add value at a local community level.

The Working Group's recommendation was that a new town council for Windsor be formed, on the basis that the electorate and other stakeholders remained supportive of the proposal. She encouraged all residents to look at the detailed proposals and share their views so that they could be taken into account in the second round of the consultation process

Councillor Knowles commented that he had found the CGR Working Group to be a very positive experience. It had been an excellent example of collegiate working. It was an ongoing process that would hopefully lead to a town council in the future. He wished to suggest a few amendments to the leaflet where it referred to Windsor Town Council then went on to refer to a parish council, which was potentially confusing. He also wished for clarification to be added so people understood that they did not pay the SAE and then also the precept, there was just one charge. It was recognised that it would never be possible to please everyone. He thanked Councillor Davies for her work on the statistics and the ward areas. He thanked the officers involved as there had been a lot of work behind the scenes.

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Councillor Rayner stated that it was an honour to serve as the ward councillor for Eton and Castle and also to be Lead Member for Windsor. There was an amazing and vibrant community in Windsor which had been demonstrated during COVID. The Clewer and Dedworth project also showed the strengths of the community. She thanked the Members of the Working Group and the officers involved in the CGR, which had been undertaken following a petition. She supported the motion as the draft recommendations gave a clear understanding of the proposals for a town council and information for residents to provide feedback on.

Councillor Price stated that she was pleased that the proposal was for one town council across the entire unparished area. She recognised that the allocation of wards was a difficult jigsaw. Councillor Price welcomed the gradual transition of responsibilities because in year one it would be a brand new council. She requested clarification on the responsibilities that would be transferred on day one and that they would be services that used up the £34.31 precept.

Councillor Cannon proposed an amendment to delegate authority to the Head of Governance and the Electoral & Information Governance Services Manager, in consultation with the Members of the CGR Working Group, to make minor amendments before publication.

Councillor Cannon commented that the process had been a remarkably good example of collegiate working that had produced a balanced and fair report. Any enhanced services that the council provided were great, but it should be noted that the cost would be added to the precept. Councillor Cannon explained that the responsibilities of a town councillor to the electorate were the same as a parish councillor. The name 'town council' was simply by virtue of the nature of the area. The Special Area Expense, the precept for the unparished area, was £34.31. By right this belonged to the town council if formed, but it had to take with it liabilities to equate to that amount from day one. Any additional liabilities would be through discussion with the borough in year two onwards.

There had been reference in the debate about the inclusion of Bray. This would need to be discussed with the Boundary Commission. The CGR focussed on the currently unparished areas of the town. Once and if a town council was set up, it could be for discussion in the future. The precept level in year two would purely be a matter for those elected to the town council. They would have liabilities that equated to the precept of £34.31; on top of that would be the costs of a clerk, accommodation and meeting space. Unless another revenue stream was found, the cost of any additional services would need to be from the precept. Councillor Cannon highlighted that it was local decision making but no decision making would be taken away from the borough. Parish councils did a very good job in their communities but they were an additional layer of government rather than a change from the borough. The draft recommendations proposed a single town council but this was out for consultation rather than a definitive proposal.

Councillor Shelim accepted the amendment proposed by Councillor Cannon.

It was proposed by Councillor Shelim, seconded by Councillor Cannon, and:

**RESOLVED: That full Council notes the report and**

- i) **Approves for consultation the draft recommendations for the formation of a new town council for Windsor as detailed in Appendix A, subject to authority being delegated to the Head of Governance and the Electoral & Information Governance Services Manager, in consultation with the Members of the CGR Working Group, to make minor amendments before publication.**

<b>Community Governance Review - Windsor Town Council - Draft Recommendations (Motion)</b>	
Councillor John Baldwin	No vote recorded
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	For
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	Abstain
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Catherine del Campo	For
Councillor David Cannon	For
Councillor Stuart Carroll	Abstain
Councillor Gerry Clark	For
Councillor David Coppinger	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	For
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Karen Davies	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	For
Councillor David Hilton	For
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	For
Councillor Greg Jones	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Ross McWilliams	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Helen Price	For
Councillor Samantha Rayner	For
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	For
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Simon Werner	For
<b>Carried</b>	

89. 2021/22 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

Members considered the programme of meetings for 2021/22.

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Councillor Johnson highlighted that the programme had been drafted in a way that accommodated the request to avoid school holidays wherever possible following feedback in the previous year. The programme also sought to more evenly spread out the meetings of full Council.

Councillor Davies commented that she had raised the school holiday issue and full Council and she was therefore pleased that this had been taken into account. Although no one could have envisaged the changes in working practices a year ago, the small move to being more family friendly was a good thing.

Councillor Baldwin echoed the comments of Councillor Davies. In relation to frequency and predictability to allow Members to plan their time, he was concerned that there had been frequent Extraordinary Council meetings in 2020/21. He requested some effort in advance by the administration to give Members as much forward notice as possible. Predictability and some consultation would be welcomed.

Councillor L. Jones agreed that getting more certainty and the programme being more family friendly was brilliant. However she raised a concern that when the council returned to face to face meetings, a 6.15pm start could be unachievable for those who worked and also lived some distance from Maidenhead. Before COVID-19 the general start time was 7pm.

Councillor Knowles acknowledged things had been different on the last year but he commented that there had been 11 full Council meetings, some of them quite long. He requested that the Mayor and leader be mindful of the length of meetings. He was also concerned about extraordinary meetings that transacted important business as they did not have the same functionality as an ordinary meeting, for example Members were not able to submit Motions on Notice.

Councillor Cannon echoed the comments of Councillor Jones that 7pm was an appropriate start time when the council returned to face to face meetings.

Councillor Bateson thanked the Democratic Services team for putting the draft programme of meetings together as she knew it was a difficult job.

Councillor Rayner commented that the programme showed the wide range of responsibilities the council had as a unitary authority and its efforts in support of transparency. She thanked the Democratic Services team for managing all the events.

Councillor Johnson commented that he accepted the valid point about start times. Once there was greater clarity on when the council would be able to return to face to face meetings, this would be factored in. He also recognised the request for as much notice as possible for extraordinary meetings and the need to manage lengthy meetings. There had been a number of extraordinary meetings required during the year, in part driven by the wider situation in the world. He highlighted that the petition for debate could have been deferred to a future ordinary meeting but it was felt important to hold the debate as soon as possible, therefore an extraordinary meeting had been called.

It was proposed by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Rayner, and:

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That full Council notes the report and:**

- ii) Approves the programme of meetings for the 2021/22 Municipal Year, attached as Appendix A**

90. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS - DESIGNATION OF POLLING PLACES

Members considered delegating authority to enable the Returning Officer to re-designate new Polling Places where such became unavailable or unsuitable before an election.

Councillor Johnson explained that the report reflected the realities of holding an election during a pandemic. The proposal was to give the Returning Officer additional flexibility to re-designate at short notice new polling places where the existing station was either unavailable or unsuitable before an election.

The proposal was being made principally in the context of the pandemic but also to reflect the broader point that as the constitution currently stood it would require full Council to authorise any change to a polling station. For example if a polling station happened to be flooded or became unavailable for another reason at incredibly short notice, this would provide the Returning Officer with an additional logistical challenge as well as actually facilitating the smooth running of an election.

Councillor Tisi commented that she agreed it was sensible to have a back-up plan. She referenced Kipling Court in her ward, Clewer East. The voting took place in the lounge of the accommodation and the impact of needing COVID-friendly sites meant it would not be an appropriate venue. She requested reassurance that the powers would only be used in case of emergency such as fire, flood or pandemic and not just if the council decided to change a polling station.

Councillor Rayner commented that it was an important paper in light of the return to democracy. In the borough the 6 May elections would include the Police and Crime Commissioner election, alongside a Neighbourhood Plan referendum and a number of parish by-elections. It was important to add the flexibility to allow democracy to take place. Councillor Rayner confirmed that as detailed in the report, the Returning Officer would take into account the views of ward councillors; this was important as ward councillors knew their ward best.

Councillor Johnson reassured Members that the powers would only be used in an emergency and would take into account views of ward Members. The default polling station would remain but the delegation would allow for ad hoc late changes in an emergency situation.

It was proposed by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Rayner, and:

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That full Council notes the report and:**

- iii) Approves amendments to the constitution detailed in Appendix A.**
- iv) Delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to update as appropriate and publish the council constitution.**

