

AT A MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held in the Desborough Suite - Town Hall on Tuesday, 26th February, 2019

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor Paul Lion), The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Colin Rayner)

Councillors M. Airey, N. Airey, Alexander, Bateson, Beer, Bhatti, Bicknell, Bowden, Bullock, Burbage, Cannon, Carroll, Clark, Coppinger, Da Costa, Diment, Dudley, Gilmore, Hill, Hilton, Hollingsworth, Hunt, Ilyas, Jones, Lenton, Love, Luxton, Majeed, Mills, Muir, Quick, S. Rayner, Richards, Saunders, Sharma, Sharp, Sharpe, Shelim, Story, Stretton, Walters, Werner, D. Wilson, E. Wilson and Yong

Officers: Mary Severin, Andy Jeffs, Rob Stubbs, Russell O'Keefe, Duncan Sharkey, Kevin McDaniel, Jenifer Jackson, Ruth Watkins, Karen Shepherd and Louise Freeth

89. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brimacombe, Cox, D. Evans, L. Evans, Kellaway, McWilliams, Pryer, Smith and Targowska.

90. COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That:

- i) **The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2018 be approved.**
- ii) **The minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 28 January 2019 be approved.**

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sharma declared a personal interest in the item 'Budget Report 2019/20' as he worked for the First Group.

Councillors Dudley, Love, Saunders and S Rayner declared personal interests in the item 'Petition for Debate – Maidenhead Golf Course Blanket TPO' as Directors (non-remunerated) of the Joint Venture with Cala Homes.

Councillor Diment declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the item 'Petition for Debate – Maidenhead Golf Course Blanket TPO' as she was a member of the Golf Club. She left the room for the duration of the debate and voting on the item.

Councillor Gilmore declared a prejudicial interest in the item 'Motions on Notice' as an employee of Airbus. He left the room for the duration of the debate and voting on the item.

Councillors S Rayner and C Rayner declared prejudicial interests in the item 'Motions on Notice' as they owned land that would be affected by Heathrow. They left the room for the duration of the debate and voting on the item.

92. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor had submitted in writing details of engagements that the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor had undertaken since the last meeting, which were noted by Council.

93. PETITION FOR DEBATE - MAIDENHEAD GOLF COURSE BLANKET TREE PRESERVATION ORDER

Members debated the following petition:

'We the undersigned petition the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to place a blanket Tree Preservation order on the Maidenhead Golf Club development site.'

Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning, explained that the council was the landowner for the majority of the site. It was not usual practice for the council to make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in respect of trees on its own land; as the council had control as landowner the risk was likely to be low. The council was committed to protecting trees, especially significant trees. The site was identified as a development site in the Borough Local Plan Submission Version, which was currently at examination. There was no reason to believe the trees on the site were currently at risk.

Equally it would not be good practice to impose a blanket order on the site with a view to preventing future development. The appropriate way forward would be to work with the developer to ensure the protection of trees with amenity value through planning conditions. A blanket order would never protect every tree on site being removed through development or redevelopment of that site, due to the relevant considerations of amenity as set out in the report. The Head of Planning therefore advised a blanket TPO was not a valid mechanism to use to prevent development on a site, particularly when a site had been identified through a local statutory process as being potentially suitable for development. TPOs could be made on individual trees, on roots of trees, or on woodlands. The report set out details of relevant legislation and guidance.

Councillor Hill spoke as lead petitioner. He highlighted that the petition had gathered 1249 signatures. He thanked his fellow ward councillor, the residents who had gathered signatures and all those who had signed the petition. The local Desborough family had allowed the borough to acquire the land for use as open recreational land. Many walkers and dog walkers used the land which contained ancient woodland and wildlife. If the land was not a golf course it should be used for other recreational purposes. To do anything other than keep it intact was wilful destruction of the environment. If the development went ahead it would be against stated government policy. He quoted from the Daily Mail online 7 October 2018 in relation to the newspaper's campaign to stop councils selling off land. The campaign had been supported by Secretary of state James Brokenshire. A recent report from UK Active had found that a quarter of boys and a fifth of girls did not complete 60 minutes of regular exercise per day. The health benefits of parks helped save the NHS £101m per year. The charity Fields Trust said that parks provided £34bn of health and social benefits.

Councillor Hill proposed the following motion:

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- i) This Council places a blanket TPO on the whole of Maidenhead Golf club site that can't be overruled by a planning condition.
- ii) This Council agrees that if Maidenhead Golf Club were to leave then this piece of land should once again become a public park or public open space.

Councillor Majeed seconded the motion and stated that this was what residents wanted, especially those in Oldfield.

Councillor D. Wilson spoke as ward councillor. He commented that blanket TPOs were a thing of the past. When National Rail had been cutting down trees along the railway, the council had served a TPO to get them to come to a meeting. Since then planning legislation had changed. Trees had to be individually assessed to clarify their protection status because it was far better to identify those trees and protect individual species than to just serve a blanket order. The Rushington Copse was an area about which local residents were particularly concerned. This was ancient woodland with planning protected status and as such did not necessarily need a blanket TPO. The NPPF paragraph 175c in 2018 and the more recent 2019 update indicated that protected species would continue to be protected. It was important to look at the details in the report. Planning would not be stopped by the serving of a TPO; it would only ensure identified species were protected where they were most vulnerable. He therefore supported the recommendation in the report from the Lead Member included in the agenda.

Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning, commented on Councillor Hill's first motion to recommend a blanket TPO be made that could not be overturned by a later planning application. She suggested that this would in fact be not lawful. A blanket TPO could not be used to invoke the determination of an application not yet submitted. Equally the motion asked for Council to consider returning the golf course to public open space. That was not a matter specifically covered in the petition but her advice would be that the Borough Local Plan had been submitted on the back of a resolution by the Council in June 2017 and that this was not the way to alter a process that had already been agreed.

The Monitoring Officer read out the motion proposed by Councillor Hill:

- i) This Council places a blanket TPO on the whole of Maidenhead Golf club site that can't be overruled by a planning condition.
- ii) This Council agrees that if Maidenhead Golf Club were to leave then this piece of land should once again become a public park or public open space.

Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning, stated that she wished to clarify the first point she had made in relation to the motion. It was not possible to restrict future development of a site by placing a TPO on it, whatever that TPO might be. If an application was made which proposed removal of some of those trees then they would have to be assessed through the planning application process as to whether the trees were of sufficient amenity value to allow planning policy to support their removal, or otherwise. Her suggestion would be that it would not be lawful to control development on a site in this way. She had addressed the second point by referring to the Borough Local Plan examination. The Council had agreed that it would seek to designate the site for development. Councillor Hill's motion was contrary to that resolution.

Councillor Coppinger commented that the petition was not about trees, it was an attempt to stop the Borough Local Plan and the decision the council had already made. The report highlighted that as the landowner the council had stated that only 60% of land would be developed. The council had agreed that the ancient coppice would be retained for all to enjoy. The requirements listed included the retention of the Rushington Copse and other mature trees, and a sensitive design in terms of biodiversity and wildlife. The proposals by Councillor Hill would not protect what everybody wanted to protect. The council had a history of protecting green spaces. He therefore proposed the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Sharma commented that trees protected an area from erosion, improved people's health and reduced stress. A blanket ban was more appropriate because when you removed one tree it affected all other trees.

Councillor S Rayner stated that the council was passionate about open green spaces and trees. Since she had been Lead Member the council had bought 87 acres at Thriftwood, 10 acres at Battlemead Common and 13 acres at Shurlock Row, along with some land at Eton Wick. The budget for 2019/20 included £300,000 for tree planting and maintenance and £180,000 for highway trees. Hundreds of volunteers helped plant trees in the borough on a regular basis.

Councillor Dudley thanked all residents who had signed the petition, there was clearly strength of feeling. He had earlier that day met with Wild Maidenhead and other groups to discuss Battlemead Common. It had been agreed to establish a Friends of Battlemead Common Group and to delay the opening to allow for further research. It was not right to say that golf courses were a safe place for people to walk as there were golf balls flying around; it could be a dangerous environment. The sympathetic redevelopment of the site would create a safe environment far in excess of the 50 acres currently available. Councillor Dudley gave his personal assurance that, whilst he was a director of the development company, the development would be done in a sympathetic way to protect and enhance the environment, and where possible all significant trees would be preserved including the ancient copse. He had sympathy with the residents who had signed the petition as what they wanted was what the council wanted, but there was also a need to provide homes for residents too.

Councillor Hill stated that he was disappointed in the response from the administration. He saw the future destruction of a valuable green space and wildlife, something 1249 residents did not want. It was a disgrace that they would be ignored. The golf course was just being sold for a massive receipt.

Members voted on the motion by Councillor Hill:

- i) This Council places a blanket TPO on the whole of Maidenhead Golf club site that can't be overruled by a planning condition.
- ii) This Council agrees that if Maidenhead Golf Club were to leave then this piece of land should once again become a public park or public open space.

The motion fell as: 5 councillors voted for the motion (Councillors Da Costa, Hill, Majeed, Sharma and Werner); 37 Councillors voted against the motion (Councillors M. Airey, N. Airey, Alexander, Bateson, Beer, Bhatti, Bicknell, Bowden, Bullock, Cannon, Carroll, Clark, Coppinger, Dudley, Gilmore, Hilton, Hollingsworth, Hunt, Ilyas, Lenton, Lion, Love, Luxton, Mills, Muir, Quick, S. Rayner, Saunders, Sharp, Sharpe, Shelim,

Story, Stretton, Walters, D. Wilson, E. Wilson and Yong). 3 Councillors abstained (Councillors Burbage, Jones and C. Rayner).

Members then voted on the recommendations included in the report in the agenda.

It was proposed by Councillor Coppinger, seconded by Councillor Dudley, and:

RESOLVED: That Full Council notes the report and:

- i) **Reiterates its firm commitment to maintain and enhancing the borough's trees and woodlands as a vital part of the environment of the borough.**
- ii) **Acknowledges the petition and approves funding of £40,000 from revenue in the financial year 2019/20 to the Head of Planning to commission a consultant to conduct a detailed Arboricultural survey of the Maidenhead Golf Course site.**

(40 councillors voted for the motion: Councillors M. Airey, N. Airey, Alexander, Bateson, Bhatti, Bicknell, Bowden, Bullock, Cannon, Carroll, Clark, Coppinger, Da Costa, Dudley, Gilmore, Hilton, Hollingsworth, Hunt, Ilyas, Jones, Lenton, Lion, Love, Luxton, Majeed, Mills, Muir, Quick, S. Rayner, Saunders, Sharp, Sharpe, Shelim, Story, Stretton, Walters, Werner, D. Wilson, E. Wilson and Yong). 5 councillors abstained: Councillors Beer, Burbage, Hill, C. Rayner and Sharma)

Councillor Diment left the room for the duration of the debate and voting on the item.

94. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

a) Gavin Weeks of Castle Without ward asked the following question of Councillor Dudley, Leader of the Council:

Regarding "no deal" Brexit preparation, Councillor Dudley was quoted in the *Slough Express* as saying: "The Government is going to release something in the region of 70 impact assessments. We will look for the commentary in those impact assessments." These assessments were published in early Autumn 2018. What preparations have been made by the council?

Councillor Dudley responded that the council had:

- designated a lead officer within the council to co-ordinate communication and provide oversight;
- ensured Brexit had been the focus of specific corporate leadership team meetings and formed part of strategic planning for the year;
- issued specific guidance for local government to relevant service leads and members of the council leadership team (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-government-brexit-preparedness>) for awareness and, where appropriate, response;
- co-ordinated closely with the council's Joint Emergency Planning team and was responding and participating in the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum regional response;

- and continued to focus on the issue at the CLT level with regular briefings scheduled on the issue to regularly review what remained a rapidly changing situation.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Weeks asked who was heading up the Brexit preparations task force at Member and officer level.

Councillor Dudley responded that ultimately he as Leader of the Council, along with the Managing Director, were responsible.

b) Simon George of Clewer South ward asked the following question of Councillor Dudley, Leader of the Council:

Brexit and no-deal Brexit will affect businesses and residents, and consequently service demand on the council. Organisations reliant on EU workers or funding will be particularly exposed. What risks and service areas have you identified as being vulnerable to Brexit and to no-deal, and when will a report be available for scrutiny by Members and the public?

Councillor Dudley responded that the co-ordinated work with the Joint Emergency Planning Team and the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, which formed the substantive part of the council's preparations, were classified as Official Sensitive and therefore could not be made public.

Cabinet would be briefed on the updated position after the next Council Leadership Team meeting on 6 March 2019.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr George commented that for example, Bristol City Council had identified eight areas: finance and funding, civil contingencies, workforce, legal and regulatory, supply chain, housing, key operations and city economy. Will the council now look into these areas?

Councillor Dudley responded that the council was looking into the necessary areas in preparation for leaving the EU, and the Cabinet would be updated by the Corporate Leadership team and the Managing Director of any necessary actions.

c) Lisette Stux of Bray ward asked the following question of Councillor Saunders, Lead Member for Finance:

Local government update: Written statement - HCWS1279 notes that each Unitary Authority will be given £210K for Brexit preparations by central government; £105K in current year and £105K in 2019/20. What have you spent this money on in 2018/19, and what will it be spent on in 2019/20, and where in the council budget is this noted?

Councillor Dudley responded to this question on behalf of Councillor Saunders.

Councillor Dudley commented that people probably did not realise the government was providing funding to all local authorities. The funding had not yet been received by the council and therefore did not yet appear in the budget. An update to the budget through the monthly Finance Update to Cabinet would be taken at the appropriate time.

Funding to support additional services offered through the Registrars (detailed in response to question g) were being resourced with this money. Otherwise it would be held in reserves to assist with any issues in the event they arose.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Stux commented that Slough Borough Council had set aside £220,000 in addition to the funding from the government. How much additional money and officer time had been set aside by the borough, above government funding?

Councillor Dudley responded that the council's reserves exceeded the statutory minimum therefore there was no need to set aside any further funding.

d) Karen Davies of Park ward asked the following question of Councillor S Rayner, Lead Member for Culture and Communities:

Given that the government has forecast a downturn in the economy post Brexit, local businesses will be affected. How will you support small businesses in the borough through this difficult period?

Councillor Dudley responded to this question on behalf of Councillor S Rayner.

Councillor Dudley responded that the Department for Exiting the EU had had released economic projections in case of a no deal which predicated the economy would be 6.35-9% lower than if there were a managed Brexit. The council had a longstanding track record of supporting businesses locally and this would continue. Some of the existing support available included:

- Charitable and Discretionary Rate Relief
- Hardship Relief
- Newspaper Relief
- Partly Occupied Property Rate Relief
- Retail Re-occupation rate Relief
- Rural Rate Relief
- Small Business Rate Relief
- Transitional Relief
- Unoccupied Property Business Rate Relief

The government had resources available for businesses through the website <https://euexit.campaign.gov.uk/> to support their preparations which the council encouraged any small businesses to access.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Davies asked, with regard to rate reliefs, what effect is it anticipated that this will have on business rate income retained by RBWM?

Councillor Dudley responded that as this was a technical question he would respond in writing.

e) Lisette Stux of Bray ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health:

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Bristol CC are preparing for impacts of “No Deal” on Social Care, including that: “Pressures on workforce and supply chain could lead to disruption to services. Including Impact on the timeliness /quality of care delivered and, increased wage demands putting contractors at risk.” What mitigation is the council planning for EU27 residents who perform vital jobs, but are leaving?

Councillor Dudley responded to this question on behalf of Councillor Carroll.

Councillor Dudley responded that there was no evidence yet that EU27 residents were leaving the Royal Borough; in March 2018 there were 5927 EU electors in the Royal Borough compared to 6081 on the electoral register in February 2019. Therefore the number in Windsor and Maidenhead had increased over the year. This represented 5.59% of the borough’s electorate in February 2019. The council would continue to monitor the figures. Slough had 16,000 EU citizens.

As part of wider preparations, relevant heads of service have had dialogue with contracted services to ensure they were updating their business continuity plans and close communications would be ongoing.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Stux asked if EU residents were not yet leaving and there was a cliff-edge Brexit, could he assure her that the quality and timeliness of social care services would continue and increasing costs would not put services at risk?

Councillor Dudley responded that the protection of the vulnerable was paramount. The council had extremely healthy reserves. If there were any pressure on services the council would allocate all necessary resources to protect the vulnerable.

f) Gavin Weeks of Castle Without ward asked the following question of Councillor Dudley, Leader of the Council:

Bristol CC and LB Enfield have identified risks “*to achieve its housing delivery targets, and to manage/maintain our council stock.*” Given the potential negative effect on property prices post Brexit, and the issues of availability of skilled labour, is it possible that some or all of the RBWM property ventures will become less lucrative?

Councillor Dudley responded that the council had no housing stock itself; this had been transferred to Housing Associations some years previously. The council’s arrangements with development partners had mitigated as far as possible against this; for instance it was the development partners not the council that would bear the sales risk. For example on the York Road site, a minimum land value and overage clause had already been conditionally agreed. A paper would come to Cabinet on this in March 2019.

There were a number of things which insulated the London and South East property markets, given the buoyancy of the local economies more generally, something which was being monitored by Homes England of which he was a non-executive Director and received weekly briefings. Locally, there were also a number of things which would insulate property prices to a degree such as the arrival of Crossrail scheduled for December 2020.

There was an affordability crisis in the local housing market, though, with property prices in excess of 12.5 times the median salary which was why the council continued to focus on using its resources and expertise to build affordable homes for its residents including 88 new affordable homes on the York Road site, starting any day now.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Weeks asked what was the risk of range of possible effects and did he consider the council's property ventures to be at risk?

Councillor Dudley responded that ventures such as the golf club were not anticipated to start for some years and may be subject to any macro-economic affects on the UK property market over the next ten years. In respect of the local market, there was significant housing demand and a very buoyant economy. As a developer one was able to accelerate or slow down development to match market absorption rates. All borough development sites guaranteed 30% affordable housing which would go to housing providers. For the York Road development, this would be Housing Solutions.

g) Simon George of Clewer South ward asked the following question of Councillor Dudley, Leader of the Council:

Pilot schemes demonstrate that some EU27 residents will struggle with the Settled Status application process, for varied reasons (including technology difficulties, age, disability). Councils such as Southwark are offering support to these persons, while Southampton CC is offering passport scanning and verification. What support will be made available in RBWM, and when, for residents who require assistance to apply?

Councillor Dudley responded that as part of the application process applicants proved their identity using the EU Exit: ID Document Check app, which would be available on Android devices. The council had signed up to provide an in-person identity verification service, providing access to a device for those who did not have one.

The council had ordered and received the devices from the Local Registration Service Association (LRSA) and was awaiting a software update from them. Once this was in place, and training had been received from the LRSA, the council would be providing this service. The cost per applicant would be set by the LRSA and therefore uniform across local authorities. The registrar's team were aiming to run this service on an appointment basis, providing specialist staff to carry it out. The service would be open to everyone, not just RBWM residents.

Once the training from the LRSA was complete and the services was running, the council would be automatically added to the www.gov.uk website as a provider. It would also be advertised on the rbwm.gov.uk website and via the council's Communications Department.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr George asked what the council was doing to ensure EU27 residents were informed of the need to apply for Settled Status including vulnerable persons and those in care?

Councillor Dudley responded that a while ago the council had created a section on the website for this; he would ensure it was regularly updated and could easily be accessed from the main webpage. The council would do everything to assist all EU27 residents, in particular those with specific needs.

h) Karen Davies of Park ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health:

Given the Council's public health priorities for 2018-19 of Enabling and Empowering Resilient Communities, Promoting and Supporting Good Mental Health, Social Isolation & Loneliness and Healthy Ageing, what will the council do to support residents, including EU27 citizens, mentally through this time of uncertainty?

Councillor Dudley responded to this question on behalf of Councillor Carroll.

Councillor Dudley responded that he was proud two cabinet members had indicated they had mental health challenges and did a wonderful job in their Lead Member roles. Although there were no specific plans to support people in relation to Brexit, the Royal Borough had a strong commitment to enabling resilient communities and promoting and supporting mental health. There were a wide range of services available to support the communities of the borough across all age ranges in order to maintain and improve their mental and emotional wellbeing. This included all library staff who were in the process of being trained in Making Every Contact Count, which would enable them to have healthy conversations with residents. If they identified that a resident needed support with their wellbeing then they could signpost them to self-help books or wider services for support.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Davies asked how much funding would be made available to fulfill the objectives?

Councillor Dudley responded that in respect of residents' mental health in connection with exiting the EU, whatever financial resources were necessary would be put in should issues arise.

i) The Mayor asked the following question of Councillor Dudley, Leader of the Council, on behalf of the absent Clare Quarman of Clewer South ward:

What is the council doing to pressurise the government to fix the settled status process and mobile phone app issues?

Councillor Dudley responded that the answer to question g above was relevant, and also noted that there had been no formal complaints made to the council's complaints department about this as yet.

The council had a dedicated page on its website for EU citizens with links to useful government sites and the CAB to support EU residents on issues affecting them. The deadline to apply would be 31 December 2020 if the UK left the EU without a deal which was still sometime away. The government was focused on achieving a deal in which case the deadline for applying was extended to 30 June 2021.

j) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Health:

Can you please clarify the appropriate weight to be afforded to Policies ED1 and ED2 of the Borough Local Plan Submission Version in reaching a planning decision?

Councillor Coppinger responded that to provide context he wished to explain that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. The development plan had primacy. The Borough Local Plan submission version was not part of the development plan, it was a relevant material consideration and the policies within it could be afforded weight as such, the weight would differ according to the policy.

Policies ED1 and ED2 related to economic development and employment sites respectively. There were significant unresolved objections to these policies and he was advised, at this time, they carried limited weight as material planning considerations.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that in February the planning department had said that councillors should accord relevant policies and allocations significant weight in the determination of applications, taking into account the extent to which there were unresolved objections to policies. At the moment the Borough Local Plan was neither sound nor unsound but officers appeared to be saying policies could be split between those with resolved objectives carrying significant weight and those with unresolved objections carrying limited weight. Applicants and objectors alike needed certainty therefore he asked if the Lead Member would publish a complete list of emerging policies that officers currently believed had had their objections resolved and would thus be given significant weight at this time?

Councillor Coppinger responded that he would respond in writing as the issue related to specific planning applications.

k) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor M Airey, Lead Member for Environmental Services:

RBWM was awarded £1.31m under the government's "Flexible Homelessness Support Grant" for 2019/20. This is on top of £1.05m/£1.21m from 2017&2018. This ring-fenced grant gives RBWM flexibility to actively prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. How much of the FHSG money has been spent to prevent people needing any temporary accommodation under your s.4(2) HRA2017 duty?

Councillor M Airey responded that the council had spent £87,680 of the grant on Interest Free Loans to prevent homelessness, which was the main spend on prevention. Loans were given at 0% to customers to enable them to secure private rented accommodation by funding a deposit (approximately 6 weeks equivalent rent) and one month's rent in advance. The scheme was discretionary and applicants were assessed against the criteria to ensure those in the greatest need were assisted.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that Councillors McWilliams and Carroll had been actively reaching out to protect homeless people however the public had also seen some extraordinary tweets from Conservative councillors, for example that Slough only had temporary SWEP but the borough had permanent SWEP. The officers of Slough Council had felt moved to say this was not a competition. The government also appeared to say this was not a competition and had issued guidance. In Chapter 2 of the guidance it said that local authorities should work with neighboring authorities. He asked when was the last time the council had talked with local homeless charities and opposite partners at Slough to discuss the idea of collaboration on a joint homelessness strategy?

Councillor M. Airey responded that under Councillor McWilliams there had been regular meetings with borough partners and homelessness charities. He had not been in post that long but planned to do so in the coming months. SWEP had been in place since 22 November 2018 and would be in place until 22 March 2019, regardless of temperature. He did not control the RBWM Conservative Twitter account.

95. PETITIONS

No petitions were received

96. BUDGET REPORT 2019/20

Members considered the Budget 2019/20.

Members noted that the following petition, with over 1000 signatures, had been received by the council on 21 February 2019

'We the undersigned petition The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to censure the Cabinet and reject the proposed budget for 2019/20.'

David Knowles-Leake, lead petitioner, explained that the petition had originated before Christmas when members of UNISON had been presented with a council document that purported to have budget pressures or cuts in services of £9m, therefore a number of people were told their jobs were at risk. The figure subsequently reduced to £6.8m as the government provided a grant of approximately £2m for children's services. Mr Knowles-Leake explained that he was Chairman of the local Labour Party. There had been a lot of support for the petition; at one point on a Saturday it was being signed by 200 people per hour.

Mr Knowles-Leake stated that in his view the proposed budget was not fit for purpose. It was important for what it did not say rather than what it did say. The budget was presented with cuts or savings of £6.8m and increased spending of £11.2m. In reality the overall increase in spending was just £0.9m. Despite the £2m government grant, council tax would increase by £1.9m and £3.5m was being added to reserves. Appendix O provided an analysis of risks. Mr Knowles-Leake commented that it was actually an analysis of uncertainty and assumed probability attached itself sensibly to the discussion of uncertainty. With percentages rounded off, three appropriate levels were given for reserves. At the bottom was £4m appropriate for one year. £5.8m was deemed appropriate for 18 months. £8.9m was deemed appropriate to cover all manner of risks. He asked why did reserves need to be set at £11.8m? What was the council not telling the public as to why such a high level was needed? What kind of problems were envisaged down the line? Were all the development projects going as well as they could? Was a negative result of the planning review expected? There were a lot of people who would like to look at the budget and take a different approach that related to the benefits of people, not property.

Councillor Saunders paid tribute to all of the Directors and Heads of Service from across the council, and their officer teams, for the diligent and professional manner in which they had worked with their respective Cabinet Lead Members, and to the expertise and devotion of the Head of Finance, the Senior Accountancy and Finance Ops Lead and the Finance Team to assemble the budget for next year. It had been a truly collaborative effort and he saluted all of the officers and Members involved.

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The budget proposed that base Council Tax would increase by 2.99% to £961.33 at Band D, remaining the lowest Band D Council Tax outside of London by some distance. The Adult Social Care Levy was proposed to remain at £74.74 at Band D, bringing the additional funding to support the needs of the elderly to £20.7m over four years, and enabling a spend of £21.4m more on these vulnerable and deserving residents, over the same period.

Increases in spending were anticipated next year by £5m on children's, adults and public health services, largely to support children in care, with additional government grants of £1.3m and £2.8m of targeted efficiencies and smart buying of services identified by officers, to help fund the growing needs of some of the most vulnerable young residents in local communities.

It was anticipated that £700,000 of additional income would come from parking, whilst continuing to support residents by investing £1.3m to pay for no increases, for the second year running, in time-based parking charges for Advantage Card holders. An additional £1m would be invested in residents' refuse and recycling, to remain firmly one of the dwindling number of councils to still provide weekly emptying of every resident's bin.

The budget planned for £600,000 more income from property investments and officers had identified and verified £2m of efficiencies outside of children's, adults and public health services, including those arising from a somewhat reduced number of councillors. The Conservative administration proposed to reinvest this by spending more on other resident priorities, in environmental health, enforcement, trees, libraries, leisure centres, Norden Farm, the Guildhall, York House Windsor resident access, and maintaining unprofitable but important bus routes, and continuing to allocate £300,000 each year for the critical grants the council awarded on residents' behalf to charities and other organisations supporting the vulnerable, the homeless, the mentally and physically challenged, the old and the young, and arts, sports and community groups across the borough, many of whom depended on these council grants to continue their great work.

Of some significance to the budget next year was a plan to contribute an additional £4m into the employees' pension scheme, bringing the effective employer pension contribution rate to 27.2%, a level which most in the private sector could only dream of being invested in their pension. Noting that the required contribution rates into statutory auto-enrolment schemes were 3% for the employer and 5% for the employee. The council's employee rate was between 5.5 and 6.5%.

Councillor Saunders explained that the future for business rate retention beyond next year remained ambiguous, which would answer some of the questions raised by the lead petitioner, although the council anticipated receiving £2.2m, through the decision to be part of the Berkshire retention pilot group. Beyond that it was genuinely unknown. Given this, and the other uncertainties evident in the economy, the administration proposed not to plan to spend this income, and instead use it and a further £1.3m to prudently increase reserves by £3.5m.

Total gross capital investment of £30.4m was proposed for the next year, including £12.7m in highways, pavements and bridges, £10.3m in resident facilities in education, schools, leisure, trees, libraries and green open spaces, £4.5m in new refuse collection vehicles and £2.9m in other infrastructure. These investments, when

added to those already underway or likely to arise during the coming year, indicated that the £57m of borrowing inherited 12 years ago from the previous administration would rise to £85m at the end of the next year. However, unlike the £57m, the council had a clear expectation that the capital receipts from regeneration investments and developer contributions would fully fund this and the future infrastructure investment the borough required, leaving the council debt free in the medium term future, should it wish to be so.

This was a budget for all in the borough: the young, the elderly, the vulnerable, the council's employees and every Council taxpayer, who expected their council to tax them fairly, and expected the council to prioritise the services they valued and help those less able or unable to help themselves. This was a budget for today, tomorrow and for many years to come.

Councillor Dudley thanked officers from all departments and Councillor Saunders for the wonderful job done in producing the budget. There were only two political parties that could run the country and the Royal Borough, the Conservative Party or the Labour Party. The Liberal Democrats, as could be seen in any poll, had been destroyed. The Independent Group was taking its votes every day. The petition had been submitted by the local Labour group. In Slough, Band D council tax for 2018/19 was £1578.53 whereas in the Royal Borough it was £933.42. This was a difference of £654.11. The council tax contribution rate for low earners or those on benefits in Slough was 20%; in the Royal Borough it was 8%. In the Royal borough SWEP had been invoked in November 2018 regardless of temperature and had just been extended for another month at a cost of £50,000.

Councillor Jones thanked officers, especially the Head of Finance, for their hard work and forbearance with the onslaught of her questions in the last four weeks. Producing a balanced budget for next year would have been challenging.

In Full Council in February 2015 she had warned against cutting council tax. She had brought attention to a graph produced by the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance that stated that as far as to 2019/2020, central funding would continue to reduce and the costs relating to children's social care, adult social care and waste management would continue to rise. The administration did not listen then and she doubted that they would listen now. It was actually too late for them to listen to her or to residents.

The budget consisted of two parts: the revenue budget and the capital budget
The revenue budget (sometimes called the services budget) paid for all the operational services of the council: waste collection, social care, school admissions, planning etc. The revenue budget must balance each year, it was not possible to borrow money to prop up the revenue budget. Last year Members had heard from the Lead Member that 'The council's innovative and prudent management enabled it to propose only a 1.95% increase in base council tax alongside the 3% social care levy'. The council had shouldered a rising demand to support more young and older vulnerable residents and the 'council entered these challenging few years with finances fit for purpose....The projected budget for 19/20 was currently balanced with a 1.95% increase in council tax.'

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Twelve months down the line and it was forecast by the end of March that the budget would be £7.7m overspent before mitigations, necessitating £4m of savings. This overspend was mainly made up of fatuous savings targets and unrecognised demand.

Councillor Jones reminded Members of the 'balanced' budget in 19/20. To achieve that now would require mitigations against another £10.6m of extra service expenditure on a net £81m service budget. That was 13% of the total net services budget, and £3.6m of that was the rising demand in children social care that she had warned against but the Lead Member had reassured her was 'shouldered'. This was also in light of a 2.99% council tax rise, not the 1.95% stated by Councillor Saunders the previous year. This was the result of what the administration called 'innovative and prudent' management.

This resulted in another round of forced and completely unexpected mitigations. In this context it meant redundancies, reductions in services and capacity within the council. The council had outsourced over half its officers since 2011 and had lost approximately 200 employees completely. The council now operated with one third of the directly employed officers than it did in 2011. This could be seen as a good thing, a lean machine. However in some departments this had meant a loss of skill set and a loss of the capacity to cope with the non-routine. The council did provide some very good process driven services such as waste collection, but when it came to the more challenging aspects for instance the BLP, the Waterway, Stafferton Way, solutions for homeless reduction, and addressing the need for social housing, it was severely lacking in the capacity of officers to ensure a strong outcome.

Unexpected and unplanned-for redundancies and tasking officers to 'find' savings (when the council had already gone through substantial 'transformation') were indicative of a loss of control and could not be dismissed as due to the national pressures.

In children's services the millions of savings needed would obviously mean reductions in the non-statutory areas such as children's centres, youth services and school improvement and the increase in parking charges for those without an Advantage card may not yield the increased income. There had already been a change in parking habits following the previous year's rises.

There was a great deal of emphasis on the capital budget in the report, not surprising given the state of the revenue budget. The capital budget was to provide the infrastructure, the buildings, the roads, the parks and open spaces. Next year the council would spend (excluding external funding) £19.5m on capital compared to £65.6m this year. This then reduced to £8m in 20/21 and £3.9m in 21/22. There was no other capital funding indicated, no funding for the Oaks leisure centre, no funding for schools physical expansion beyond the existing program. This was because the council did not have the money to spend and would need to borrow to fund these projects or realise receipts from selling assets.

In fact there was no extensive capital programme detailed in the capital summary (up to 2022) but in Appendix L it showed that the capital financing requirement increased up to a possible £228m by 2021, resulting in interest payments of £8.1m by 2022.

There was also an estimated rise in the council tax of 1.95% to 2.99% a year for the next three years. With the increase indicated in the budget, council tax on a band D

property would rise to £1036.07 including the adult social care levy, close to the highest council tax rate in the last 10 years, and it was expected to continue to rise by another £88 by 2022 to a RBWM council tax record busting £1124.90 .

Councillor Jones stated that she believed the savings had gone too far. The Opposition would like to ensure the non-statutory services such as youth services, schools support and early years were not impacted by these savings as they were such an important prevention service. The Opposition would also like to ensure that there was a more sustainable plan put in place to deal with the underlying causes of homelessness and to offer more support to those who found themselves anticipating homelessness.

There should be an in-house highways planning resource and an in-house highways engineer resource to filter queries and provide first-line viability decisions. The Opposition would like to reverse the decision to allocate the Apprenticeship Levy to schools that had no opportunity to take advantage of the Levy for the year 2019/2020 and look to review it in the next budget. These were not all re-occurring costs. Some were one off impact/outcome based investments, some were preventative measures ensuring early intervention and would therefore reduce costs further down the line, and some were just the right thing to do to not add to the financial pressures schools were under.

Councillor Jones tabled an amendment to the budget comprising an additional recommendation which would leave a minimum of £10.66m in reserves, which was 4.86m above recommended levels:

- x) Deputy Director and Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and the Leader of the Opposition to transfer up to 1,039,000 from reserves (dependent on detailed costings by officers) to the revenue budget to ensure the non-statutory services such as Youth Services, Schools support and Early Years are not impacted by these savings, to put in place a more sustainable plan to deal with the underlying causes of homelessness and to offer more support to those who find themselves anticipating homelessness, to put in place an in-house highways planning resource and an in-house highways engineer resource to filter queries and provide first-line viability decisions, reverse the decision to allocate the Apprenticeship Levy to schools that have no opportunity to take advantage of the Levy for the year 2019/2020.

Councillor Jones explained that this was a budget that had had to put right the decisions made by the administration in past years: council tax reductions to look good, decisions that had led to non-achievable savings targets, a reduction in capacity within the council, overspending on projects and projects not being delivered within a timescale due to a lack of control and capacity, and an administration that now needed to borrow for any major new capital spending decisions it made and pay it back from the receipts from Maidenhead Golf Club. Given the status of the BLP and the call for sites made only the day before she did not think that was going to happen any time soon. Innovative and prudent certainly were not the words she would use for the last eight years of political budgeting strategy.

Councillor Hill seconded the motion.

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Councillor Saunders stated that he did not accept the amendment in its current form, therefore Members debated the proposed amendment. He deeply regretted that this was the first time he had seen the motion as there were a number of elements that would require clarification. He could not support the suggestion that Members present should make such a transfer regardless of any discussion with relevant Lead Members or Heads of Service. Therefore he would be encouraging his colleagues to vote against the amendment but he would be willing to meet with Councillor Jones to discuss the issues raised.

Councillor Hill stated that he was disappointed that every attempt by the NTA made to put something right was thwarted by the Conservative group. Councillor Jones had put forward an excellent proposal to preserve services and the response given was simply 'no'.

Councillor Jones stated that unfortunately Opposition Members were only able to see the budget when it was published for the public. If it had come to the Opposition in December or early January they may have been able to make more suggestions. Instead they only had six weeks to get their head around something that the administration had been working on for six months. She had made a number of suggestions at Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings.

Councillor N. Airey commented that no Opposition members had come to her to discuss any issues in children's services. There were good reasons behind what was proposed. For example, 91% of pupils attended the 88% good and outstanding schools whereas it was 72% ten years previously. Money was being invested into schools: £100,000 was being invested in the seven schools requiring improvement. There was a natural saving as 72% became 88%. There was an in-year saving in school improvement as work was being done. To say more money needed to be transferred for the schools support budget did not reflect reality. She would have been happy to explain this to any of the Opposition Members if they had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings or had requested a meeting with her directly.

Councillor Quick commented that the Opposition always said they did not have enough time to read reports, yet had not given any time for Members to consider their complex amendment. Members had heard the reassurances that the reserves were needed and if further costs arose they could be drawn upon.

Councillor E. Wilson commented that he had sat on two Overview and Scrutiny Panels and had not heard one single proposal from an Opposition Member.

Councillor Stretton stated that she had raised questions at the Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel whereas not a single Conservative Member had raised any issues. The amendment proposed was a perfectly reasonable recommendation to make the budget more palatable and to support the vulnerable.

Councillor Carroll commented that the Homelessness Strategy had been updated and was a robust and comprehensive document. A number of partners and stakeholders had been involved. Documents such as the JSNA and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy were public documents that helped codify the Homelessness Strategy.

Councillor Walters commented that he was sick and tired of people on the left saying the Conservatives did not have a heart. He provided the example of a homeless person he had encountered on Holyport Green the week before. He had engaged the man in conversation and found that he knew the family. The man had not eaten for four days. Councillor Walters phoned the councillor line who said they would send someone from the support team straight away.

Councillor Werner commented that Councillor Walter's story revealed that if you knew a councillor or they knew your family, you were more likely to get help. If the councillor knew the special number to call you were also more likely to get help. Councillor Werner commented that there were many more people not in this situation who also needed help.

Councillor Bicknell commented that Councillor Walters' story was not the only one. He had encountered a homeless person after a council meeting in November. SWEP had been invoked ten days previously. Councillor Bicknell had called the control room, which was the usual out of hour's number, and got help for the individual within one hour. The borough had invoked SWEP regardless of the temperature. If this individual had been in the neighbouring town he would likely not have received any help.

Councillor Jones commented that to go through the budget in five weeks, to fully understand and ask questions of officers, was not an easy task. She was one of the few councillors who had gone through every page of the budget. She had proposed a motion because she believed in it. She commented on the case of a resident who had reported to housing three weeks before she was due to be evicted; she had waited until one day before eviction for a call back due to capacity issues. There were good things in the budget but she would like to discuss a number of areas. The administration may say they could be done but the recommendation would give the commitment.

Members voted whether or not to accept the amendment by Councillor Jones:

x) Deputy Director and Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and the Leader of the Opposition to transfer up to 1,039,000 from reserves (dependent on detailed costings by officers) to the revenue budget to ensure the non-statutory services such as Youth Services, Schools support and Early Years are not impacted by these savings, to put in place a more sustainable plan to deal with the underlying causes of homelessness and to offer more support to those who find themselves anticipating homelessness, to put in place an in-house highways planning resource and an in-house highways engineer resource to filter queries and provide first-line viability decisions, reverse the decision to allocate the Apprenticeship Levy to schools that have no opportunity to take advantage of the Levy for the year 2019/2020.

Nine councillors voted for the motion: Councillors Beer, Da Costa, Hill, Hollingsworth, Jones, Majeed, Sharma, Stretton and Werner. 38 Councillors voted against the motion: Councillors M. Airey, N. Airey, Alexander, Bateson, Bhatti, Bicknell, Bowden, Bullock, Burbage, Cannon, Carroll, Clark, Coppinger, Diment, Dudley, Gilmore, Hilton, Hunt, Ilyas, Lenton, Lion, Love, Luxton, Mills, Muir, Quick, C. Rayner, S. Rayner, Saunders, Sharma, Sharp, Sharpe, Shelim, Story, Walters, D. Wilson, E. Wilson and Yong.

The motion therefore fell. Members returned to debating the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Carroll stated that this was a crucial budget as it set the financial future for the council. It was residents' money and it was therefore councillors' incumbent responsibility to spend, invest and allocate that public treasure wisely and prudently. Crucial, because at its core was a critical focus on his great passion, building on the administration's strong and uncompromising record of protecting the vulnerable and delivering high quality services to the best possible standard.

As Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, he wished to focus his remarks on this imperative and what the budget meant in this regard. Since 2016-2017, the council had increased funding in adult social care. Additional resource for adult social care had been made available through various means, including the option to apply a precept through the council tax, the Improved Better Care Fund and adult social care grants, including winter pressures funding. In the case of the precept, the administration, unlike other councils, took the full precept at the earliest opportunity allowing it to invest early in critical capacity and infrastructure upfront. For additional grants, this was something himself and the Leader had lobbied hard for, and secured, from the Government following direct discussions with the constituency MP for Maidenhead, the Prime Minister Theresa May.

The council had used the new resource to invest in services, which also showed that the council had maintained investment in those services, in excess of the new resource. Through Optalis, the contract for the Royal Borough for the delivery of adult social care services was £33 million. The overall investment in adult social care was around £50 million.

The total amount of new funding for adult social care since 2016 totalled £20.72 million. This included three years of precept through council tax, and three years of Improved Better Care Fund funding. In addition, the council received the aforementioned one-off grants totalling £1.74 million. In the same time period, the Royal Borough allocated a net £21.4 million to adult social care activities, which was £675,000 in excess of the new resource. The strategy was to invest early to build the resilience and capacity to cope with increased demand driven by the fantastic reality of people living older, but indeed with increased chronicity of conditions and expense.

Additional funding was important, but strategy and delivery were just as important. First, the Royal Borough recognised the importance of prevention and self-care. It had ensured that a significant amount of funding from the new investment had been allocated to these areas, particularly in relation to mental health and drug and alcohol services, in order to prevent needs escalating to statutory adult social care services. In the case of the excellent drugs and alcohol service, Resilience, Public Health England recently ranked it one of the best services in the area.

Additional investment had been allocated to a number of areas for the benefit of vulnerable residents including:

- Increasing the number of nursing dementia beds in Queen's Court, Windsor, to support reduction in delayed transfers of care. A one-off investment of £170,000 secured the conversion, funding specialist equipment and furnishings to support

people living with dementia. Having recently visited, he had been impressed to see how personal and homely this wonderful facility was and this had been confirmed by CQC who had now rated it Good.

- The council had funded a dedicated Home from Hospital Programme including an 'IRIS' hospital discharge multi-agency team at an additional £120,000 ongoing annual investment, a seven day Short Term Support and Reablement team, and additional Occupational Therapists, an ongoing £143,000 per annum, to ensure that people were discharged from hospital in a timely manner. As a result, the borough was one of the highest performing councils nationally in preventing delayed transfers of care. Overall performance to date was 0.5 against a target of 1.5. This was an awesome performance by the council's tremendous staff.
- The council valued its staff, therefore it had funded inflationary increases for providers where many other boroughs had not done so. This was in addition to funding performance payments for provider staff committing to work guaranteed shift patterns over the winter period. This additional funding had ensured that providers were able to respond quickly to requests for support so that people had care where, and when, they needed it. This had driven the excellent delays performance so that people needing support in their own home had zero delays.

There was no more important responsibility than protecting residents, particularly those most vulnerable. The petition was misleading, misrepresentative and misplaced. No cuts had been made in his service area. There was more investment, more focus on prevention and outstanding delivery by staff. As the Lead Member and therefore one of the foremost advocates for vulnerable people, would continue to do this and follow the vision to ensure that those who needed care always received it.

Councillor Sharma commented that the focus should be to bring people together and to look after residents. It was incredibly sad to see homeless people in the town centre and people relying on foodbanks and charities. Some of the most vulnerable would be hit by the callous cuts and increase in council tax. The increases over the last three years including the current year amounted to a 12% increase. For the next three years there was a proposed 3% rise. If added to the 12% already in place this equated to a 21% increase. He had heard so many times that council tax was a regressive tax and the administration did not want to take money from people's pockets. What could be said to the elderly and those on a fixed income who already struggled to pay? Council tax bands were linked to historic property values and therefore could be false. Most of the properties on the borough were likely to be in higher bands.

Councillor Sharma commented that buses were central to the future of communities, they were a lifeline for some people. A long term investment strategy in buses was needed to maximise benefits. Improvements could be made through technology, for example through a demand response service. The Highways and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel had received a number of presentations but to date nothing had happened due to a lack of political will to bring initiatives forward. There was no allocation for funding of buses in the budget. He feared that after the election services would be scrapped if they were not commercially viable.

Councillor N. Airey commented that here were so many rumours that the council was trying to expose, undermine and leave the vulnerable in children's and adult services but this was so far from the truth. The council was investing £3.1m more in children's

services, evident in the contract with Achieving for Children (AfC). Across the country the demand on services to protect vulnerable children was increasing. There were 75,420 looked after children in England, the highest level since the 1980s. This was reflected in the local position with 45 more Education Health and Care plans than a year ago (6%) and additional workload at the front door requiring 16% more staff.

The council was working to prevent children from coming into care and protect those in care or in vulnerable situations; the funding followed and was in place to deliver. The majority of the spend within children's services delivered on statutory duties to keep children safe and have access to education. The council spent £8m alone on placements, never mind the child protection and associated services. Approximately £2.4m was spent a year on home to school transport for both mainstream and additional needs pupils. Development of Education, Health and Care plans (943 at the 31/1/2019) was in addition to the DSG funded placement costs.

Despite the financial pressures, performance of children's services had steadily improved year on year since transferring to Achieving for Children, and the Royal Borough was meeting or exceeding targets including:

- Children receiving a review within six weeks of birth.
- Single assessments completed within 45 working days; and
- Initial Child Protection Conferences held within timescales.

There had been many reports that there were cuts to children's services in the budget which would particularly harm the most vulnerable. These were fundamentally untrue. As was evident in the budget papers there was a net increase in the contractual arrangements with AfC of £3,170,000, from £21,356,000 to a total of £24,526,000.

The contract with Achieving for Children was for the delivery of all statutory and discretionary children's services in the Royal Borough. The budget met the level of expenditure required to protect vulnerable children and continued to invest for the benefit of all children in the Borough. It supported 279 FTE staff which was the same number of FTE as a year ago, because that was the resource necessary to fulfil our duty to vulnerable children.

Councillor N. Airey highlighted a number of investments:

- £100,000 of support for seven 'Requires Improvement' schools that were striving to be Good or Outstanding.
- £93,000 to develop and support an offer for care leavers up to the age of 25
- £60,000 for continued investment in social worker training units each year to sustain a vibrant workforce
- £100,000 for provision of youth sessions for ages 8 to 18 across the borough
- £100,000 for provision of Children's Centres sessions for families and young children

The most significant factor in the additional £3.2m going into the budget was the spending required to meet demand. This had been made up of elements of increased cost, offset by some efficiencies and savings in delivery. Growth elements were estimated at almost £3.5 million for 2019/20, a reasonable forecast of a net growth of one more child coming into the care of the local authority each month. This was also based on an estimated inflation figure for the costs of external placements and continued investment in the SEND service resources.

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While facing the increased demand, council officers had worked very hard to secure reductions in cost whilst delivering the same service to vulnerable children, young people and their families. The £1,452,000 of targeted efficiencies shown on the savings appendix of the budget report were ongoing for example:

- Reducing the proportion of social care and early help posts covered by agency staff from 21% to 10%
- Securing better rates for long-term placements for young people who need stable non-family placements

There was so much going on to protect children, as well as investment in schools and council tax exemption for care leavers. There was so much in the budget that was good for children and families; she therefore commended the budget to council.

Councillor Hill stated that the previous year he had dismissed the budget with a word that was now banned in the chamber. He had been proved right to be so scathing since the budget overspent by £7.4m showing the most appalling mismanagement.

In relation to this year's budget he commended the officers for putting together a good budget under the most difficult of circumstances. He noted the need to put right last year's excesses but questioned the level of circa £10.4m of cuts.

There were more cuts to the officer cohort, commensurate worries about service delivery with potentially real cuts to services with only statutory services surviving unscathed. This was surely not a good way to run the borough.

Some of the factors contributing to the wasted cash were:

- Outrageous legal costs fighting residents over the Vicus Way planning application
- The incredible HR mystery with the loss and re-hire of the Head of Paid Service
- Profligate spending of tax-payers' cash on North Korean style self-congratulatory banners, a glossy pull-out in *Around the Royal Borough*, and a Maidenhead regeneration movie, all just before the May elections. The daddy of them all, the failing Borough Local Plan.

There was also a forecast debt loading of circa £228m within a few years' time. Councillor Hill questioned how this would be paid for. One of the ways the selling off the family silver in the form of taxpayer owned land. With the big one being the sale of Maidenhead Golf Course which is far from a done deal, despite what some would have people believe. Without a massive injection of cash or cuts, upon cuts, upon cuts RBWM was heading for the financial rocks like the good ship Titanic.

Councillor Hill supported Councillor Jones's common-sense approach and implored the administration to think again about their approach.

Councillor Da Costa May commented that for the last six weeks it had been the churches in Windsor and 120 volunteers operating the 'More Than a Shelter' project, and not SWEP, who had kept 80% of the homeless off the Windsor streets, offering them shelter, care, hot food, cleaning facilities, friendship, a community and fun.

In relation to the budget there were just three lines of figures for complicated services like AfC, parking, highways maintenance etc; income, expenditure, and one minus the

other. There was a lack of information to allow councillors to do their job properly, to see trends and patterns, to recognize anomalies and discrepancies, in other words to effectively scrutinise the complex services contained in the budget.

Despite requesting information, some weeks ago, this information had not been provided, preventing him from scrutinising the budget on behalf of residents.

Last year's budget had got the parking income woefully wrong. It predicted too great a usage of parking spaces. The result was an unexpected loss of £800,000 which was made good by cutting costs and services in other areas. In this year's budget, he would expect parking income to therefore be lower than last year's incorrect budget but it was £400,000 higher. It seemed this would be achieved by increasing parking charges by 20% to non-Advantage card holders, and visitors to the borough.

Councillor Da Costa questioned whether the steep price increases would further depress car park usage and so result in further losses of £800,000 later in the year. Would the council then have to cut more costs and services unexpectedly, say to children and young people, the elderly or staff, who were under greater pressure than ever before? What effect would price increases have on visitor numbers and footfall in the retail areas? Would this result in a further drop in retail income and the closure of more shops on the high streets and town centres and a loss of business rates and jobs?

Councillor Da Costa addressed Councillor E. Wilson to say even the proposal for £180,000 of Dedworth Road/Hatch Lane/Parsonage Lane improvements did not trump these concerns and uncertainties. As a result, he would be forced to abstain.

Councillor M. Airey outlined some of the priorities in relation to homelessness:

- Reducing the number of people becoming homeless
- Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation
- Supporting people into good quality safe accommodation
- Reducing rough sleeping

Utilisation of the homelessness prevention and relief fund and grants in a creative way to prevent people from becoming homeless was very important. The coordinated project Making Every Adult Matter had required a specialist role in the council. SWEP had already been spoken about. The Grants Panel had agreed a grant to the Windsor Homelessness Project to help in their endeavours.

Councillor M. Airey thanked the officers, in particular the Housing services Manager and the Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships for working collaboratively to support local residents.

In relation to parking Councillor M. Airey apologised for the issues people were having with the new parking machines. The barcode problems had now been resolved.

Councillor Werner commented that Councillor Saunders would not be at the council to deliver the budget therefore he would not have to take the rap when things started to go wrong or explain when ridiculous targets were set. Councillor Werner had called the previous year's budget a 'gambler's' budget; Councillor Saunders had lost the bet with a £5m overspend. The increased income from parking charges was fantasy.

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Income in the current year had been £800,000 less than predicted and now charges were being increased. Councillor Werner could not see how a saving of £1.5m could be made with AfC. Spending had been rocketing in children's services therefore this was not a credible prediction. Councillor Werner commented on the fantastic services at Pinkneys Green Children's Centre. He requested the Lead Member's assurances that the services at the centre would not be at risk over the next four years. Councillor Werner commented in relation to the saving of £200,000 for temporary accommodation that there has been examples of people almost being bullied into leaving and intimidatory practices.

Councillor M. Airey cautioned Councillor Werner to be careful about referring to individual resident cases in the public domain.

Councillor Hilton commented that when the Conservatives took over from the last Liberal Democrat administration, within three weeks he had found a £1m hole in parking revenue income. Councillor Hilton commented that transparency was very important to the administration and on page 59 of the report Councillor Saunders had provided a table that showed budget variances in the current financial year and budget changes for 2019/20. Despite some financial headwinds reserves were broadly as they were at the start of the financial year and in excess of £7m. At the same time throughout the year the council continued to do what it did best, delivering excellent services to residents. This was what the residents' survey told the council.

Members had listened to Lead Members advise of their plans to maintain and, in many cases, improve services to residents. The Opposition may say the council was not doing enough but it was interesting to compare with other councils. Councils up and down the country were struggling to make ends meet. The State of Local Government Finance Survey 2019 published by the Local Government Information Unit demonstrated that many councils were planning cuts in services:

- 50% were proposing cuts in arts and culture.
- 45% planned cuts to parks and leisure spending whilst the council was building a new leisure centre at Braywick and had longer term plans for a leisure centre in Ascot.
- 38% would cut road maintenance whilst the council had increased investment to £12.7m next year and planned to maintain this for 4 years.
- 33% would be cutting library services which the council believed were vital not only to support the cultural offer but as community hubs.
- 22% were reducing waste collection. Councillor M. Airey would be making a proposal to secure weekly bin collections for the next eight years. The borough would be amongst just 25% of councils who continued to do so.
- 18% were cutting support to the CAB whilst last year the council entered into a 3-year agreement to support the vital work of Maidenhead CAB by increasing their grant by one third to £132,000 a year.
- Lastly more than 50% of councils planned to use reserves to support their 2019/2020 budget whereas the council planned to increase reserves by £3.5 million to put the council in a strong position to manage the considerable uncertainties of the coming year.

It was an excellent budget and deserved unanimous support.

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Councillor Ilyas explained that in addition to being a Member of the council, he had held responsibility of being the Chairman of the Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel over the previous four years.

Members may be aware that making projections or predictions for budgeting for Adult Social Care was not an easy task as small variations in the health of vulnerable adults in the borough could result in additional provision being required for those individuals. This was a responsibility that the Royal Borough took very seriously and it was what residents deserved.

Over the last four years there had been times where additional funding had been needed both in Adult Services and Social Care Services. As a borough, the council was fortunate to have excellent officers and Lead Members who had put into place sources of funding that meant that the most vulnerable citizens were not ever disadvantaged. They had responded positively to scrutiny from the panel that he chaired.

It was pleasing to note that in the budget the council had increased its reserves. Should other streams of funding be exhausted or unavailable due to uncertainties, the council would still have ample funds to ensure that residents of the borough could continue to receive the excellent services which were provided to all. In the budget, the council had increased funding and in Adult Services had made efficiencies without compromising on the standard of services to residents. Councillor Ilyas believed that through the budget, the residents could be confident that they would continue to receive the excellent services that they deserved.

Councillor Gilmore welcomed the budget and drew attention to the increase in Adult Social Care. This brought much benefit to the residents of Pinkneys Green. He also welcomed the additional security measures that the investment of £1.4m in CCTV would deliver including an additional camera site in Oaken Grove.

Councillor Gilmore read out a speech by the absent Councillor McWilliams:

All local authority ships were sailing into the difficulties of ever-increasing pressures on adult social care and children's services, however not all ships were sailing with as strong sails as RBWM. There had been examples across the country of local authorities facing substantial financial uncertainty, which put into perspective the success locally. Nothing simply happened in politics, everything was a choice. The council had chosen to protect funding to the most vulnerable and invest in huge new infrastructure projects to support the growing borough.

There were a number of good news stories for Cox Green in the budget: not least the continued upgrading of the local road network, which had seen £500,000 spent on the Cox Green Road Improvement Project and the £350,000 investment in Ockwells and Thrift Wood Park.

There was also £20,000 set aside for Cox Green Community Centre. Councillor McWilliams had been campaigning for the last two years to have the Community Centre car park expanded. Cox Green Community Centre was a popular and well-used facility providing space for community events, groups and activities for residents of all ages. As the population of Cox Green had grown and Cox Green School had been expanded, the popularity of the Community Centre had increased and the car park had become increasingly full. This had resulted in numerous occasions where

residents, particularly older residents, who were less mobile, had not been able to attend events at the community centre. The car park was regularly at capacity and without additional car parking spaces the community centre may not be viable in the long-term, which would be a great loss to the local community. Last year, he had organised a series of round table meetings between RBWM, Cox Green Parish Council, Cox Green Community Centre and Cox Green School. They had met to discuss the pressure on the car park and decide on a solution to the problem. A draft scheme was presented and agreed to deliver 51 new spaces in two phases. Officers had confirmed that the first phase would cost approximately £150,000. There were a number of details that needed ironing out and the £20,000 would enable necessary feasibility works to be carried out. Cox Green Parish Council had signalled their willingness to explore contributing to the scheme and the Community Centre management committee, of which councillor McWilliams was a member, gave their support to the scheme. It would be a tragedy if the momentum behind delivering the much needed expansion were lost. With this in mind, Councillor McWilliams asked Cabinet to consider committing to deliver the project subject to the feasibility study and negotiations with Cox Green Parish Council on their contributions, both of which may reduce the overall cost to RBWM.

The project has been long in the making and he hoped a commitment could be agreed to deliver the much needed new car park extension. He was happy to continue working with Cabinet colleagues and the other key stakeholders involved to deliver the scheme for our residents.

The council was on the cusp of something special in Maidenhead, there could be no doubt that the town was approaching a critical moment. If the council kept the course, kept its resolve and continued with a resolute focus on delivering the the long-held dream of regeneration the town residents had long desired could be created.

Councillor E. Wilson focussed on the audit and risk elements of preparing a budget. Councillor Saunders had generously given his time when Members asked questions. The budget had been set against a difficult background but had been prepared with the advice of the external auditors. There was a robust and improving approach to risk management. A very strong surplus in collection services was an indicator that the council was able to collect the taxes it was setting. It was clear things were working well in terms of the Cabinet managing emerging issues along with commissioning partners. He agreed with Councillor Sharma's point on bus subsidies; an extra £150,000 was proposed in the budget. In relation to the capital programme he had seen a leaflet by the West Windsor Residents Association a few years previously saying the Old Windsor Firestation Arts Centre was about to close. With £0.5m investment from the council, it was open for business. Dedworth needed investment; the budget delivered for Dedworth.

Councillor S. Rayner commented that Councillor Saunders had delivered the budget with integrity and commitment to residents. She highlighted a number of areas within her portfolio:

- A planning application for the Oaks Leisure Centre would be put in shortly.
- £65,000 would be invested in road improvements in Eton Wick
- £300,000 would be invested in tree planting and maintenance
- She was proud of progress at the Old Court; a further £63,000 of investment was planned.

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- Investment in libraries included £40,000 in Eton, £11,000 in Datchet, £15,000 in Cox Green and £23,000 in Dedworth.
- £50,000 had been allocated to redecorate the Register officer
- £150,000 would be invested in improving the external walls of the Guildhall

Councillor Beer commented that there had been a number of comparisons with Slough Borough during the debate but it had been overlooked that Slough did not have the tax base that the Royal Borough had and therefore it was not a fair comparison. Councillor Beer had been lobbying for safety improvements at the Guildhall as people were putting flags up on slippery wet surfaces; no improvements had been funded in the budget.

Councillor Stretton welcomed the funding for the Old Court. She also noted funding for Norden Farm. However, community theatre groups who used the Desborough Suite theatre were being ignored. A few years previously a number of improvements were identified to bring the theatre up to modern standards including disabled access to the stage and to enable it to be a community entertainment centre in the town. She had been assured that £2m was in the budget for these improvements however this had then been reduced to £650,000, then £8,000. The town hall car park was due to be turned into flats, therefore she questioned where theatre goers would park, many of whom were elderly. The council was not building a borough or a town for everyone.

Councillor Bicknell highlighted that £4m was invested in highways in 2018/19; a further £3m was proposed for 2019/20. Funding was also available from the LEP including £4.5m for Maidenhead station improvements. £200,000 had been allocated for 'find and fix' items outside the Volker contract. A new permits team had been set up at Tinkers Lane to issue permits to utility companies who wished to undertake roadworks, to minimise overruns. £1.5m of funding had been identified for Windsor public realm.

Councillor Saunders concluded that after 12 eventful and fulfilling years as a Borough councillor, leading Planning, Regeneration, Corporate Performance and now Finance, most would know he was not standing for re-election this May. It was time for him to focus elsewhere the talents that had been generously acknowledged. He sincerely hoped that he left his Cabinet Finance position in good shape for the future.

Councils up and down the country were facing significant pressures, for example Northamptonshire, Birmingham, Lancashire, Suffolk, Torbay, and Hartlepool. The inevitable and sometimes unforeseeable demands, particularly in council care services, had overtaken their resilience and skills and had left them unstable. RBWM was not immune to unexpected substantial financial variances, as had been seen in the last year, but the challenge was whether the officers and Members collaborated professionally and, with a cool head, maintained the financial clarity and confidence required. His colleagues have shown last year how this was done, and done well.

Councillor Saunders highlighted how the council compared now to the financial intentions of the average English Council in the areas most important to residents. According to a recent and reliable survey from the Local Government Information Unit:

- 53% of Councils planned to tap into their reserves in the coming year; the Royal Borough did not.
- 24% intended to reduce children's care services; the Royal Borough did not.

- 45% planned reductions to parks and leisure; the Royal Borough did not.
- 38% expected to spend less on roads; the Royal Borough did not.
- 22% intended to reduce their waste collection; the Royal Borough did not.

Hartlepool Borough Council was working towards a Band D Council Tax which exceeded £2,000 next year, twice that of the Royal Borough. Their recent statement said 'When your Council Tax bill lands on April 1st, remember this is not the fault of your Council. You are paying the price for years of under-funding by this Tory Government.' This was an apparent complete abdication of any responsibility. The Royal Borough's equivalent statement might read 'When your Council Tax bill lands on April 1st, we accept full responsibility, and hope to continue our successful efforts of the last 12 years, to tax you only what is needed to continue to deliver, with the efficiency you have come to expect, the services you tell us you value, and our commitments to all of the vulnerable in our communities. Please help us do this on May the 2nd.'

It was proposed by Councillor Saunders, seconded by Councillor Dudley, and:

RESOLVED: That Full Council approves the:

- i) Detailed recommendations contained in Appendix A which includes a base council tax at Band D of £961.33, including a 2.99% increase of £27.91.**
- ii) Adult social care precept to remain unchanged at £74.74.**
- iii) Fees and charges contained in Appendix D.**
- iv) Capital strategy in Appendix G.**
- v) Capital programme, shown in Appendices H & I, for the financial years 2019/20 to 2021/22.**
- vi) Prudential borrowing limits set out in Appendix L.**
- vii) Business rate tax base calculation, detailed in Appendix P, and its use in the council tax requirement in Appendix A.**
- viii) Deputy Director and Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Members for Finance and Children's Services to amend the total schools budget to reflect actual Dedicated Schools Grant levels once received.**
- ix) Delegation to the Deputy Director and Head of Finance and Lead Member for Finance to include the precept from the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority once the precept is announced.**

39 councillors voted for the motion: Councillors M. Airey, N. Airey, Alexander, Bateson, Bhatti, Bicknell, Bowden, Bullock, Burbage, Cannon, Carroll, Clark, Coppinger, Diment, Dudley, Gilmore, Hilton, Hollingsworth, Hunt, Ilyas, Lenton, Lion, Love, Luxton, Mills, Muir, Quick, C. Rayner, S. Rayner, Richards, Saunders, Sharp, Sharpe, Shelim, Story, Walters, D. Wilson, E. Wilson and Yong. 1 councillor voted against the motion: Councillor Hill. 7 councillors abstained from the motion: Councillors Beer, Da Costa, Jones, Majeed, Sharma, Stretton and Werner.

97. CONTINUATION OF MEETING

At this point in the meeting, and in accordance with Rule of Procedure Part 4A 23.1 of the council's constitution, the Chairman called for a vote in relation to whether or not the meeting should continue, as the time had exceeded 10.00pm.

Upon being put to the vote, those present voted in favour of the meeting continuing.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the meeting continue after 10.00pm to conclude the outstanding business on the Agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 10.54pm for a comfort break. The meeting resumed at 11.02pm.

98. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members considered approval of the council's Treasury Management Strategy.

It was proposed by Councillor Saunders, seconded by Councillor Dudley, and:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That full Council:

i) Approves and adopts the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

99. POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS

Members noted that the political balance and allocation of seats on the Standing Panels/Forums had been reviewed following the resignation of Councillor Sharma from the Conservative Group.

Councillor Sharma has joined the 'Not the Administration' (NTA) group. The resulting change in political balance meant that five seats formerly held by the Conservative Group were allocated to NTA.

Members noted that an updated version of the recommendations had been distributed.

It was proposed by Councillor Dudley and:

REOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That full Council:

i) Notes the following appointments:

- **Councillor Brimacombe (NTA) – Maidenhead Development Management Panel**
- **Councillor Jones (NTA) – Windsor Rural Development Management Panel**
- **Councillor Beer (NTA) – Windsor Urban Development Management Panel**
- **Councillor Stretton (NTA) – Borough-wide Development Management Panel**
- **Councillor Sharma (NTA) – Licensing Panel**

ii) Appoints Councillor D. Wilson as Vice Chairman of the Maidenhead Town Forum for the remainder of the municipal year

100. 2019/20 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

Members considered the council programme of meetings for 2019/20.

Councillor Jones commented that as the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel would take on the work of the Audit and Performance Review Panel from May 2019 it would need more meetings than had been currently scheduled. It was confirmed that each Overview and Scrutiny Panel would review their work programme at the first scheduled meeting of the municipal year in June 2019. Each Panel could therefore agree additional meetings if required.

It was proposed by Councillor Dudley, seconded by Councillor Bicknell, and:

RESOLVED: That Full Council notes the report and:

- i) Approves the programme of meetings for the 2019/20 Municipal Year, attached as Appendix A.**

Councillor Sharma abstained from the vote.

101. APPROVAL OF PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/20

Members considered the updated Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20.

Councillor Dudley introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Targowska. He asked the Managing Director to look into a report being produced in relation to the council's gender pay gap.

It was proposed by Councillor Dudley, seconded by Councillor Bicknell, and:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Council notes the report and:

- i) Approves the updated Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 as recommended by the Employment and Member Services Panel.**
ii) Notes that further revisions will be required to the statement when the Government's reforms to public sector exit pay arrangements are implemented.

102. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

Members considered the updated Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Councillor N. Airey explained that there were 125 children in the care of councillors, as all Members were corporate parents. In addition there were 69 care leavers (between the ages of 19-25) who were in active contact with the borough. Looked after children were not the sole responsibility of children's services. The borough as a whole was the corporate parent, and councillors had a key role to play. There were 62 girls and 63 boys in the council's care.

Whilst an ugly term, corporate parenting was the technical term for the collective responsibility of the local authority and its partners to ensure the care and protection of children in care and care leavers. However many natural children a councillor had, they would have many more in terms of children in care.

Corporate parents must:

- Act in the young person's best interest and promote physical and mental wellbeing
- Promote the expression of wishes and feelings and giving the young person's views
- Take into account their views, wishes and feelings
- Provide support with accessing the services needed
- Promote high aspirations
- Provide safety and stability their home lives, relationships and education, work and training
- Prepare young people for adulthood and independent living

Councillor N Airey commented that she was sure all would agree, this sounded like good, normal parenting. This was the point; councillors should always be asking 'is this what I would want or expect for my child?'

The administration had taken a lead in promoting the wellbeing of children in care and care leavers, for example giving discretionary council tax relief to care leavers to age 25. The council wanted every child in care and care leaver from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to reach their full potential and be healthy, happy, safe and secure whilst feeling loved, valued and respected.

The new Corporate Parenting Strategy would build upon the Inclusion Charter. It set out what children in care in the borough could expect from the council and how they could engage with services. She thanked all those involved in developing the strategy. Councillor N. Airey was working with offices to ensure robust training would be in place for new and returning councillors.

Councillor N Airey encouraged councillors to attend a KICKBACK meeting. She also encouraged Members to read the letter that had been written by KICKBACK to all councillors in their capacity as corporate parents. She thanked KICKBACK for all their input. Members should read the documents and advocate the work as champions of children in care; no matter what role they sat in on the council, all Members were corporate parents.

Councillor Stretton commented that she had not received any training in this area in the eight years she had been a councillor therefore she welcomed the proposals for training of new and returning councillors. Councillor Dudley also welcomed the proposals.

Councillor Quick stated that she fully endorsed the recommendations as a member of the Corporate Parenting Forum. If it was not good enough for councillors' own children and grandchildren it should not be good enough for those children in the council's care. Councillor Quick quoted from the KICKBACK letter. She commented that any society was judged on how it treated its most vulnerable members. May of the children

in care had had traumatic starts to life and needed support. The children also needed to feel ownership of their present and future.

Councillor Mills echoed the comments that had already been made. She was a member of the Corporate Parenting Forum. It was one of the best attended meetings and the enthusiasm of those involved was palpable. The effort put in by all to develop the strategy showed how working together brought results.

Councillor Bicknell commented that he had previously been Lead Member for Children's Services. He wanted all children in care to have the maximum educational opportunities including college or university. The option to undertake the 11 plus had already been introduced; he felt that this should be taken further with extracurricular help and the option to undertake the common entrance exam.

Councillor Hunt commented that the Corporate Parenting Forum was a meeting which she would like to be involved in. Councillor N. Airey confirmed that the DfE had her name and that of the Director of Children's Services as the responsible leads. Individual councillors did not have individual responsibilities but should be involved in challenging outcomes.

Councillor N. Airey concluded that each child had different needs and desires and these should be supported.

It was proposed by Councillor N. Airey, seconded by Councillor Quick, and:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Full Council:

- i) Notes the report and appendices.**
- ii) Endorses the progress made by the Corporate Parenting Forum in developing a new corporate parenting strategy, action plan and guide for councillors, in order to ensure that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is supporting Children in Care and Care Leavers to reach their full potential.**
- iii) Reaffirms its commitment to Children In Care and Care Leavers.**

103. MEMBER ATTENDANCE 2015-2019

Members considered member attendance statistics for the current term of office.

The Managing Director explained that the report highlighted the intention to better use the Modern.gov system in the next civic year, including a request that the annual report from the Employment and Member Standards Panel include details of member attendance. The report was being presented to Full Council now to enable any issues to be picked up in advance of the new municipal year. An example that had already been raised was to ensure that where the Mayor or Deputy Mayor sent apologies for a council meeting due to a mayoral engagement, this would be recorded as 'apologies due to council business.'

Councillor Dudley proposed the recommendations in the report. He highlighted a number of councillors who had an attendance record of over 90%. He thanked Councillor Beer for all he had done as a Member; Councillor Beer would not be

standing for re-election in May 2019. Councillor D. Wilson was the most hard-working councillor having attended 235 meetings with an attendance rate of 99%. The statistics were a useful tool to understand the efficiency of councillors. The inclusion of voting records in future would also be important.

Councillor Jones welcomed the transparency element relating to voting records. However there were many reasons councillors were unable to attend meetings including family holidays, caring for dependents and bereavement which she felt should be recorded.

Councillor E. Wilson commented that as council meetings were funded by the taxpayer, it was right that residents should know what councillors were up to. Councillor N. Airey highlighted that the maternity policy was now in place. Councillor Bicknell commented that with the reduction in the number of councillors from May 2019 and the volume of meetings, variances would occur. It was not about making excuses; people would understand that 100% could not always be reached as Members had families who would need to come first sometimes. However the statistics were useful to identify trends.

Councillor Saunders commented that he supported Councillor Bicknell's comments. There had been about 10 meetings that he had not attended as he had not felt his mental health had been sufficiently strong. He did not feel that reasons for non-attendance needed to be detailed. Members had to honestly accept that if there were aspects of their life that affected their role as a Member, this was part of the package that people would be voting for. He was happy for absences to be shown without explanation.

It was proposed by Councillor Dudley, seconded by Councillor Bicknell, and:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Full Council:

- i) Notes the Member attendance statistics for all councillors for the period 26 May 2015 – 8 February 2019 (Appendix A).**
- ii) Requests the Employment and Member Standards Panel annual report to Full Council from 2019/20 to include details on Member attendance.**
- iii) Requests officers to identify ways to expand the data available on the council website in relation to Member attendance, voting statistics and declarations of interest at meetings, for implementation from the start of the 2019/20 municipal year.**

104. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- a) Councillor C. Rayner asked the following question of Councillor Saunders, Lead Member for Finance:**

I made a number of capital bids for the 2019/20 financial year for the ward that I represent (Horton and Wraysbury), however I believe all were unsuccessful. Do you think that the capital budget should be more evenly spread among the rural parishes?

Councillor Saunders responded that he agreed that capital budgets should be more evenly spread among the rural parishes.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor C. Rayner asked if the Lead Member would write to Horton and Wraysbury Parish Council to give them hope for funding for the CCTV programme in the village.

Councillor Saunders responded that there were ongoing discussions in relation to CCTV in Horton and joint arrangements for funding were being looked at. He suggested that the relevant Lead Member, Councillor M. Airey, together with officers would be in a better position provide Councillor C Rayner with the information requested. Councillor M. Airey agreed that he would respond in writing to Councillor C. Rayner.

Councillor C. Rayner commented that he was still waiting for a response in writing from Councillor M. Airey to a question from a previous full Council meeting. Councillor M. Airey confirmed that a written response had been sent. Councillor C. Rayner commented that this was from a junior officer and he expected the response to come from the Lead Member. Councillor M. Airey commented that the response had come from the Head of Commissioning – Communities, who was not a junior officer.

b) Councillor C. Rayner asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Health:

Further to a letter dated 18/1/19 from the Environment Agency to the borough in Wraysbury, what does the council now intend to do regarding the planning policy/local plan for this land in Hythe End, in light of the official advice from the statutory body?

Councillor Coppinger responded that as the question related to a current planning application, he was limited in the response he could give. The letter referred to was the response from the Environment Agency as statutory consultee to a consultation on a planning application, it would not be appropriate for him to comment on that application specifically. He noted that the Environment Agency had objected to the proposal as it comprised development in the functional flood plain (otherwise known as flood zone 3b). Each application was considered on its own merits. The National Planning Policy Framework set strict tests to protect people and property from flooding which all local planning authorities were expected to follow. Where these tests were not met, national policy was clear that new development should not be allowed.

Councillor Lenton commented that residents in Wraysbury were just as concerned about CCTV as those in Horton. In relation to Hythe End, this had been a running sore ever since he had become a councillor and ever since the borough allowed the operations to start. It was not satisfactory to say this was still dragging on.

Councillor C. Rayner confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.

c) Councillor Hill asked following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Health:

Why have numerous lamppost banners costing circa £22,000 been displayed across RBWM without advertising consent and without being submitted to the relevant planning panel?

Councillor Coppinger explained that Councillor Dudley was the appropriate Member to respond as his portfolio included communications.

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Councillor Dudley responded that banners were widely used by other councils to share key messages with residents and research had shown they had a greater impact in terms of communicating key achievements and priorities. The banners were placed by the communications and marketing team to highlight the six key priorities which were agreed in the Council Plan at Full Council. The council monitored council performance against those six priorities.

The banners did not require planning permission. The intention was to install the banners using deemed consent but, due to an error in the sizing, advertising consent was required and an application would be made imminently.

The six banners were reflective of the council's six strategic priorities in the council plan 2017-21. They were also linked to the residents' survey. New banners may be installed in the future as part of the ongoing communications strategy. Councillor Dudley summarised the banners and how they related to the six key priorities and the results of the residents' survey:

Priority	Banner Message	Residents' Survey 2018
Healthy skilled and independent residents	9 out of 10 local schools good or outstanding	Joint 4 th most important thing about what made an area a good place to live – schools / education.
Safe and vibrant communities	25 wardens keeping you safe – more than ever before	Safety / policing / low crime – most important thing about what made an area a good place to live.
Attractive and well-connected borough	£10.4 million being spent on roads	8 th most important thing about what made an area a good place to live but the top issue most in need of improvement (43%)
Growing economy, affordable housing	Up to 4000 homes built on council owned land with 30% affordable guaranteed	The third most popular thing people liked about their local area was being close to / easy access to the town (town centre regeneration sites will provide homes in the right places).
An excellent customer experience	Weekly bin collections for our residents	Clean, litter free, well-kept streets was the third most important thing to residents that made an area a good place to live. 88% were satisfied with the waste collection (50% were very satisfied, 38% were satisfied).
Well managed resources delivering value for money	Lowest council tax outside London	63% agreed the council provided value for money. 25% of residents neither agreed nor disagreed. The level of agreement that the council provided value for money had the most significant influence on overall satisfaction with the council.

There were 84 banners in total across the borough.

The company worked in a number of other local authorities including Birmingham, Brighton & Hove, Camden, Cardiff, Coventry, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey,

Harrow, Havering, Leeds, Luton, Manchester, Newcastle, Newham, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Walsall, Westminster, York, Richmond and Greenwich.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Hill commented that it had been widely reported in the press and on social media that residents were angry and had expressed the view that the banners were a waste of taxpayer money and constituted political campaigning so close to an election. Councillor Hill asked when the banners would be removed, would they stay removed, and would the Maidenhead Conservative Association be paying the bill?

Councillor Dudley responded that the banners represented a small investment from the communications team to tell residents about council priorities. The banners would come down in the middle of March 2019 but the structures would remain so that they could be used for future campaigns.

d) Councillor Cannon will asked the following question of Councillor Dudley, Leader of the Council:

Please can you provide an update on the current position in respect of plans and their progress to address the current funding gap for the Environment Agency River Thames Scheme?

Councillor Dudley responded that there had been a recent meeting with Surrey County Council and Phillip Hammond. He was hopeful that, as had been agreed by the Council, both the borough and Surrey County Council would levy a flood levy to enable repayment of a loan, to be taken out by an entity yet to be determined, to meet the funding gap. The issue was being progressed in central government. He sincerely wanted to see completion of the scheme; the council had already agreed £10m funding.

Councillor Cannon confirmed he did not have a supplementary question.

105. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Councillor Dudley introduced his motion. He explained that he had attended the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Western Link Railway in the House of Commons. The borough was not supporting the Windsor Link Railway. The real way to give western rail access to Heathrow was the proposed Western Rail Link, which had been worked on extensively by Network Rail. It would leave the main line between Langley and Iver and go up to Heathrow airport. It would significantly reduce surface transport movements to the airport from the west. It was expensive at a cost of £1.5bn but Councillor Dudley believed it would be of enormous benefit to residents. The borough continued to have grave concerns about the expansion of the airport. The judicial review would begin on 11 March 2019; the borough was a party to that action. The reduction in surface transport movements would help to reduce air pollution. The link was also a vital part of infrastructure for the town.

Councillor Hilton stated that Councillor Dudley was right to be concerned about air quality and the health and wellbeing of residents should the third runway proceed, but air quality was not the only issue. By far Heathrow was the biggest noise polluter in Europe, adversely affecting more than three times as many people as Frankfurt, and if a third runway was built 2 million people would be adversely affected.

Heathrow was undertaking a consultation on airspace design for a three-runway airport and an increase in 260,000 Air Traffic Movements a year. They proposed to use Performance Based Navigation (PBN) which would set aircraft on narrow flight paths and concentrate noise on the ground. Residents in Ascot and Sunningdale experienced this during the 2014 westerly departure trials which created public outrage. More than 1,100 people attended a meeting with Heathrow and the CAA at Ascot Racecourse and the trials which were scheduled to run for five months were abandoned after 10 weeks.

Councillor Hilton was a member of the Community Noise Group which had been meeting with Heathrow for four years. The group had spent time researching airports that had introduced PBN and all had led to unacceptable annoyance for communities around all the airports.

The government had said that annoyance started at 54 dBm, which was five times higher than that recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). WHO suggested that aircraft noise above 45 dBm was associated with adverse health effects. If adopted the WHO recommendation would increase the disbenefits of a third runway at Heathrow by about £7 billion which would mean the net economic benefit would be negative.

Councillor Hilton urged everyone to go to the Heathrow consultation web site, put in their postcode and see if they would be impacted, and if so let Heathrow know their proposals were unacceptable.

Councillor Sharma explained that during the consultation in 2018 the following issues had emerged. He asked the Leader of the Council to raise these matters in his letter to the Prime Minister:

- Concerns about the permanent closure of Hollow Hill Lane / Mansion Lane.
- A long standing desire for a relief road in the Iver area.
- A fast lane from Maidenhead to Paddington
- Requests for more frequent service and stopping at additional stations such as Langley
- Calls to integrate the services with other routes.
- Concerns about the environmental impact of the scheme including noise and pollution during the construction.

72% of residents agreed with Network Rail's plans to improve the service. Councillor Sharma fully supported the motion as it would increase capacity and reduce journey times. It would be a great investment.

Councillor Beer commented that one of the principal statements of Heathrow in relation to the third runway was a target of 60% of workers travelling by public transport. Some years ago the ambition had been 30% and then 40%; the figure was still below 40%. With 50% more traffic Heathrow was now promising 60% would travel by public transport. If so, they should pay for the rail link as it formed part of their strategy to reduce the pollution they were causing. Councillor Beer felt this point should be made in the letter to the Prime Minister. The money should not be coming out of the public purse.

Councillor Dudley commented that no one knew what would happen with the third runway but that conversation on the rail link would continue between Heathrow and the Department for Transport. The motion was to elevate the importance from the council's point of view. If the airport paid for the rail link this would add to the regulated asset base and therefore landing charges would increase. Councillor Beer felt this was not entirely correct.

It was proposed by Councillor Dudley, seconded by Councillor Bicknell, and:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That this Council:

- i) Has grave concerns about any expansion of Heathrow Airport with a third runway and the implications for air quality and the health of our residents.**
- ii) Requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister, Theresa May MP and copy the Secretary of State for Transport, in support of the Western Rail Link being promoted by Network Rail.**

Councillor Hunt abstained from the vote.

Councillors C. Rayner, S. Rayner and Gilmore left the meeting for the duration of the debate and voting on the item.

106. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on items 18-19 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 7.30pm, ended at 12.02am

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

Addendum:

Written response to supplementary question submitted by Karen Davies of Park ward (public question d):

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Davies asked, with regard to rate reliefs, what effect is it anticipated that this will have on business rate income retained by RBWM?

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As RBWM will be part of a 75% Business Rate Retention pool for the financial year 2019/20 the effect of relief awarded will be reflected in the sums retained by the authority which have already been factored into the budget for that year.

Written response to supplementary question submitted by Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward (public question j):

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that in February the planning department had said that councillors should accord relevant policies and allocations significant weight in the determination of applications, taking into account the extent to which there were unresolved objections to policies. At the moment the Borough Local Plan was neither sound nor unsound but officers appeared to be saying policies could be split between those with resolved objectives carrying significant weight and those with unresolved objections carrying limited weight. Applicants and objectors alike needed certainty therefore he asked if the Lead Member would publish a complete list of emerging policies that officers currently believed had had their objections resolved and would thus be given significant weight at this time?

Regrettably it is not as simple as you might like to think it is, this means that it is not possible to publish a list in the way you suggest. I will go on to explain why below.

In February 2019 the Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework 2019 which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Borough Local Plan Submission Version is being examined under the National Planning Policy Framework of 2012 as it was submitted under the transitional arrangements, the policies in the BLPSV are NPPF 2012 compliant but it does not automatically follow that the policy will be consistent with the NPPF 2019.

For the purposes of decision making the NPPF 2019 sets out at paragraph 48 that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to the stage of preparation, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the policies with the relevant framework (footnote 22 makes it clear this is NPPF 2012 for RBWM). Equally the LPA must give consideration to whether the adopted plan is consistency with the NPPF 2019 and also whether there are material considerations in NPPF 2019 which the LPA gives weight to before we conclude in the balance. For some policy areas it depends on the nature of the application proposal as to what consistency there is with the emerging policy and therefore what weight you might give the emerging policy: for example, the 2010 NPPF made changes of use in the Green Belt inappropriate but the 2019 NPPF does not.

In light of the question you posed the Head of Planning has reviewed the panel report layout to seek to ensure that officers make as clear as is possible the weight to be afforded to the Development Plan and to emerging policies and other matters which are material planning considerations. The Head of Planning has also reviewed the content of recent panel reports on the same basis to seek to make clear when a policy is part of the development plan and when it is an emerging policy only given weight as a material consideration; the development plan has primacy. The Head of Planning has undertaken to keep this under review and to have regard to appeal decisions also which address similar issues. I'd like to thank you for raising the issue.