

**AT A MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held in the Desborough Suite -
Town Hall on Tuesday, 25th February, 2020**

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

Officers: Louise Freeth, Hilary Hall, Kevin McDaniel, Russell O'Keefe, Barbara Richardson, Mary Severin, Duncan Sharkey, Adele Taylor, Rhona Bellis, Maddie Pinkham, James Carpenter, Ruth Watkins, Peter Robinson and Karen Shepherd.

ONE MINUTE SILENCE

A one minute silence was held in memory of three councillors who had recently passed away: Mike Alston, a Belmont councillor until 1991; Adam Smith who had been a Riverside councillor until May 2019; and former Mayor Eileen Quick.

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brar.

74. COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 be approved.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

76. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

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

The Mayor highlighted that councillors would have already received confirmation that the Civic Funeral for the Former Mayor of the Royal Borough, Dee Quick, would be held on Monday 9 March 2020 at 12.30pm at St Stephen and St Agnes Church, Windsor. She commented that a healthy attendance by councillors at a Civic Funeral demonstrated the Council's appreciation for the many years of community service rendered by the former Mayor of the Borough. She therefore encouraged as many councillors as possible to attend the service.

77. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

a) Jane Stone of Belmont ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

How many organisations tendered for the contract which was currently with Ways into Work and has now been awarded to Optalis?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question on this important issue. Rather than go out to tender, the council has asked its own delivery company, Optalis, to provide the service. As you might be aware, from April 2017, the council started delivering all statutory and discretionary adult services through Optalis, which is a Local Authority Trading Company; jointly owned by Wokingham Borough Council and the Royal Borough.

As Optalis is a jointly owned Local Authority Trading Company, the Council is not required to formally tender any contracts for statutory or discretionary services, if they can be fulfilled by Optalis.

In the case of the existing contract with Ways into Work, the Royal Borough was not, therefore, required to re-tender the contract when it expires on 30th April 2020, as Optalis already has a successful and established Supported Employment service in operation, in Wokingham, which has been running for more than 18 years. Delivering through Optalis is our long term strategy and all part of our overall plan to deliver better adult social care through enablement, prevention and independence.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Stone expressed concern that Ways Into Work had provided this service for five years as a community interest company and prior to that as part of RBWM. This continuity had allowed them to build up contracts and relationships with local employers and the candidates who had complex needs. She asked how this wealth of knowledge and experience would be maintained and candidates supported?

Councillor Carroll responded that the council's adult social care strategy had been to invest in Optalis Holding Company, which was part of the proposal. The government ranked each local authority on the percentage of people with learning difficulties supported into employment. The Optalis service currently in Wokingham was ranked number two in the country. Optalis already had expertise in the field. The council was working with the current provider to ensure transitional arrangements were fully optimised.

b) Janet Hayes-Brown of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

How many clients can the new Optalis supported employment service work with for the £74,000 budget, and what targets, including job outcomes, will be set with the new provider?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question on this important issue. It is important to understand that there is a fully operational Supported Employment Service already operating within our Local Authority Trading Company, Optalis. This has been in operation for more than 18 years and supports around 300 residents in Wokingham. There is an existing staff team comprising a Head of Employment Services, as well as Team Leads, Coaches and other support staff, who operate to the high standards required to be accredited to the British Association of Supported Employment. Delivering through Optalis is our long term strategy and all part of our overall plan to deliver better adult social care through enablement, prevention and independence.

We are, therefore, not setting up a service from scratch, but rather, are adding additional investment into the existing infrastructure that is successfully operating. This means that more staff can be recruited (or transferred from the existing provider, Ways into Work), to support the cohort of people likely to transfer across when the existing contract comes to an end on 30th April 2020.

Detailed discussions are still ongoing between the outgoing provider, Ways into Work, and commissioners, regarding the number of customers who are likely to transfer across to Optalis. The Royal Borough understands that the existing provider is intending to continue to support and maintain a significant number of their existing clients.

Clients for whom the existing provider has not yet managed to find employment, around 79 people, or who are still on their waiting list, around 78 people, are likely to be offered the opportunity to come across to the Optalis Supported employment service.

Regarding job outcomes, you may be aware that each year the Government ranks each Local Authority on the percentage of people with a learning disability who are supported into employment (the indicator is called ASCOF 1E (proportion of people with learning disabilities in employment)) and the Optalis service at Wokingham, ranked number 2 in the country this year behind London Borough of Hounslow. We will ensure that the contract with Optalis includes all relevant employment targets to meet the national ASCOF standards.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Hayes-Brown asked whether it would be an option for Ways into Work to be funded for those that they already had in work, giving Optalis the opportunity to build relationships and reputation in the borough? Also, in the written answer it stated '*Clients for whom the existing provider has not yet managed to find employment, around 79 people, or who are still on their waiting list, around 78 people, are likely to be offered the opportunity to come across to the Optalis Supported employment service*'. What did 'likely' mean?

Councillor Carroll responded that the council would continue to work with Ways Into Work as much as it could; some of the existing people would be retained. Given the high performance at Optalis in Wokingham he was confident that the transition would be successful. The 78 people referred to would be offered the opportunity; what was needed as part of the plan was to see how they could very quickly be offered employment opportunities. The Health and Wellbeing Board had written to all local employers to highlight the issue. An offer would be available but the issue was whether placements would be available.

c) Susan Edwards of Furze Platt ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

My son has benefitted greatly from funding provided by RBWM to Ways into Work and works for the Council. He has multiple and complex issues including severe learning disability, hearing impairment and, difficulties with communication. Whoever supports him needs to know him well. By changing service provider to Optalis, how can you guarantee that he will not be disadvantaged?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question on this important issue. The Royal Borough is aware of the group of people to whom you refer, who work for the Council. They are currently supported 8 hours a week through the coaches employed by Ways into Work. The council has asked Ways into Work for costings to continue to support these people which is £12,000 per annum. The council is seeking alternative funding to ensure this support continues, including employment benefits, and has committed to pay any shortfall.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Edwards asked for clarification if the council was going to continue funding for the Ways Into Work parks team and how long for?

Councillor Carroll responded that the commissioning team was in discussion with Ways Into Work on this particular issue. He hoped those discussions would be concluded in the next few weeks. He had asked for costings to be supplied for these individuals. The council would be seeking alternative funding and had committed to pay any shortfall.

d) Lisa Hughes of Furze Platt ward asked the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

Many residents with disabilities will be greatly affected by cuts of £166k to supported employment and £330k to the council tax reduction scheme plus increases to adult health and commissioning charges. Can RBWM provide evidence that due regard was given to its equality obligations in relation to residents with disabilities?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. I can confirm that the Royal Borough has given due regard to all its equality obligations in respect of the proposals it is making for the 2020-2021 budget. Equality Impact Assessments have been completed where applicable and these are available on the website at this [link](#).

Turning to the three specific points that you mention, in relation to the supported employment service, we will be commissioning this from our jointly owned Local Authority Trading Company, Optalis. Optalis has been successfully operating a high-quality supported employment service for more than 18 years and therefore we are building on the existing structures and staffing that are already successfully in place. We are confident that by investing into the existing service, there will be greater efficiencies and economies of scale through shared use of staff and resources so that

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we will be able to build and strengthen the support across the two boroughs, whilst providing value for money.

In relation to the proposed changes to the council tax reduction scheme, there is no evidence that residents with disabilities will be any more affected than any other working age customer with a protected characteristic. The authority will continue to disregard income received from disability related benefits, e.g. Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments. However, there is no proposal to exempt individuals, en masse, as a result of disability. They, like anyone else, will be able to apply to consider remitting the costs on the basis of financial hardship in accordance with the authority's existing S13A(1)(c) Policy.

In line with the council's overall approach to fees and charges, adult social care fees and charges have been increased by inflation on all but domiciliary care. For domiciliary care, we are proposing full cost recovery for self-funders only, on the basis that they will have been assessed as able to pay the full amount. Removing the Advantage Card discounts for parking is being applied across the board and there is no evidence that residents with disabilities will be any more affected than anyone else using the car parks. Blue badge provision for residents with disabilities is unaffected by this proposal.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Hughes commented that the council could have, but did not, identify council tax reduction recipients with a disability therefore how could the council be sure that they would not be more adversely affected by the proposal? The EQIA showed that the simplicity of the council's administration took precedence over the risk of financial hardship for people with disabilities. People with some types of disabilities really struggled with applying for the S13A discretionary reduction but this was not considered. A reasonable adjustment would be to provide help for people with disabilities to apply for discretionary reductions. Would the council do so?

Councillor Johnson responded that the council would be offering help to people through the full process of applying and would review each situation on a case by case basis. He was confident that the EQIA process had been robust in terms of meeting the council's duties. He would however come back with detail on the issues raised.

Written response provided after the meeting: The policy only specifies that requests must be made in writing setting out the circumstances on which the application is based and any hardship or personal circumstances relating to the application. The application should include a full income and expenditure breakdown of the applicant together with that of any other household members. The Council may request evidence in support of the application.

We have not prescribed a specific form which would need to be completed and will accept applications via e-mail or post. However, we can provide a pro-forma for the customer to complete with details of income and expenditure if that assists them. Customers can request face to face assistance, via the dedicated Revenues and Benefits Assistants situated in both Maidenhead and Windsor library. No appointment is necessary for this service. Telephony support is also available via the customer services contact centre.

Any further information can be supplied again, either face to face, or via e-mail to the Revenues and Benefits team.

e) Angela Clark of Cox Green ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Ways into Work provides personalised employment support that enables residents with disabilities to be a part of the workforce, with commensurate benefits to their finances, health and well-being. Will the £166k of savings next year be realised by reducing the number of people supported or reducing the scope of the services provided?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question on this important issue. We recognise the importance that a Supported Employment Service holds for people with additional needs and the benefit and sense of self-esteem that comes with finding paid employment.

I would like to reassure you that the service that we will be commissioning from our jointly owned Local Authority Trading Company, Optalis, has been successfully operating providing a high quality Supported Employment service for Wokingham Council for more than 18 years. It is important to recognise that we are therefore not setting up this enterprise from scratch, but are building on the existing structures and staffing that are already successfully in place within Optalis, so that when the council commissions this service it can also operate for our Windsor and Maidenhead residents. As a long-established service, Optalis Supported Employment works with many local and national companies and has many contacts and links into employment, maintaining the high standards required from the British Association of Supported Employment.

As our Local Authority Trading Company, Optalis already operates in offices and day centres across the Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead providing statutory adult social care (social work, Occupational Therapy, reablement services, residential care homes and day centres) and other support for vulnerable adults on behalf of the Local Authority. We are confident that by investing into the existing Supported Employment service already running, there will be greater efficiencies and economies of scale through shared use of staff and resources and we will be able to build and strengthen the support across the two Boroughs, whilst providing value for money and that important employment support that you refer to in your question. Delivering through Optalis is our long term strategy and all part of our overall plan to deliver better adult social care through enablement, prevention and independence.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Clark asked would the council continue to fund Ways Into Work for the 169 clients they already had?

Councillor Carroll responded that essentially the answer was yes because Ways Into Work had multiple funding streams. In agreement with the council they had committed to that number of people. This would be reviewed on a periodic basis.

f) Paul Stretton of Clewer East ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:

During the Council meeting (Sept 2018), concerns of asbestos hazards, during demolition (surface and airborne) in the Dedworth area were raised. Authority to proceed with demolition was given by RBWM, without ensuring all planning conditions had been met. What actions and recommendations have been implemented to protect and reassure the community from this and any such future suspected contaminations?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question, however the question states points that are factually incorrect. The Council did not authorise the demolition of the building ahead of the discharge of conditions, the developer took this course of action without informing the Council or applying to discharge relevant pre-commencement conditions. The planning department cannot prevent such a course of action being taken. It can only seek to rectify allegations of a breach of planning control through the planning enforcement process.

Concerns over alleged nuisance during construction works should be raised with the Council's Environmental Protection team, however, concerns over asbestos are a matter for the Health and Safety Executive where this is alleged to relate to unsafe building practices. This is no different to the position as advised by the Council at the time.

Mr Stretton was not present therefore no supplementary question was asked.

g) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:

On 26th March Simon Dudley announced at the St Mary's Church Areli/Tikehau meeting, that he had "... already entered into" an agreement to sell Central House, and our 50% freehold of the Nicholson centre to Areli. On what date did he enter into that agreement, and had any officer or Cabinet approved this massive agreement beforehand?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. Following discussions between officers of the Council and its wholly owned property company with the new owner of the shopping centre heads of terms were agreed with them on the 1 March 2019. These were non-binding and were there to form the basis for a contract to include the Council's ownerships within a future redevelopment. A report was taken to Cabinet on the 25 April to gain formal approval to negotiate and agree a contract on this basis. Cabinet agreed delegated authority subject to a report being brought to Council. On the 23 July Council approved the sale of the Council's freehold interests in Nicholson's and Central House for £6million and delegated authority to enter into contracts for these.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that on 23 July the council had approved for the sale of freehold land for basically half of the town centre a few minutes from the Crossrail station for nearly £1m pounds. At that meeting Simon Dudley noted that the real value lay in the regeneration value which could be in the region of £100m. The valuation process clearly did not factor that in and the council had not held an open market contested bidding process. The report claimed that 'the

only interest was likely to come from parties who would be seeking to interfere with the regeneration plans for Maidenhead.' Mr Hill asked who was the council referring to when it suggested parties would interfere?

Councillor Hilton responded that as he did not have the detailed knowledge, a written answer would be provided after the meeting.

Written response provided after the meeting: The Council owns the freehold interest of approximately 50% of the shopping centre with an unexpired lease interest of 117 years in favour of Denhead Sarl. Denhead Sarl, also own the freehold and leasehold interest in the remainder of the shopping centre, giving them a substantial property interest in the existing shopping centre. Denhead Sarl purchased their interest from Vixcroft through an administration process. The developer Denhead bought from the administrator the lease and remaining freehold of the site.

Due to the length of the unexpired lease (117 years) the new owners approached the council with a view to purchasing the council freehold interest, to enable an extensive redevelopment of the town centre. The Council freehold interest at this point had a deminimus value due to the poor performance of the retail sector over the last 3-5 years, and the declining retail markets. Had the Council decided at this point to put the freehold interest to the open market for sale, a) its value would have been deminimus b) it would have frustrated the potential redevelopment of the town centre. Instead it agreed in principle to sell the freehold interest to Denhead Sarl, who already held the substantial leasehold interest, subject to a s.123 report (an external valuation) demonstrating value for money, and best consideration. Had the Council decided to sell this freehold interest on the open market it would have attracted substantially less in value that has actually been agreed with the existing leaseholder. The reference in the report to if the Council sold its part of freehold to someone else relates to fact that because the developer had already bought the remaining freehold and 117 year lease, any organisation who would be likely to buy it, if there were to be any, would do so to try and interfere with and frustrate the plans of the developer to redevelop the site as they could not redevelop it themselves etc. Clearly, the Council wishes to see the town centre regenerated effectively for the good of residents and the local economy and for this not to be frustrated or delayed unnecessarily. Exactly who such organisations could be would only be known if we tried to sell our part of the freehold in that way which for the reasons outlined is not the course of action.

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

Why is the Local Planning Authority putting residents' health and safety at risk, and rewarding developers who significantly breach allegedly "strict" prior planning conditions, by retrospectively approving demolition management plans for sites where there had already been breaches of several statutes including the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for the question however I do not agree that considering a planning application has put residents' health and safety at risk. The planning authority is duty bound to consider all planning applications received. This includes where retrospective applications are made. Applications are considered against the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and are assessed against

relevant planning policy, and legislation. The planning system does not regulate the control of asbestos.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that the final sentence of the written response stated that the planning system did not regulate the control of asbestos. Officers had made comments to the HSE on asbestos; Councillors Carroll and Bhangra had been superb in raising the safety issues; on the planning portal there were asbestos surveys and consultees included environmental health on dust. It appeared to be saying in the final sentence that the council would approve retrospectively a construction management plan in circumstances when it was concerned about asbestos safety because it was implying it had no right to reject an application on that basis. Was that a correct understanding?

Councillor Coppinger responded that as this was a technical question he would reply in writing.

Written response provided after the meeting: Land contamination can be a planning matter, however its regulation in terms of safe disposal is not within the control of the Planning Department. (N.B. Subsequent to the meeting Cllr Coppinger has also sought to arrange for Mr Hill to meet with the Interim Head of Planning to discuss any further concerns in person).

i) Ray Hayes-Brown of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Currently 168 vulnerable adults are working in the borough, supported by WIW. You propose to continue this with Optalis on a third of the current budget. Have the council made proper assessment of the complex needs they all have, and risks they will be exposed too if their needs are not supported adequately? With impunity can you guarantee their safety?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question on this important issue. Discussions are continuing between Commissioners and Ways into Work but we have been told by Ways into Work that they intend to continue their employment support for the group of 168 people who are currently employed. There are around 78 people who are currently on a waiting list that Ways into Work are not yet supporting and a further 79 people who Ways into Work are working with but not yet found employment for. We understand the intention is that this group of people will be offered the opportunity to transfer into the commissioned service provided through Optalis.

Each individual who is referred into the Supported Employment service provided through Optalis, will have an assessment of their needs, their aspirations and outcomes that they would wish to achieve and a tailored support plan will be drawn up between the Supported Employment coach and the individual. Optalis work to the same high standards required by the British Association of Supported Employment as we have required from our existing provider and will apply all of the principles of risk assessment for the safety of individuals and staff when assessing and working with individuals and employers.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hayes-Brown commented that the response said discussions were continuing and they intended to continue their support, but that this was not guaranteed. He asked if this was correct? He also asked what would happen if the goodwill from Ways Into Work stopped and how could the council ensure the continued safety of those vulnerable adults?

Councillor Carroll responded that in the discussions Ways Into Work had made it clear that that was their explicit intention. Along with the Director of Adult Social Care, he had received a pledge for that number of people to be retained by Ways Into Work. In the eventuality that it did not happen for any reason the council would review and look to ensure alternative provision; however at this point there was no indication that would be required as a result of the explicit undertaking Ways Into Work had provided.

j) Valerie Pike of Sunningdale and Cheapside ward asked the following question of Councillor Cannon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking:

The council "...has now explicitly confirmed to the [Information] Commissioner" that it holds no information, such as a business case, for the £240k capital scheme (Chobham Road, Sunningdale New Parking Scheme) bid for in February 2018. Why did RBWM approve this spending without a submitted business case as to what benefits this scheme would deliver to residents and how?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. Funding for this project formed part of the budget (capital programme) for 2018/19 which was approved by Council on 20th February 2018. Formal approval was preceded by consideration at Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Panels and was, therefore, subject to opportunities to scrutinize and challenge in public prior to approval. I understand this information has been provided on previous occasions which included input from the Head of Finance.

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Pike commented in that in the last few hours since she had received the written response she had gone through the minutes of Cabinet on 8 February but she could not find anything related to the project; likewise the Communities and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panels. She asked whether a business case was prepared or not? If one had been produced it would have identified what the scheme would deliver and how it would be managed.

Councillor Clark responded that he would look into the issues raised and send a written response. Business cases were generally in relation to investments that would yield a return. When there were pressures from residents and ward members, the business case could merely be for an identified public safety risk.

Written response provided after the meeting: The scheme to create new parking bays in Chobham Road was the subject of public consultation which resulted in 88% support for the scheme. In addition, the proposal to introduce a raised pedestrian crossing was consulted upon at the same time and resulted in 65% against this element. (For background: Details of the scheme are available at https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200213/parking/664/parking_consultations/15). Issues were raised during the design and construction phase raised by concerned residents with respect to improving conditions for pedestrians - no formal pedestrian crossing was installed as part of the parking scheme which reflects the outcome of the public consultation. However, in order to

positively respond to the resident concerns around vehicles speeds and pedestrian crossing points a 'flat-top' road hump at the southern end of the scheme together with other modifications to reduce vehicle speeds and increase awareness of the nature of the area was installed. A further commitment was made to review vehicle speeds and pedestrian movements following completion of the project. This has been completed and I can advise that works have been commissioned to upgrade the 'flat top' hump to a pedestrian (zebra) crossing. A budget of £240,000 was approved to develop, consult and deliver this project. I am pleased to advise that the scheme was delivered within budget and funding is available to extend the scope of the scheme to provide a pedestrian crossing.

There was no scheme specific business case for this project as the proposal and budget required, was considered and subsequently approved by Cabinet as part of the overall capital programme development. In addition, consideration by Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny formed part of the review of the overall recommended programme, of which this scheme formed one part.

k) Valerie Pike of Sunningdale and Cheapside ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:

When a Parish Council or the Police & Crime Commissioner submit their precept demands, what governance and scrutiny is undertaken by RBWM itself to ensure their demands are reasonable, fair and value for public money, and in keeping with relative size of that parish, or in proportion to the scale of the public services offered?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. The council has no responsibility for the precepts raised by Parish Councils or the Police and Crime Commissioner, it is simply responsible for collecting the amounts precepted. In 2020/21 the increase in the precept for the Police and Crime Commissioner was subject to a limit of a £10 increase. Anything above this level would have required a referendum of all constituents in the Thames Valley.

Members of Parish Councils are elected and they are responsible for setting the Parish precept. Unlike Borough Councils the Parish Council precept increase is not capped. Any questions around value for money or the level of increase for either the Police or Parish Councils need to be directed to these bodies directly.

Ms Pike confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.

l) Adam Bermange of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Cannon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking:

With the proposed savings in funding for our community wardens meaning the administration will not be able to fulfil its manifesto pledge to retain a 25 warden-strong unit, will the Lead Member commit to holding a public consultation before finalising the adjusted tasking of the remaining team?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. Community Wardens currently respond to the needs within all RBWM wards. This is not proposed to change. The proposed savings will see a reduction in 6 wardens (25 to 19FTE) and as such, coverage by the team as a whole will be diluted in terms of the total area patrolled by an individual warden and the manner in which they are deployed.

In order to mitigate any potential impacts and ensure wardens have the ability to meet ongoing need, a smarter working pattern for wardens is being implemented by service managers. This will see the wardens move away from ad-hoc patrols within a ward, towards a more targeted patrol pattern that is much more dependent on risk and informed by local intelligence. A public consultation is not proposed to shape this, due to the manner in which wardens are tasked, needing to be a dynamic process so that any emerging issues can be addressed as required.

To ensure that the intelligence used for tasking is fit for purpose, the warden team are committed to expanding the number of mechanisms in which engagement with stakeholders (including resident groups and elected members) can occur. Residents will retain a named warden for their area, acting as a single point of contact; and be able to build relationships and a profile of the issues being encountered in each ward.

Wardens will continue to provide all current work streams including: antisocial behaviour enforcement, engagement with the local community, dog fouling, littering, school patrols and support to rough sleepers – albeit in a much more focussed manner.

The Community Warden team will continue to provide a visible presence to all wards; albeit the degree of time spent in a particular ward will be more dependent on intelligence and identified need.

Assurance should be provided in the core aims of the warden team remaining unchanged, namely to build community cohesion and to provide a visible deterrent to crime

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Bermange commented that Community Wardens did a fantastic job. It had been great news in March 2018 that Cabinet had agreed to increase the number from 18 to 25. That report had stated it was not realistic to tackle the increasing antisocial behaviour issues and sustain the effective working of the Community Warden team within the current resources. He therefore asked if the Lead Member would concede that dropping the numbers back down now to 19 would be at least become more challenging to tackle the rising antisocial behaviour problem?

Councillor Cannon responded that he agreed Community Wardens did a wonderful job. The model they were working to at the time required the resources to be increased. The council was now reworking the model based on intelligence-led tasking therefore the resources in place, combined with the increase in policing resources in the Thames Valley meant additional resources would be available.

m) Louis Wright of Hurley & Walthams ward asked the following question of Councillor Stimson, Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:

Since declaring a "climate emergency" and proposing a cross-party developed strategy to achieve carbon neutrality, how has the Royal Borough identified the minimum competencies and skills, within its own staff, to understand, develop and implement the aforementioned strategy?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. Since declaring the climate emergency, officers and Members have been working together to develop the strategy. This has been done in

consultation with the community and special interest groups. The nature of the climate emergency is that the strategy will need to be delivered across all services of the Council. Therefore the cross-party group has utilised knowledge of specialist officers across many parts of the council such as waste, transport, biodiversity and energy. We have utilised best practice from other councils and also engaged with experts in different fields to generate a wide range of ideas for the strategy.

Given the importance of this issue, the Council has also recruited two new posts to lead the development of the strategy. A new Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth is now in post. We have also recruited a new Service Lead for Sustainability and Climate Change who will be responsible for finalising and delivering the strategy. They will work with our existing Energy Reduction Manager to co-ordinate delivery of the strategy working with other services across the council.

Mr Wright was not present therefore no supplementary question was asked.

n) Louis Wright of Hurley & Walthams ward asked the following question of Councillor Stimson, Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:

What plans does the Royal Borough have to engage with young people (children and teenage demographics) on the topic of climate change?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. The council has been undertaking a series of public engagement meetings to help to generate ideas for the climate strategy. These have been open to all members of the public and have attracted interest from some young members of our community. We also recently held an event specifically for 6-19 year olds on Thursday 20th February 2pm-4pm in Maidenhead Library – with around 20 young people attending the event. We have also presented at a number of schools to raise awareness of climate change and the development of our strategy.

We will continue to engage on this important matter with the wider community and there will continue to be an important role for young people in the process.

Mr Wright was not present therefore no supplementary question was asked.

o) Terence Pike of Sunningdale and Cheapside ward asked the following question of Councillor Clark, Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure:

Noting its statement introducing the October 2017 consultation on increasing parking availability in Sunningdale by a net 5 bays that “Pedestrians are having difficulty crossing Chobham Road”, how does the council plan to create a safe crossing?

A written response was provided:

Thank you for your question. The scheme to create new parking bays in Chobham Road was the subject of public consultation which resulted in 88% support for the scheme. In addition, the proposal to introduce a raised pedestrian crossing was consulted upon at the same time and resulted in 65% against this element.

(For background: Details of the scheme are available at https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200213/parking/664/parking_consultations/15)

Issues were raised during the design and construction phase raised by concerned residents with respect to improving conditions for pedestrians - no formal pedestrian crossing was installed as part of the parking scheme which reflects the outcome of the public consultation.

However, in order to positively respond to the resident concerns around vehicles speeds and pedestrian crossing points a 'flat-top' road hump at the southern end of the scheme together with other modifications to reduce vehicle speeds and increase awareness of the nature of the area was installed.

A further commitment was made to review vehicle speeds and pedestrian movements following completion of the project. This has been completed and I can advise that works have been commissioned to upgrade the 'flat top' hump to a pedestrian (zebra) crossing.

A budget of £240,000 was approved to develop, consult and deliver this project. I am pleased to advise that the scheme was delivered within budget and funding is available to extend the scope of the scheme to provide a pedestrian crossing.

Mr Pike was not present therefore no supplementary question was asked.

At the conclusion of the item, Councillor Hill requested that the order of business be amended as there were two individuals in the public gallery who wished to hear the debate on his motion on notice, which was the last item on the agenda. The Mayor responded she did not feel this was appropriate given the budget debate.

78. PETITIONS

No petitions were presented.

79. REFERRALS FROM OTHER BODIES

COUNCIL BUDGET 2020/21

Members were addressed by Ms Beaumont-Lall, on behalf of Mr Daniel Griffiths lead petitioner for a petition requesting the council to '[scrap plans to charge for residents parking permits.](#)' Ms Beaumont-Lall explained that unfortunately he had been late in opening the petition and had only gathered 91 signatures. She herself had only found out about the petition after it had closed. She had tried to put up her own petition but it had been rejected as a duplicate. However, she had highlighted the issue on an online forum and received support from 628 people in just 24 hours. The amount now proposed to be charged for a permit was double the cost when the council had previously removed the charges for parking permits in October 2013. Residents were seething at the misappropriation of borough money, for example funds used to pay for lamppost banners and on re-routing of the Queen Street junction. Ms Beaumont-Lall commented that she had looked into resident consultations and Freedom of Information requests at the council. She had identified a lack of a systematic approach, a lack of proper use of data, and no consideration of qualitative data. This was evidence that consultations were not done properly. She had also looked at the cost of parking permits in other towns and heritage cities such as Winchester and Salisbury; the proposed cost in the borough was higher. None would be needed if the

town centre planning situation been looked into appropriately and there had been sufficient consideration for the number of parking spaces needed for Crossrail.

Members were addressed by Jacob Cotterill, lead petitioner for a petition requesting the council to '[save Advantage Card parking discounts](#).' Mr Cotterill highlighted that his petition had received over 7000 signatures. The draft proposal was inadequate and would affect people's lives. The proposal was to save money without a plan to make travel in the borough greener, accessible and affordable; it would simply inconvenience residents. Less than 12 months previously, in the run up to the local elections, banners were erected about low council tax, community wardens and other investments. The proposals in the budget for 2020/21 painted a very different picture including cuts to Children's Services and Adult Social Care, increased council tax for the vulnerable, reductions in library services and reduced subsidies for local arts. The borough council decisions had been taken because the national government had hacked at the social fabric of the country for a decade. The council preferred private profit over the public good. There had been no mention of a council tax reduction scheme when candidates had been seeking election the previous year.

Mr Cotterill suggested that as the cuts would have consequences Members had the opportunity to put right a wrong. They should vote to keep Advantage Card discounts and bus subsidies until a long term plan to make travel environmentally friendly and accessible to all was in place. The council tax reduction scheme should be retained at the current level. Procurement practices should be overhauled. Mr Cotterill suggested these proposals could be reconciled with the black hole in the finances by the council standing up to the national government and saying it was not prepared to cut services further.

Councillor Hilton presented the budget. He explained that since the publication of the agenda, the precept for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (Band F) had been confirmed as £97.64. Councillor Hilton formally moved all motions contained in items 7i-7iv. He thanked Directors and officers across the council for the professional manner in which they had worked with their respective Cabinet Lead Members, well supported by the finance team and the expertise of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance registered interim accountants.

The administration proposed a transformative, innovative and financially responsible budget designed to future-proof the Royal Borough and allow it to protect the vulnerable, whilst supporting the discretionary services enjoyed by residents.

The council had a two-pronged approach to delivering on this aim, firstly transforming the Borough and secondly transforming how services were delivered.

Maidenhead was an important part of the transformation. The Braywick Leisure centre would open in 2020. The magnificent £36m state-of-the-art replacement for the ageing Magnet Leisure Centre would provide a space for everyone to enjoy sports, arts and cultural events. It would include bigger and better facilities than the Magnet but in keeping with the sustainability agenda was designed to use 70 per cent less energy.

The council had delivered the waterways project and the Stafferton Link Road which had improved east/west traffic flow, but the cranes on the Maidenhead skyline were evidence of more exciting projects. The council's joint venture schemes such as the Watermark to be followed by St Clouds Way and later the golf course were part of the plan to deliver new homes, energise businesses and revitalise the local economy.

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Importantly, the St Clouds Way and the Watermark developments would provide more than 220 new affordable homes.

The regeneration of Maidenhead would increase the council's income to enable it to improve services across the borough, but it would also create capital receipts that would help pay for the infrastructure needed to support future housing growth as well as projects in Windsor, the south and the rural areas too.

To ensure young people had the best opportunities to succeed, an overall investment of £233m in new school places was proposed. The council had already spent more than £30m in expanding schools such as Charters in Sunningdale and St Peters in Old Windsor.

The council had secured funding from the LEP for a review of the A329 in Ascot. Output from this review would inform the rejuvenation of Ascot Centre project and could lead to more infrastructure funding.

Windsor was the jewel in the crown. £1.5m would be spent to improve the public realm and support the visitor, retail and hospitality economies, which did so much to support vital public services. The council was considering other exciting opportunities to better manage coach parking, improve the visitor experience and re-energise Windsor.

The Oaks Leisure Centre remained a borough priority and in addition the council was committed to supporting the £640m Lower Thames Scheme that would protect residents' homes from flooding in Datchet and Wraysbury.

Over the next three years the council, the Joint Venture Partners and commercial developers would invest more than £78m into transforming the borough. This transformation would deliver homes, a revitalised centre to Maidenhead, a re-energised Windsor and an Ascot Centre to be proud of. Importantly it would promote the economic vibrancy essential to support critical public services and vision.

As the borough was transformed, so would the way council services were delivered. The council would be responsible, listen to residents and be fair.

A key principle underpinning this transformation was the response to the declaration of a climate emergency:

- The council wished to see recycling rates rise, and it was already seeing evidence of behavioural change. The council would support this cultural shift through a high-profile public awareness campaign
- Investing in modern workplace technology and encouraging innovation in Achieving for Children.
- Announcing a climate emergency meant taking climate change seriously. With this in mind subsidies for polluting vehicles would be cut and the council would encourage, where practical, the use of alternative sustainable transport. The council had listened to residents and would be considering options for a parking discount offer.

The second key principle was to fund a more targeted approach, in line with the mission of supporting the most vulnerable.

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- This meant investing in staff by hiring more full-time professionals; embracing the principle of targeting support to the most vulnerable through family hubs, and smarter Adult Social Care in line with and supported by expert opinion. Council staff did an amazing job and the small increase in council tax of just 79.5 pence a week for a Band D council tax payer would ensure that they could continue to do their brilliant work.

The third principle was to ensure the council was more commercial whilst prudent and fair in the use of council assets and the provision of services. The council would maximise the social and financial value of its commercial portfolio. Examples were the refurbished and highly successful York House in Windsor where the council would look to maximise returns to residents, and using the Maidenhead regeneration sites to deliver affordable homes for the social good.

All councils, like the Royal Borough, were experiencing increased costs for Children's and Adult Social Care. To give an idea of the scale confronting Local Government, in 2018/19, 80% of councils overspent their Children's Care budget by a total of £800m and a £2bn overspend was forecast for 2020. Across the country this was unsustainable. Lobbying by the LGA led to the announcement of an additional £1bn of social care funding. The council would add its weight to the argument that local authorities needed more funding. Councillor Johnson and Councillor Carroll had already met with local MPs Adam Afriyie and Theresa May and held meetings with Cabinet Ministers. These conversations would continue.

In the meantime, the council was proposing a council tax increase of 1.99% together with a 2% Adult Social Care Precept which would pay to support the most vulnerable residents. Despite this the Royal Borough would still have the lowest council tax in the country outside of London.

Councillor Hilton concluded that this was a transformative budget that put innovation opportunity and financial responsibility at its heart, it was a budget that would allow the council to continue to support the most vulnerable and indeed go even further in improving their life chances. Transformation was not only about the next year or even the year after, but how a borough council was built that was fit for the future. The budget proposed such a transformation.

Councillor Johnson second all motions in items 7i-7iv. He stated that the administration was resolutely united behind the budget. He acknowledged it was a difficult budget with difficult decisions, however the decisions were necessary if the council was to return the authority to the long term path of financial stability. All Members would be aware of the gravity of decisions to be taken and the legal obligation to deliver a balanced budget. He had heard calls for savings but he had not heard alternative proposals put forward. There was no credible alternative in the short term. The proposed budget was in the interest of the residents of the borough. Council would hear from Lead Members as to how they were proposing to build the borough in the long term for innovation and transformation, however he highlighted that the council was committed to: delivering the Oaks Leisure Centre before the next election, provision of affordable housing, finishing the regeneration of Maidenhead and starting on the rest of the borough. The Royal Borough would remain a low tax council but with the principal of 'the user pays' at the forefront. In terms of tackling climate change, the council was offering radical plans including discounts for electric vehicles. The administration was committed to delivering the budget including all identified savings.

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Councillor Jones presented the Opposition response to the budget. She thanked the Directors and the Finance team for producing a transparent and honest budget. Given the content of the proposed budget she stated that it was the first one, in many years, to give all Members the true picture of the council finances. It is a pity that all did not have sight of the full budget until 30 January. Opposition members would have welcomed the chance to submit an alternative budget but 15 working days was not enough time to produce a viable budget. The administration had taken 4 months and hours of officer time.

Councillor Jones commented that this year, for the first time, the truth was set out in the budget papers on page 192. Without the government allowing the council to raise council tax above the 2% cap it must identify £14m of savings from the revenue budget of approximately £90m by February 2022 to prevent the council from having negative reserves. Negative reserves meant the council would be bankrupt. The financial decisions made by the Conservative Administration were the sole cause of the council being in the disastrous financial situation.

Councillor Jones highlighted the ways in which the savings were proposed to be achieved:

- Increasing council tax for the most vulnerable
- Removing residents parking discounts. She was glad that this was to be revisited and hoped this would be brought forward immediately.
- Charging for parking permits. Only in the last year the administration had been on social media saying that it would never charge residents to park outside their own home.
- Reducing grants to arts, voluntary and community groups.
- Cutting subsidies for bus routes.
- Removing staff from York House, Windsor, which was the face of the council in Windsor and turning it into commercial rental
- Removal of the children's centres and youth sessions
- A reduction in Community Wardens

Councillor Jones commented that Councillor Hilton had stated in the previous year that transparency was important. Transparency had not been evident in previous budgets. There had been promises of no cuts to arts and culture, yet now cuts to the grants to Norden Farm and The Old Court were proposed. A leisure centre in Ascot had been promised however she could not see any expenditure for 'The Oaks' in the Capital Budget over the next 3 years despite its planning application being approved. £12.7m a year had been promised for road maintenance for the next 4 years yet the budget for highways works and maintenance for the next year was £3.1m. There had been promises not to cut library services, but opening hours were being reduced. There had been a 3 year agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau with promises that the council was increasing the grant to support their vital work. Now the grant was being cut. Lastly the administration had said that while more than 50% of councils planned to use reserves to support the budget, reserves would be increased by £3.5m to put the council in a strong position for the coming year. That did not happen, in fact reserves had been raided by £550,000 in the current year so far. That equated to £4m adrift and the proposal was to use over £2m of reserves to balance the budget next year

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Councillor Jones highlighted that borrowing was costing the council £6m in 20/21 and the Major Capital Cashflow (Appendix G) was not expecting any major capital receipts for 10 years. The assertion, made in February 2019 by the then Lead Member for Finance, that capital receipts from regeneration investments and developer contributions would fully fund all infrastructure investment the borough required leaving the council debt free, including the pension deficit, in the medium term future should it wish to be so now seemed recklessly speculative.

In fact within the Budget Strategy (Page 177) it stated that the council should undertake a review of its property portfolio as an increasing share of the council's budget was taken up with servicing debt. The council would need to consider whether to liquidate assets to reduce the heavy burden of debt repayments. Councillor Jones commented that it sounded like a fire sale to her and the administration may try to make excuses that many councils were in the same situation due to demand in Adult and Children's social care but that was all it was, just an excuse. Yes, there was demand but, unlike the administration, many councils had acknowledged the trend for demand some years ago. Councillor Jones referred Members to a graph in the 2015 /16 budget that had demonstrated the risk of ignoring the forecast demand to those services. Many councils had refused to plunder their reserves to prop up the revenue budget year on year and had not used capital funds for maintenance items. Many councils had sufficient reserves to cover any funding shortfalls.

On page 194 paragraph 7.6 it stated the 'key messages':

- The council may need to deliver ongoing savings of £15m in the next 4 years unless it could increase council tax above the 2% cap
- The council had insufficient reserves to sustain the scale of budget deficit for more than one year
- The level of reserves meant that it was likely to face a financial tipping point earlier than many other councils.

Councillor Jones commented that this was not a debate about quality of services, she congratulated the Ofsted 'Good' for Children's Services, it was whether the council could afford to deliver them in the future and what would need to be cut next year. As Councillor McWilliams had stated the previous year, in a speech read out in his absence, 'whilst all local authority ships were sailing into difficulties of increasing pressures of social care they didn't all have the strong sails of RBWM' His soundbite had been 'nothing simply happened in politics, everything was a choice'. The administration had chosen to ignore the warnings and set budgets to win elections without a clear direction of travel. It had chosen to provide services on the 'never never', hoping to be bailed out by a significant capital cash receipt. That had been the administration's choice. The council was legally not allowed to go bankrupt so the bad decision making had necessitated making unwanted cuts to budgets. A table had been produced for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel that highlighted RBWM was already a low spending council, spending significantly less per head of population than the nearest statistical neighbours and yet it was looking to reduce further.

At Cabinet Councillor Hilton had been blasé about the ability of the Conservative administration to deliver the cuts, in fact he mentioned that they had delivered before so he could not see an issue. There was £1.6m of pressures in the 20/21 budget book that could be attributed to unviable savings, and budgeted income shortfall from the current year. This was £1.6m that the administration had said was deliverable last year that was not. If it failed again this year to deliver savings then it would hasten the

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plunge into negative reserves. Funding was made up of council tax income (approximately 75%), business rates income and grants. Unfortunately when it came to the complex funding formula the government assumed each council would raise a certain amount locally. As stated on page 170 with the council's Band D being much lower the government assumed the council was generating £26.6m more funding when it allocated grant to the Royal Borough. Paragraph 7 of the report summary (page 160) stated that if the government funding settlement for the period 21/22 to 23/24 reduced funding and did not lift the 2% cap on council tax the council would not be in a position to set a balanced budget in 21/22 unless further significant savings were identified. Paragraph 4.5 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Page 189) where the finance department had set out the reasons why the council was at a tipping point (insufficient reserves, covering the pension deficit, servicing debt, maintaining low level of council tax) it said that more recent pressures around Children's & Adults were widening the gap even further.

If the council could not set a balanced budget in 21/22 or its financial position markedly deteriorated next year to a point where reserves did not cover any overspend, the council's S151 officer would have to issue a S114 notice that would take control of the finances out of the council's hands, this could be as early as next January. Councillor Saunders, as Finance Lead last year, took exception at Hartlepool apparently completely abdicating its responsibility for their council tax rise by blaming underfunding by the Conservative government. The Opposition expected the administration to take full responsibility for the inexcusable financial situation it had allowed to happen and not offer up excuses.

Councillor W. Da Costa proposed an amendment to the budget to allocate £15,000 from reserves to pay for training officers on climate change. Councillor W. Da Costa stated that on 25 June 2019 the Council had declared an environmental and climate emergency and committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and delivering a strategy to be brought before Full Council within 12 months, in other words, June. Since then, there had been increased erosion to coastlines in Norfolk and Devon, wildfires and droughts in Yorkshire and Southern farmland, extreme weather record temperatures and regular flooding in York, Leeds, Wales, North Somerset and even along the Thames, and one quarter of UK mammals now faced the risk of extinction.

The lungs of the planet were burning in the Amazon, record temperatures had killed thousands in Europe and Australia, there had been wildfires in Australia, loss of glaciers, melting of sea ice at record levels, changes in sea currents, and biodiversity was threatened with extinction levels not seen since the loss of the dinosaurs. Worse than that, greenhouse gases and temperature rises were causing acidification of the oceans and permafrost thawing in arctic regions, releasing large amounts of previously locked in greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to compound the situation.

At the present rate of greenhouse gas emissions, scientists thought that there were only around five years left to massively reduce greenhouse gases emissions to net zero, or face extremely dangerous levels of climate change that would threaten our species. As UN Secretary General Guterres had warned last summer, the world was close to the point of no return and needed to find solutions, not excuses. Urgent and intense effort was required by the council.

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Councillor W. Da Costa explained that he had spent the last six months attending training courses, talking and working with professors, scientists, climate change specialists, DEFRA, legislatures in Wales and Scotland, European councils, and Natural England, and spending much time at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales. This was a new science for humanity, but it was not easy. It was complex, with many feedback mechanisms and interrelated aspects:

- Generating renewable electricity
- Energy use for buildings
- Transportation networks and electric vehicles
- Land use, moving away from development on green belt and green fields
- Planning regimes to ensure that all developments and buildings were carbon neutral
- Farming, food sources and diets

The good news was that the solutions, methodologies, and training existed. Solutions which could safeguard the future for our children, and bring increasing health, wealth and vitality for all. Training could make the council experts on climate change, biodiversity and climate change resilience and, to apply it to relevant fields or work.

Councillor W. Da Costa asked who would need this deep level of training; who would prepare an Environmental and Climate Change strategy to build in resilience to the extremes that were coming; who were the experts in property, outsourcing, planning, waste, transportation, finance, schooling, and education to name but a few areas? The answer was the council officers.

Councillor W. Da Costa highlighted that the council had committed to producing a strategy by June 2020. This was therefore the last chance to put funding in place for the 20/21 budget year, to equip officers to understand and apply zero carbon methodologies and environmental sciences to their areas of responsibility. The proposal was for £15,000 one off seed funding. Councillor Stimson was working hard to raise funds for the future, but as yet those funds had not materialised, hence his proposal.

Councillor W. Da Costa blamed the spreadsheets. The complex, iterated spreadsheets meant a line had been missed. He was giving an opportunity to put that line back in. The council should turn back the point of no return and face the future together with bravery by equipping and investing in officers to make a truly future proofed budget that would help young people.

Councillor Davies seconded the amendment motion. She was disappointed that the budget did not include a coherent response to the climate change. On one level it said that removal of Advantage Card discounts was part of the response but it also increased costs for green waste bins. There was no funding for climate emergency work. The council was in danger of losing the goodwill of the group of committed residents who had been involved.

Councillor Stimson commented that she was sure that by June funding would have been identified for training; however she did not wish to dig into reserves and amend the budget, therefore she could not support the amendment. It was very important that officers were trained so they all understood the complexity of the issues.

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Councillor C. Da Costa commented that Councillor Stimson's statement that the council might have the money by June was not good enough. If it would be available she suggested the funding be made available now and added back into reserves by June.

Councillor Hill commented that he was staggered that there was no budget line to address climate change. He would have expected at least £500,000 for such a major issue. He expressed concern that the last green lung with mature trees in Maidenhead (the golf course site) would be removed.

Councillor Rayner commented that all Members supported the work on climate change. There was a corporate training budget that all service areas could bid for and she felt this was the appropriate way to take the proposal forward.

Councillor Carroll commented that the existing training budget should be considered first and therefore asked the Lead Member to undertake a review in conjunction with the Director of Resources and Head of HR, Corporate Projects and IT. All sorts of training options were available and these needed to be assessed to ensure a comprehensive and systematic approach.

Councillor Werner stated that he was disappointed in the administration's response; it said it wanted to fight climate change but when it came to putting money where its mouth was it did not deliver. Funding was needed in the budget and he therefore thought a proper assessment would already have been undertaken.

Councillor Johnson confirmed the administration had a resolute and undying commitment to tackle climate change. He found the Opposition approach to be greatly inconsistent as Members had commented that money should not be taken out of the revenue budget because the council had no money left but others then suggested spending £500,000 on the issue or using £15,000 of reserves for training. There was a corporate budget of £74,000 for training. Officers had already started to come up with ideas such as parking discounts for electric vehicles. He highlighted that town centre densification helped to avoid building on the green belt. The council had opposed Heathrow expansion including committing £100,000 to the fight. An asset review was planned which would include a review of the carbon footprint. There was also a need to provide homes in the borough; simply saying no development was not an option. The council needed to build an economic climate to enable it to tackle climate change issues. The council would play its part but in the confines of what a local authority could do.

Councillor Davey highlighted that given the amount of money that had been wasted, £15,000 out of reserves would not have much impact. Members needed to understand the borough's strategy. In relation to electric vehicles, he commented that it took eight years to justify returns in comparison to normal cars.

Councillor McWilliams commented that the budget had been through rigorous scrutiny with officers and Opposition Members feeding in. Proposing an amendment at such a late stage without any semblance of a plan was not the right way forward.

Councillor Jones highlighted that the amendment stated outcomes were to be clearly defined before training would commence. £15,000 was less than had been spent on

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plastic banners in 2019. If it was found later on that the training was not needed, the money could be put back into reserves.

Councillor Walters commented that this was his 46th budget. The Conservatives had passed the Climate Change bill; all were on the same side. The amendment looked like an artificial creation to draw a political divide that did not exist. The Leader had already pointed out the practical things that were being done to address the issue.

Councillor Stimson explained that she had said she would second the motion later in the agenda about allowances, not the amendment that proposed taking money from reserves. She would be willing to put her entire allowance in if necessary to show her commitment.

Councillor Hilton referred to Councillor Jones' earlier speech in which she had said the council was close to the edge and may need to issue a S114 notice yet was also now saying it was ok to take money out of reserves. Councillor Johnson had already highlighted the £74,000 budget for training.

Councillor Jones commented that she was disappointed at the attacks given a reasonable amendment had been put forward. She was looking for a commitment in some form from the administration; it could be in a different format.

Councillor W. Da Costa commented that Councillor Stimson had worked very hard, but it was officers that needed the training. He would be happy for the amendment to be changed so that money could be allocated now but put back into reserves at a later date if not needed. He was not keen for it to come out of the corporate training budget as this would detriment other officers. The pivotal issue was that training was needed now rather than after the strategy was produced.

A named vote was taken on the amendment proposed by Councillor W. Da Costa and seconded by Councillor Davies: 17 Councillors voted for the motion; 22 Councillors voted against the motion; 1 Councillor abstained. The motion therefore fell.

Amendment to budget - £15,000 from reserves to fund officer training on climate change (Amendment)	
Councillor John Baldwin	For
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	Against
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	Against
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Catherine del Campo	For
Councillor David Cannon	Against
Councillor Stuart Carroll	Against
Councillor Gerry Clark	Against
Councillor David Coppinger	Against
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	For
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Karen Davies	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	For

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Councillor David Hilton	Against
Councillor Maureen Hunt	Against
Councillor Andrew Johnson	Against
Councillor Greg Jones	Against
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Councillor Ross McWilliams	Against
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor Helen Price	For
Councillor Samantha Rayner	Against
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	For
Councillor Julian Sharpe	Against
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	Against
Councillor Donna Stimson	Abstain
Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	Against
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Councillor Simon Werner	For
Rejected	

Councillor Baldwin commented that the deafness on behalf of the Conservative administration had been induced by the previous large majority. Councillors Werner and Jones had been routinely mocked for their Cassandra-like predictions. However, stakes were too high for petty recriminations. The talents of all 41 councillors should be used. Councillor Johnson had promised a collegiate approach; now was the time to deliver on this promise.

Councillor Baldwin suggested that the CIL rate for all town centre developments should be raised to 15%. The collection of CIL was very important but the council continued to allow a 0% rate in the areas of greatest density. Property developers took the long view. £7500 on each of 12,000 buildings roughly equated to £9m in uncollected capital receipts. Councillor Baldwin felt it was time to end the subsidy to wealthy corporations.

Councillor Reynolds commented that less than a year ago local elections had been held; now with one notable exception the policies could not be more different. He wished to focus on what residents were told compared to what they were going to get. The 24 hour pothole pledge had now been ended. There was no budget for the Oaks Leisure Centre. 28 Community Wardens had been reduced to 19. The budget no longer referred to expansion of the Windsor Leisure Centre. A lot of people had been let down.

Councillor C. Da Costa began by stating that the council had excellent officers leading both Adults and Children's services. She welcomed the Ofsted report showing that Achieving for Children were rated as 'Good'. The challenge was to remain as 'Good' or aspire to improve despite the cuts in funding. She had seen reports that consultations had taken place but were not always taken into account. She urged the

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council to listen to the parents who would respond to the current consultation on Children's Centres. She was concerned that the borough would become reliant on church and voluntary groups to provide services. In particular she was concerned about training of youth leaders. Voluntary groups did not have full training to understand all safeguarding issues. She asked the borough to provide sufficient training. She suggested this could be funded by stopping wine after full Council meetings.

Councillor Rayner thanked the Lead Member, officers in the finance team and all the officers throughout the council who had worked so hard to deliver a balanced budget in light of rising adult and children's services costs.

The budget showed the council's commitment to transformation with IT beginning with the move to the modern workplace roll out phase 1 putting in new computers and screens across many departments at RBWM which had been a huge success increasing the capabilities and effectiveness of many departments. This would continue in 20/21 as the whole organisation updated the final wave with £800,000 for phase 2.

Braywick Leisure centre would complete within the year with the opening on 5 September 2020. The progress was now evident and looking stunning. The leisure centre would provide outstanding sport and community facilities to residents and secure its future as the Magnet was at the end of its life. Following the Magnet demolition the project for building of much needed homes on the St Clouds site would begin.

The jewel in the crown was Windsor. Windsor, like many towns, had seen a decline in the High Street and a change in how people spent their leisure time and how they shopped. The borough was fortunate the castle was the most popular of all Royal Estate properties and so Windsor was changing to react to these new habits and environment.

The budget, through LEP funding, was putting £1.563m to improve to the public realm in Windsor and making better the visitor and local experience in the town centre. This would be the beginning of revitalising and preparing Windsor for the future which was vital for the economy and businesses.

The businesses were a key strategic partner as plans were developed. The council was fortunate to have so many local and international businesses who were committed. Moving forward the council hoped to work much closer with them and work on projects to develop the economy and community.

With the budget there had been challenges for officers and Lead Members to find savings and income in their service areas. She thanked library and resident services who had worked with her. She had been impressed by their professionalism in protecting residents and the vulnerable and allowing the borough to still be one of the best library services in the country based on the number of hours open by population.

The proposal was to reduce the opening hours, one of these changes was to open every day apart from Sunday. There would be some evening opening but reduced from the current times. The council recognised how important the library was to residents, supported by excellent footfall, digital and physical book loan numbers.

The other proposal was to move customer service from York House where it was originally before the new development at York House, back to the library. The move to the library in Windsor was so successful that people were still choosing that in preference to York House.

The team also look after resident and parking permits. The new scheme was proposed to cover administrative costs; a fee of £50 for the first permit and £70 for second permits. This would put the council in line with other councils locally for example Runnymede charged £50 for the first car and £70 for the second. Guildford was £50 and £80 and Reading was £40 and £150. To promote the environment and electric cars there would be no charge for fully electric cars. This would also provide data for future electric charging points across the borough.

This budget was about a lot of change but there were also so many opportunities to be better.

Councillor Del Campo commented that when the council declared it was going to 'transform early years and youth services to be targeted at the most vulnerable, the statement was disingenuous in a number of ways. The euphemistic use of the word 'transformation' suggested there would be a massive improvement to services but in reality it was a reduction in investment and service levels in some areas. While none would disagree with the idea of supporting the most vulnerable residents, Councillor Del Campo's question had always been: 'How do we support those people who are not yet on the radar?'

Until now, the net had been cast as far and wide as possible. Now, the council was asking the fish to make their own way to the boat; many would not come. By concentrating services in two hubs, the council was forcing people who did not have cars onto public transport. When someone was in crisis, it could sometimes be difficult to get out of the front door, never mind navigating an unreliable public transport service. Again, many would not come. Many of the issues families encountered were hidden. People did not tend to talk openly about domestic abuse, drug or alcohol abuse, or financial worries. However specially trained staff at local drop-in centres, like the Children's Centres, were able to spot the signs and signpost people to the correct support. She disagreed with the assumption that these people would look to the private sector instead. Some were living with the effects of austerity and zero-hours contracts. They would not come, and they would not get the support they needed.

Councillor Del Campo commented that it seemed to be strange to be voting on the issue now, without knowing the outcome of the consultation. She joined others in congratulating the teams and individuals involved in achieving the results of the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services and the borough's SEND provision. However, the council must acknowledge that there was still much to be done. After Children's Services received a 'requires improvement' judgement in 2015, things got significantly worse before they got better, and this meant that the baseline the council was working from was actually lower than 'requires improvement'. This was, perhaps, why Ofsted noticed that "the legacy of poorer practice is still evident for children in some areas of the service". Staff turnover was still a massive issue and, according to Ofsted, work to address services for care leavers was still in its infancy.

It was vital that the council continued to drive forward improvements to Children's Services and SEND offering, without losing any momentum, to avoid a whole generation of young people missing out on the opportunity to live their best lives.

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Councillor Del Campo commented that this year's cuts were just the beginning and that savings would need to be made year on year to give the council the best chance of avoiding financial disaster. The Conservatives had had 12 years to get this right.

Councillor Coppinger confirmed that the CIL rate was determined by an Inspector based on evidence of need, not by the council.

Councillor Larcombe commented that he wanted to focus on what had been left out of the budget. Members had twice heard that the River Thames Scheme protected people in the borough. Water from Maidenhead went down the Jubilee River and ended up in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury and other wards downstream. The cost of the River Thames Scheme was £640m and the best guess was that this would increase by £1m for every week it was delayed. The stated budget at the start of the project had been £230m. The council would have to find another £40m; Cllr Larcombe questioned where this would come from. The Jubilee River had cost £100m but had design flaws, increased costs of repair and only worked at two-thirds of capacity.

Councillor Tisi commented that Members had been told that the proposals were not cuts, but were part of a transformation project. They had also been told the proposals were planned even if the financial situation had not been in disarray. She asked what kind of council would cut Children's Centres or deliberately price people out of using the town centres? The administration should have seen this coming, Member of the Opposition had said the council was heading into choppy waters but they had been ignored. Residents felt they were getting very little for their council tax. The parking discount was one way they did receive a benefit. There was no equity when residents in Maidenhead would experience an 83% increase, whereas in Windsor the increase would be £340%. She understood that Windsor captured tourists who had no choice to pay higher prices. However this meant residents could not avoid the costs to undertake daily tasks or to work in the town. To claim the proposals were environmentally-motivated was laughable; the subsidised bus rate was about to be cut. Like many she could not afford electric cars to benefit from the free parking. There was no guarantee that the proposals would increase income as people would go elsewhere and footfall would reduce. Solutions were needed but not ones that punished residents.

Councillor Baskerville commented that barely six months after launching a much-lauded 24-hour fix-it policy, the administration had decided to scale it back, having concluded the job had been done. After one of the wettest and windiest winters on record, residents might be excused for thinking such a statement was premature. Standing water and frosty mornings were not conducive to keeping repaired potholes in pristine condition. Asphalt lifted out and holes re-appeared as quickly as they were filled. Filling holes to a decent depth and sealing the edges properly were the minimum requirements if the work was to hold. Whether the £450,000 reportedly used to repair 471 potholes was money well spent, especially at a time of cutting budgets, was a moot point. Potholes would continue to appear and would need to be filled. Whether it was done in 24 hours or 24 days, people would still need to get around the borough safely and without too much inconvenience. The important thing was that the people of the borough needed to have confidence that the council was doing a good job; the jury was still out on that. On a more general point, amid all the claims and political spin of what had and had not been done over the last decade, Councillor Baskerville hoped he was not alone in feeling that a bit of humility and self-reflection opposite was needed more than ever. Councillor Baskerville felt that one word would be a start; that word was 'sorry'.

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Councillor Werner commented that this was the most appallingly shocking budget he had seen in the 27 in which he had been a Councillor. He highlighted that residents wanted to use the green waste collection scheme but would be taxed for doing so; the budget was therefore anti-green. Children's Centres were being closed, the budget was anti-families. He highlighted that the consultation would close after the budget was agreed. Youth clubs were being closed; the budget was anti-young people. Proposals for the council tax reduction scheme meant the budget was anti-vulnerable people. Parking costs would increase so people would go elsewhere; the budget was anti-town centre. More business would close and there would be less business rates. These were all knock-on effects of decisions being made. Councillor Werner questioned the efficiency savings associated with services being contracted-out as research showed they were no longer true and councils were bringing contracts back in house to save money. The council should invest to save, not sell assets to generate revenue. Councillor Werner commented that he had previously nicknamed budgets, for example the 'gamblers' budget'. He was naming this year's budget as 'evil and stupid'.

Councillor Price stated that her residents were angry and she was also angry. She was angry at a budget which had not truly considered its impact on residents and businesses. A budget that Members were being told had to be, because of the administration's financial mismanagement and smoke and mirrors. Councillor Price provided examples of the impact on two of her residents as a result of the removal of the Advantage Card discount on parking:

- A family with two children in nursery in the centre of Windsor. The father had worked out it would cost them an additional £40 per week, with dropping off and picking up, shopping, and children's activities. This family would have to earn another £2,500 per annum to pay for this alone and there was more to come via council tax increases, green bin collection etc. No one could suddenly switch on additional income like that so they would likely have to find another nursery and children's activities elsewhere.
- A man who took his elderly mum into Windsor for banking and also did errands and helped out other lonely elderly people. He had worked out it would cost him an extra £60 per month. He had told Councillor Price he would carry on supporting his mother obviously but just could not afford any more. The result was that elderly residents became isolated lonely and less supported.

Councillor Price stated that she had spoken to traders in Windsor. Their customers had said they would not be shopping there anymore. She had read the reactions on social media with residents stating they would be cancelling their gym membership if they had to pay for parking in the evenings. Windsor businesses were in a fragile state anyway and a reduced tourism footfall.

Councillor Price then focussed on cuts in supporting the voluntary sector. Cutting £220,000 of revenue next year, rising to £250,000 the year after. She questioned how such cuts of eye-watering magnitude matched the strategic priority of enabling the community and voluntary sectors to flourish. The administration was presenting a budget significantly cutting back on non-essential services to residents and assuming that the voluntary sector would step forward to fill these cuts. However the budget was also hacking the community organisations off at the knees. The council should be building its community infrastructure not cutting back. However it appeared that the

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administration had an approach of zero investment in people and the community, just in bricks and mortar. The voluntary sector would not be able to step forward, being starved of funds.

Councillor Price referred to the proposal to take away £330,000 from the poorest residents by changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The administration claimed to be protecting the most vulnerable; she posed the question, were the poor not the most vulnerable? Councillor Price explained that one of her residents was disabled, a tetraplegic who received Council Tax Reduction. After the reduction in support and the annual increase that would go up around 1.5 times. Not available on prescription were his incontinence sheets, gloves, and medications which were rising in price faster than any rise in benefits. Gardening was his major solace and his green bin cost was to rise. Councillor Price had asked him how he would manage with all the increases and he had told her he would just have to stop activities. He could appeal, but with appeals for his Clinical Care he found this very stressful and time consuming. In her ward of Clewer and Dedworth East, multiple deprivation statistics clearly showed high levels of deprivation, in the worst 30% in England. Radian, the local social housing provider, found that of all their Thames Valley housing, the most deprived residents lived in Clewer and Dedworth East and West. This meant such residents (well over 1000) were deprived in terms of income, employment, health and disability, education and training, and crime. She questioned why the administration believed such residents would just happen to have loose change in their pockets to pay more each week and assumed the same collection rate would be achieved. There was no fund to pay for mitigation that she could find in the budget.

Councillor Bhangra congratulated his fellow ward colleague Councillor Carroll and all the RBWM team involved in the fantastic work in receiving a Good rating from Ofsted for Children's Services. He also thanked all Royal Borough officers for the work they had done on the budget. Councillor Bhangra explained that he had been contacted by residents in respect of how the budget proposals would affect grant funding for Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, which was a jewel and real asset in the Royal Borough and something that both Councillor Carroll and he were extremely proud to have in the ward of Boyn Hill.

He knew how important Norden Farm was; like many other community groups and cultural organisations in the Royal Borough it was lifeline and centre-point for communities providing many social and beneficial activities. Both his daughters had been taught drama and Bollywood dancing at Norden Farm over many years. All councils were experiencing challenging financial positions so the Royal Borough was no different to the rest of the country. There were significant pressures in both adults and children's services and the council was working to reduce the gap between income and expenditure. There had been a lot of misinformation being sent out on social media recently. The council provided £200,000 to community groups to support a variety of voluntary, community and cultural organisations across the borough. The grant funding for Norden Farm in 2019/2020 increased by £58,000 due to wage pressure increases and assistance. On the whole Norden Farm had received grant funding of £100,000 for four years prior to 2019/20. In 2020/21 the funding would be £141,000 and the following years £125,000, so in essence £25,000 more than in 2018/2019. RBWM owned the freehold and Norden Farm was not required to pay any rent.

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Alongside Councillor Carroll and Rayner he had been working closely with the manager at Norden Farm to seek additional funding through various channels for example The Arts Council England, setting up crowd funding and meeting with the local Members of Parliament the thus bringing this important matter to their attention. They had both written to The Arts Council seeking funding assistance for Norden Farm.

Councillor Bhangra highlighted that the borough was a low tax council, the eighth lowest in England. Neighbouring authorities were mainly in the higher council tax rate. In 2019/20, Band D costs were:

- In the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead £1,036 per annum
- In Slough £1,367; £361 higher than the Royal Borough
- In Wokingham £1,484; £448 higher than the Royal Borough
- In Reading was £1,627; £591 higher than the Royal Borough

Members had difficult decisions to make which were not easy, but that what it did now would reflect on years to come, bringing the council finances into an improved position.

Councillor Cannon thanked officers in parking and finance for the complex job undertaken in relation to the parking budget, with the assistance of some members of the Opposition who had given constructive and helpful suggestions. Unfortunately they were not financially viable at the current time. He highlighted that standard tariffs were being frozen across the borough, it was only season tickets that were increasing by inflation. He recognised that the proposal to remove the Advantage Card discount has caused great concern to many residents, particularly in Windsor. It was not something that the administration would have chosen to do. Councillor Cannon announced that, in the interest of fairness the elected councillor borough-wide parking discounts would also be withdrawn. There were two key considerations that had influenced the proposals on parking discounts. One was the inequity of the discounted charges across the car parking estate. The differential between discounted Advantage Card tariffs and the standard tariffs ranged from an average discount in Victoria Street, Windsor of 67% to an average at the Magnet Leisure Centre of 18%. Equally, he recognised that parking tariffs were generally higher in Windsor and therefore the removal of the discounts had a particularly negative effect. The second consideration was the council's commitment to respond to the climate change emergency. It was crucial that the future parking strategy aligned with those aims. After taking into account both of these considerations, the council was currently undertaking a review of a number of options for parking charges within an overall borough parking strategy. This would particularly focus on the issues in Windsor. He could confirm that, subject to proper due process, new arrangements would take effect from 1 September 2020. He stressed that it was important that the work was not rushed and that it was properly implemented. This timeframe would enable council Members and residents to consider what was being done and fully understand the implications.

Councillor Stimson explained that her cabinet portfolio comprised Environmental Services, Climate Change, Sustainability and Parks and Countryside, which was a wonderful combination of everything that pointed towards a wonderful new world. In

terms of the difficult budget path, there had been some horrible decisions to make which Members had spent several months working through with the finance team. The two that had the most effect on her portfolio were the increased cost to the green waste subscription service (to bring it more in line with neighbouring boroughs), and getting rid of the free Saturday collection of green refuse that the council offered. Neither of these were taken lightly, with the knowledge that they might increase negative behaviour. The council had to balance its budget, in the end it was choosing between a rock and a hard place.

Councillor Stimson confirmed that at Council in June, the council would be unveiling its Climate Resilience Strategy. The strategy would be coalescing around four key areas. In relation to natural capital, how to preserve and grow green and blue infrastructure, and how to start to join the dots for nature recovery networks in the borough and ensure that urban areas had more green within them. In terms of renewable energy, how to become a more carbon neutral borough quickly, how to be more energy efficient, and how to ensure businesses in the borough paid the same attention to carbon reduction. In terms of sustainable mobility how to become a healthier borough, walking and cycling more, have a low carbon transport plan, no idling zones, and a parking strategy to encourage low carbon behaviour. In addition a circular economy, in other words how to waste less, use less, re-use more, and eliminate single use wherever possible from the borough. If there were savings in this regard she would do her best to keep them to support the strategy. These areas would be supported by communications and engagement, monitoring and measurement, and funding. The council would work with the government, Opposition Members and residents as it was a borough strategy not a council strategy.

Councillor W. Da Costa suggested there were two leading-edge opportunities for the council including funding opportunities. The council could be the first to hold a climate change assembly for residents and involving Natural England to help with the green and blue infrastructure. In relation to parking charges, freezing charges was not really fair as the costs in Windsor were higher than in Maidenhead. There would be a 300% increase in charges in two years if the removal of the Advantage Card discount was taken into account. This would sap energy out of the town and reduce footfall. The administration had spoken of a £1.5m investment in Windsor, he suggested some of this funding should be used to bring back Advantage Card discounts in Windsor. In relation to parking permits, Councillor W. Da Costa commented that the ridiculously appalling planning policy had not been updated and therefore the council allowed developments without sufficient parking which inevitably spilled out into side areas. Management of HMOs in the borough was also an issue. The Leader of the Council had said he wanted a low tax council but this also meant having the lowest income despite cost pressures, which lead to further costs. Free parking for electric vehicles was great but only the rich could afford them at the moment.

Councillor Hill used the analogy of “The Once Good Ship RBWM” in his budget speech. He explained that it all started many years ago when Able Seaman Dudley worked his passage to join the senior ranks, supporting Captain Burbage. The course was set, reducing cabin fares and costs, and looking good at party headquarters. ‘Lookout’ Jones was the first to spot two icebergs heading towards the ship. Lost in legend they were known as ‘the daddy of all debts’ and ‘pension fund deficit’. Very few listened as ‘Lookout’ Jones battled alone trying to get a change of course. In a mutiny, Captain Burbage was demoted and newly promoted Captain Dudley took control of the “RBWM”.

Entering increasingly rough waters 'Lookout' Jones persistently warned of trouble ahead. Councillor Hill explained that he and others, also seeing trouble ahead, started to openly disagree with Captain Dudley. All were swiftly demoted. Councillor Hill and others pressed charges against the now all-powerful Captain Dudley. It came as a bitter blow when Captain Dudley, backed by all but a few, survived. The knowing stole away in life-boats but Councillor Hill stayed to walk the plank. Councillor Hill, however, wearing a life-vest, managed get back on board through one of the sea-doors just above the water-line.

Councillor Hill continued his analogy: Life on-board was getting tougher and tougher under Captain Dudley. More crew members disappeared in life-boats and there were tales of officers being thrown over-board. The passengers were becoming restless and complaining about constant cuts in services and ever-increasing extra charges. The complaints were now reaching the mainland with news reports and rumours constantly circulating the ship. Things were looking bad for Captain Dudley as 'the daddy of all debts' and 'pension fund deficit' could now be clearly seen on the horizon. Then one morning an announcement came: Captain Dudley had left in the dead of night never to be seen again. There was mounting fear of 'pension fund deficit', as if on auto-pilot, she would collide with the ship ripping a gash out of the hull below the water-line. The valiant but now skeleton crew would work around the clock to repair the damage and pray she did not hit again, but they knew she would.

The new Captain Johnson (parachuted in from the mainland) unwittingly took the job only to discover just how close to doom the ship was. The Senior Technical Officer managed to get expert help to diagnose the faults with the rudder and engines. They battled to find ways to repair the damage done by lack of maintenance of previous commands, so the "RBWM" could change course. Desperate to raise cash but hamstrung by company policy Captain Johnson was set to increase cabin fares, sadly the highest proposed increases must go to cabins housing the poorest passengers. The captain must also increase costs for all manner of much-needed rations across the ship. Passengers were becoming even more restless and very angry, however, those vital supplies were becoming beyond the Captain's reach.

Councillor Hill's analogy concluded that nevertheless, some on board continued to be blissfully unaware of what an iceberg could do to a ship, let alone being without funds to buy much needed supplies. No one quite knew the future of the "The Once Good Ship RBWM", for certain there had been many failures of governance, scrutiny and leadership. On her current course bankruptcy loomed along with fatal collision. The Captain desperately tried to change course but found himself stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea. There was little room to manoeuvre in the now renamed "RBWM Titanic".

Councillor Carroll commented that there had been much misinformation relating to adult social care, social services and public health. Funding for adult social care would increase by £1.9m and for children's services by £1.2m. The council had taken the adult social care precept at the earliest opportunity, under the previous Lead Member. In children's services a proactive transformation plan had been embarked upon to focus on high cost placements. Plans were in place to move from 'Good' to 'Outstanding in terms of Ofsted rating in the next four years. The council followed the evidence, as recommended by the Children's Commissioner, for example in relation to children's hubs.

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Councillor Carroll explained that there were significant demographic pressures. There was a need to move to prevention strategies and the use of assisted technology.

Councillor Clark highlighted the major investment in infrastructure, initially in Maidenhead but then across the borough in the medium term. He highlighted a number of schemes:

- Maidenhead missing link - £2.8m
- Maidenhead station interchange car park - £4.6m
- Road maintenance - £5m, including capital resurfacing (£1.9m), find and fix pothole pledge (£100,000)

Councillor Clark commented that the find and fix scheme worked very well. Once identified, potholes were fixed on a priority basis. Between September and December 2019, 471 potholes had been identified and 476 were repaired as adjacent potholes were also identified on inspection.

Councillor McWilliams commented that he wanted to focus on the future. The council, not just the staff and the facilities the council provided but the residents, the local economy and the infrastructure all ensured that the borough had fundamental essential strengths. He encouraged everyone to respond to the consultation on children's services. He had undertaken a tour of nine of the centres across the borough. One building the council paid £25,000 per year for was open one day a week with just five children in attendance. This was an example of how money could be spent better through targeting. Councillor McWilliams reiterated the increases in funding in children's services (£1.2m) and adult social care (£1.9m).

In relation to housing, Councillor McWilliams explained that the service had historically had a large budget because it utilised temporary accommodation. This was not a long term solution therefore there had been a focus on prevention and a £200,000 reduction in temporary accommodation costs.

Councillor Davey commented that Windsor contributed 40% of council tax receipts to the borough but did not get its fair share of capital investment. He questioned the proposal to spend £3m - £4m on cycle paths, way more than the £1.9m budget for roads, when the council was likely to have no reserves left at the end of 2021-22 and there was the very real possibility of a section 114 notice being served. The council was £200m overdrawn, with £7m due in interest payments. Councillor Davey felt it was time to 'wake up and smell the coffee'. Once the Conservative leader admitted and accepted responsibility for his party's actions, Councillor Davey stated he would be happy to do his bit to help the council get out of the financial mess. However, he would be expecting a greater balance of investment for Windsor in the years to come.

As the new Independent Lead on Infrastructure he would be asking lots of questions moving forward and looking for answers, such as:

- Why was the LEP's £100,000 for Ascot on the front page of the budget when surely the potential multi-million loss on the Braywick Leisure Centre would better represent Conservative financial management?
- If the council received £98,000 CIL income for Air Quality, why was there only £60,000 in the budget for next year?

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- Why was the council funding MAKE Maidenhead, what about Windsor?
- In relation to the meagre £1.5m LEP for re-energising Windsor, when would plans be available?
- Did West Windsor residents need more houses on the Greenbelt?

Councillor Davey asserted that the borough was not like other councils, Windsor was a town commanding global interest and that needed to be appreciated more in the decision process. RBWM did tend to milk Windsor for what it could get when actually, it could do with a little more 'tlc'.

Councillor Davey congratulated officers on looking for guidance from CIPFA and implementing the RBWM Capital Strategy Gateway Process. He questioned why Conservative councillors had been allowed to overstep the mark and dictate how it was going to be to officers. Stories of councillors banging on tables to get their own way and officers forced to back down for fear of repercussions were totally unacceptable.

Councillor Davey highlighted that when he has asked about CC52 Clewer & Dedworth Neighbourhood Improvements with a budget of £350,000 back in June the Conservatives had just laughed. He had asked why it was £35,000 over budget. There had been no answers, just laughter. CIPFA had subsequently looked at the books and the overspend was now over £400,000.

Another budget line, CD27 Pave Dedworth was showing £29,000 overspent. CY27, which could only be described as an election budget of £250,000, was canned after the election when 18 Independents and Liberal Democrats walked through the doors in May 2019. Councillor Davey questioned how a budget line could be removed without a vote.

Councillor Davey read out a comment from a local resident responding to one of his blogs: *'Stop all this political nonsense and act responsibly, let's see a little professionalism and solve the immediate problems of the budget. Time is a luxury that we do not have, action is required now, positive decisions are needed. Too many committees, too many meetings and your working shire horse ends up looking like a camel.'*

Councillor Davey commented that the Conservatives had got the council into this mess, so they must get it out. This would mean making some brave decisions. Firstly, reverse the decision to abolish the Advantage Card discount. If residents stopped coming just once a week, that equated to £1m. Added to the £650,000 revenue forecast and nearly one third of the reserves was used up. Secondly, admit there was only one logical way out, call for a referendum and suggest a realistic but painful increase in council tax. Then work on a strategy to convince residents to vote for a referendum, a huge ask.

Councillor Bond commented that parking permits were to cost £120 for a two car household; £50 for one car. There was no variation on type of car, fuel type or based on parking restrictions in an area. The only exception was electric vehicles. Neighbourhoods of Victorian and Edwardian housing with minimal off-street parking would be affected. If residents were expected to pay, they would expect proper enforcement. In relation to Ways Into Work, Councillor Bond explained he had recently met a service user and he could see the value of the scheme. Optalis were second in

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the national rankings and Ways Into Work were fourth but there was an ambitious programme to reduce costs. The adult social care transformation programme to achieve £1.7m in savings also seemed very ambitious. He was particularly concerned about the need to retain social workers to avoid agency rates. Councillor Bond stated that more detail was needed about the capital programme working group including membership and decision making powers.

Councillor Bateson commented that as a ward councillor she would continue to pursue the Oaks leisure centre as this was important for the Ascot area. The nearest swimming pool was 10 miles away with limited public transport.

Councillor Hilton concluded that in 2015/16 the council had assumed an end of year overspend of £772,000 therefore it had implemented a change in approach. From 2016/17 onwards the council had increased council tax to the capping limit and added a 1% social care precept. Unfortunately the increasing costs for adults, children and vulnerable people requiring social care had grown faster than council tax. The council was determined to continue to support vulnerable people by taking the necessary decisions in the budget. Councillor W. Da Costa had suggested using LEP funding to subsidise parking. Councillor Hilton explained that the funding was ring-fenced to improve the environment in Windsor to improve footfall. The parking discounts did not make sense and needed to be reviewed. Councillor Hilton highlighted that the council's role was to provide seed-funding grants for organisations which would then look for other sources of funding. Councillor Lynne Jones had suggested that to balance next year's budget the council would need to save £14m. Councillor Hilton confirmed that the figure was £4.4m and there was £1.7m in reserve within the budget to be used if needed. He was determined this money would not be spent by assiduously making sure the savings were met and the money went back into reserves to support next year's budget.

i) COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Councillor Price stated that she was concerned that the consultation process had not adhered to the statutory obligations thereby leaving the council open to possible lawsuits. The consultation had been open until 7 February 2020. Setting aside Christmas and New Year, this gave people four weeks to respond and she questioned whether this was reasonable. She had thought six weeks was the borough standard. The results of the consultation had not been available when the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel had met to discuss the budget therefore there had been no time for scrutiny of the methodology. The 1992 Local Government Finance Act required the council to consult with recipients of CTR and the wider council tax payer. At the Overview and Scrutiny Panel she had asked if all recipients had been consulted to enable them to respond and start budgeting for an increase. She had been told this would have been too expensive. She therefore felt the council had not met its statutory obligations. The response rate from current recipients was 0.8%. The total number of responses was 138, which she felt was very low. The report stated that emails were sent to community groups and charities likely to have contact with CTR recipients but this was only a selection. Organisations not contacted included the Disability and Inclusion Forum, Housing Solutions, Radian, and Maidenhead Lions (although Windsor Lions had been). She felt the groups contacted were not representative. Additionally, they were only emailed about the consultation on 29 January 2020. Government guidance advised that consultations should be designed to be accessible to and clearly targeted those that would be affected. This was not the case for this

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consultation and it was hard to see how the council had complied with its duties under the Equality Act when Members had not been supplied with the Equality Impact Assessment referred to in paragraph 11 of the report. All councillors should have read this document in advance of making the decision. The assessment was only prepared on 5 February 2020 and had not been approved by the Head of Service, nor was it appended to the report.

Councillor Reynolds commented that about 70% of respondents to the consultation did not support the proposals but the council was going to ignore this fact. For the most vulnerable having to put in a little bit more might be a little bit too much. There was a causal link between increased payments and higher arrears, leading to higher administration costs. There was also the impact on the mental health of vulnerable residents to take into account, who were paying for the mistakes of the past.

Councillor Hilton commented that there was a safety net around the service which the council provided. The proposals would see the council moving to the same level of discount as the four unitary authorities with the highest level of discount in the area. Residents of Windsor and Maidenhead would have the benefit of a significantly lower council tax than those authorities so even with the scheme changes they would pay less. In the event of significant hardship, individual circumstances would be considered.

Councillor Johnson stated that the consultation had thorough and robust. The suggestion a council tax referendum had been made, however this could result in a significant increase which would have a disproportionate impact on those at the bottom. He favoured a low council tax because those in receipt of benefits but yet still learned low incomes paid low levels of council tax. The council was seeking to bring its level of CTR into line with every other local authority other than West Berkshire and Reading. However Reading had a level of 35%. West Berkshire's level was 20% but it had a higher council tax to start with.

A named vote was taken: 23 Councillors voted for the motion; 17 Councillors voted against the motion.

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

RESOLVED: That Council notes the report and:

- i) Approves the revised (20%) contribution levels for the 2020/21 Council Tax Reduction scheme with effect from 1 April 2020.**
- ii) Approves the associated changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme to align them to rules governing Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.**

Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Motion)	
Councillor John Baldwin	Against
Councillor Clive Baskerville	Against
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	For
Councillor Simon Bond	Against
Councillor John Bowden	For

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Councillor Catherine del Campo	Against
Councillor David Cannon	For
Councillor Stuart Carroll	For
Councillor Gerry Clark	For
Councillor David Coppinger	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	Against
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	Against
Councillor Jon Davey	Against
Councillor Karen Davies	Against
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	Against
Councillor David Hilton	For
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	For
Councillor Greg Jones	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	Against
Councillor Neil Knowles	Against
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	Against
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Ross McWilliams	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Helen Price	Against
Councillor Samantha Rayner	For
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Helen Taylor	Against
Councillor Amy Tisi	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Simon Werner	Against
Carried	

ii) FEES AND CHARGES REPORT 2020/21

Councillor Del Campo asked whether the cost for a second burial, which had previously been free, would be retrospective or for new purchases. If it were retrospective, she questioned whether residents concerned would be consulted before communication as it would cause distress, given the situation.

Councillor W. Da Costa commented that if parking permits were to be charged for, it would be reasonable to put in Community Wardens or Enforcement officers.

Councillor Cannon confirmed that the charge for a second burial would not be retrospective. The number of parking wardens had already been increased by 10%

A named vote was taken: 24 Councillors voted for the motion; 13 Councillors voted against the motion. 3 Councillors abstained.

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

RESOLVED: That Full Council approves:

i) The Fees and Charges for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A

Fees and Charges (Motion)	
Councillor John Baldwin	Against
Councillor Clive Baskerville	Against
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	For
Councillor Simon Bond	Against
Councillor John Bowden	For
Councillor Catherine del Campo	Abstain
Councillor David Cannon	For
Councillor Stuart Carroll	For
Councillor Gerry Clark	For
Councillor David Coppinger	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	Against
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	Against
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Karen Davies	Against
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	Against
Councillor David Hilton	For
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	For
Councillor Greg Jones	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	Abstain
Councillor Neil Knowles	Against
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	Against
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Ross McWilliams	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Helen Price	Against
Councillor Samantha Rayner	For
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Helen Taylor	Abstain
Councillor Amy Tisi	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Simon Werner	Against
Carried	

iii) CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 - 2022/23

A named vote was taken: 28 Councillors voted for the motion; 11 Councillors voted against the motion. 1 Councillor abstained.

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

RESOLVED: That Full Council approves:

- i) The Capital Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 as set out in Appendix A**
- ii) The proposed additions to the capital programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 as detailed in appendix B, C and D and summarised in table 4.1.8.**
- iii) Approves an additional capital budget of £489,000 in 2019/20 that represents capitalised debt charges on schemes with a construction period greater than one year.**
- iv) Approves fully funded capital budget of £100,000 in 2019/20 for Ascot High Street Public Realm and Highway Improvements Design Study as set out in 4.3.8.**

Capital Programme (Motion)	
Councillor John Baldwin	Against
Councillor Clive Baskerville	Against
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	For
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	For
Councillor Catherine del Campo	Against
Councillor David Cannon	For
Councillor Stuart Carroll	For
Councillor Gerry Clark	For
Councillor David Coppinger	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	Abstain
Councillor Jon Davey	Against
Councillor Karen Davies	Against
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	Against
Councillor David Hilton	For
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	For
Councillor Greg Jones	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	Against
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Ross McWilliams	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Helen Price	Against
Councillor Samantha Rayner	For
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	For

Councillor Simon Werner	Against
Carried	

iv) REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21

A named vote was taken: 23 Councillors voted for the motion; 17 Councillors voted against the motion.

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

RESOLVED: That full Council:

Notes and takes into account the statutory s25 statement of the S151 officer in paragraph 5 in determining its:

- i) Proposed budget for 2020/21;**
- ii) Longer term financial plans for 2021/22 – 2024/25;**
- iii) Level of reserves**

Notes:

- a) The comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on the proposed budget;**
- b) Equality impact assessments have been taken into consideration and has informed the final budget proposals.**

Approves:

- i) The Budget Strategy and medium-term financial projections as set out in Appendix A;**
- ii) The 2020/21 budget of £94.677m and the associated contribution from reserves of £2.218m as set out in paragraph 4.5;**
- iii) The Proposed growth in service budgets of £11.693m as set out in Appendix E including a contingency of £1.700m as set out in para 4.6.5;**
- iv) The proposed opportunities and savings of £5.826m as set out in Appendix F;**
- v) The Business rate tax base calculation, as detailed in Appendix G;**
- vi) The calculations for determining the council tax requirement for the year 2020/21 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as set out in Appendix K;**
- vii) An increase in council tax of 3.99% increasing the band D charge from £1,036.07 to £1,077.41 for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in 2020/21, based on:**
 - a. 1.99% increase in base council tax in 2020/21**
 - b. An additional 2.0% to reflect an increase in the Adult Social Care Precept;**

viii) Approves the policy and the special expenses precept of £34.31 for 2020/21 for the unparished areas of Windsor and Maidenhead in accordance with Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as set out in Appendix M;

ix) Notes the following Precepts

a. Parish Precepts Appendix L

b. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley - £216.28
(para 4.21.3)

c. The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority –£67.60 (para 4.21.3);

x) The council plan for transformation and use of flexible capital receipts as set out in Appendix J;

xi) The allocation of the £122.475m dedicated schools grant as set out in Appendix H. The Director of Children’s Services and S151 officer in consultation with the Lead Members for Finance and Children’s Services be given delegated authority to amend the total school’s budget to reflect the actual Dedicated Schools Grant levels once received;

Revenue Budget (Motion)	
Councillor John Baldwin	Against
Councillor Clive Baskerville	Against
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	For
Councillor Simon Bond	Against
Councillor John Bowden	For
Councillor Catherine del Campo	Against
Councillor David Cannon	For
Councillor Stuart Carroll	For
Councillor Gerry Clark	For
Councillor David Coppinger	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	Against
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	Against
Councillor Jon Davey	Against
Councillor Karen Davies	Against
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	Against
Councillor David Hilton	For
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	For
Councillor Greg Jones	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	Against
Councillor Neil Knowles	Against
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	Against
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Ross McWilliams	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Helen Price	Against
Councillor Samantha Rayner	For
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For

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Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Helen Taylor	Against
Councillor Amy Tisi	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Simon Werner	Against
Carried	

80. CONTINUATION OF MEETING

At this point in the meeting, and in accordance with Rule of Procedure Part 4A C25.1 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 9.30pm.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the meeting continue after 9.30pm to conclude the outstanding business on the agenda.

81. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members considered the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21. Councillor Hilton explained that a similar report had been considered by full Council in December 2019. The report before Members now included proposed prudential indicators. The boundary for borrowing was proposed to be £250m with a maximum level of £275m.

Councillor W. Da Costa asked for details of the current level of gearing and whether there had been any consideration of interest rate risk. If the situation got worse, it could affect the council's credit rating and therefore interest rate costs.

Councillor Bond commented that most borrowing was in the short term. He questioned whether the council should switch to long term borrowing to protect against interest rate rises. Debt was set to rise to £200m therefore even 1% was a significant amount.

Councillor Hilton explained that short term debt was currently under review by the council's treasury management advisers. In relation to Councillor W. Da Cost's question he confirmed that the interest rate assumed in the budget was 9% therefore there was some headroom.

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Full Council approves:

i) The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 as set out in section 4 of this report.

ii) The Council's Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix B.

iii) The Council's associated counterparty list as set out in Appendix C

82. LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTY PREMIUM

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Members considered an increase in the Long Term Empty Property Premium in the borough. Councillor Johnson commented that this was a good news story; the legislation enabled councils to increase the premium to 200% from April 2020, where a property had been empty and unfurnished for at least 5 years.

Councillor Hilton commented that the proposal was admirable as it would generate additional funding and also bring empty properties back into use.

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Council notes the report and:

- iii) **Approves the increase in the Long Term Empty Property Premium to 200% where a domestic property has been empty and unfurnished for at least 5 years.**
- iv) **Delegates the approval of any future increases to the Director of Resources.**

83. 2020/21 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

Members considered the 2020/21 programme of meetings.

Councillor Werner commented that three of the full Council meetings were scheduled during the school holidays. It was important to ensure different types of people were encouraged to stand as councillors, including parents and teachers. He suggested the full Council meeting dates be amended so that they did not fall during school holidays.

Councillor Hill proposed that the schedule be changed to include more full Council meetings which would avoid such long agendas. The opportunity to cancel meetings would be retained if an agenda were not full enough.

Councillor Johnson responded that the programme for 20/21 followed the schedule for 19/20, apart from the October meeting. In relation to start times he was proposing that the default time be 7pm. A standardised arrangement would also help ensure the business was transacted within a reasonable timeframe.

Councillor Price commented that the cluster of meetings that were scheduled in the run up to the budget meant tight deadlines for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels; she felt they should be more spread out.

Councillor Davies stated that she seconded Councillor Werner's suggestion to amend the dates of council meetings that fell in the school holidays.

Councillor Walters suggested consideration be given to deleting the Borough-wide Development Management Panel as this had not met so far in the municipal year.

Councillor Johnson stated that he was not happy to agree the amendment proposed by Councillor Werner; there was no ideal date for anyone.

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

RESOLVED: That Full Council notes the report and:

i) Approves the programme of meetings for the 2020/21 Municipal Year, attached as Appendix A.

(Members voted by a show of hands)

84. APPOINTMENT OF PANEL CHAIRMAN

Members considered appointment of the Chairman of the Maidenhead Town Forum.

Councillor Johnson explained that Councillor Haseler had stepped down from the forum to become a substitute; Councillor Coppinger would become a full member and was proposed as Chairman. Councillor Johnson thanked Councillor Singh for his work on the forum since the local elections.

Councillor Reynolds commented that he did not believe that Councillor Coppinger was the right person to lead the Forum. The constitution was clear that Town Forums dealt with issues in unparished areas; Councillor Coppinger was not a ward member for an unparished area. Additionally, Councillor Reynolds felt that as Councillor Coppinger was an executive member and the Lead Member with responsibility for Maidenhead, the role may stifle potential new and alternative views of a vision for the town that residents may wish to put forward. He therefore proposed that Councillor Taylor, a relevant ward member, be appointed as Chairman. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Baldwin.

Councillor Hunt commented that she sat on the Town Forum but was a ward councillor for a rural area. She had been heavily involved in numerous issues considered by the Forum including relating to business rates. She felt Councillor Coppinger was very well-placed to take on the role.

Councillor Hill commented that he felt Councillor Coppinger would be heavily conflicted. Councillor Taylor would make an excellent Chairman.

Councillor Baldwin commented that the Conservatives were not well represented in the non-parished areas of Maidenhead. He kept hearing about the administration's desire to embrace a broader section of the membership and requests for people to cooperate. Appointing Councillor Taylor would be a minor thing but a symbolic gesture.

Councillor Reynolds highlighted that Councillor Taylor had experience in the forum and she was an experienced councillor in the town and in her ward. The administration talked of a collegiate approach until the Opposition put forward an alternative suggestion.

Members voted on the motion by a show of hands. The motion fell and Members returned to debating the substantive motion.

Councillor Johnson stated that he had full confidence in Councillor Coppinger and did not believe he would be conflicted in the role. His appointment would give a different dynamic to a non-political and non-decision making forum. Tying to bounce him into changing a proposal on the night was not in his opinion a collegiate thing to do.

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

RESOLVED: That Councillor Coppinger be appointed as Chairman of the Maidenhead Town Forum for the remainder of the municipal year.

(Members voted by a show of hands).

85. APPROVAL OF 2020/21 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Members considered the council's Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21.

Councillor Rayner explained that the statement provided transparency in relation to the ratio of the pay of senior staff compared to those who were lower paid. The statement had already been approved by the Employment and Member Standards Panel.

Councillor Price welcomed the transparency. She asked if details of redundancy payments would be equally transparent.

Councillor Rayner responded that the Pay Policy statement related to ratios, whereas redundancy payments were calculations.

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Council notes the report and:

- v) **Approves the updated Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21.**
- vi) **Notes that further revisions will be required to the statement when the Government's reforms to public sector exit pay arrangements are implemented.**

86. POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2019/2020

Members considered recommendations of the cross-party Polling District and Polling Places Working Group and the Returning Officer for reviewing the boundaries of the borough's parliamentary polling districts and designation of polling places for all types of elections.

Councillor Rayner explained that the working group had identified three proposed changes, as detailed in the report.

Councillor Del Campo commented that she was broadly in favour of the proposals. However, she raised concern that the lighting at the St Mary's polling station was inadequate and requested that this issue be looked into.

Councillor W. Da Costa commented that the existing Clewer and Dedworth West stations were illogical, particularly for those in the south and east of the ward who had to cross roads. He requested that the situation be looked into in future.

Councillor Hilton commented that the working group was cross-party and had looked at all opportunities and solutions Members had suggested. The proposals were the best compromise possible given input from all parties.

Councillor Baldwin echoed the comments of Councillor Hilton that the working group had looked at all options in detail and considered the alternatives. There was a lack of suitable available accommodation in Clewer and Dedworth West.

Councillor Rayner commented that the Returning Officer would be asked to look into the issue at St Marys.

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Council notes the report and:

- vii) The revised polling district boundaries and designation of the polling places affecting the following wards be approved, (as detailed in Appendix 1):**
 - **Clewer & Dedworth West, Furze Platt, and Oldfield.**

87. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

It was agreed that all Member questions would be responded to by way of a written answer.

a) Councillor Larcombe asked the following question of Councillor Cannon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking:

The progress towards prompt completion of the £640m River Thames Scheme project is important to the residents and businesses of Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury. There appears to be a significant delay due to lack of partnership funding. Is there a report detailing the RBWM portion of the partnership funding, the sources of those funds, funding timings and the associated risks?

Written response provided after the meeting: The River Thames Scheme will reduce flood risk to people living and working near the Thames. It will enhance the resilience of nationally important infrastructure, contribute to a vibrant local economy and create many recreational opportunities.

The project creates a new flood channel alongside the River Thames to reduce flood risk to properties in communities in Datchet, Wraysbury, Egham, Staines, Chertsey, Shepperton, Weybridge, Sunbury, Moseley, Thames Ditton, Kingston and Teddington providing protection to 15,000 homes and 2,400 businesses.

Road, rail, power and water networks will be more resilient. 106 hectares of new public open space and 23km of new pathways will be created, as well as improving biodiversity for wildlife through the creation of 250 hectares of new habitat.

The Royal Borough remains committed to this project which is essential to protect our residents from flooding. As part of the budget being considered this evening, it is recommended that £10m is approved as part of this commitment.

In addition, Council previously resolved in September 2017 to an agreement in principle of paying a flood levy to the Environment Agency as a contribution to the scheme, subject to new legislation being enacted to make provision for this.

The project has robust governance in place with representatives from partner organisations attending regular meetings of the Programme Board (officer level) and the Sponsoring Group (Member level). The Royal Borough is represented at each of its meetings where funding is a regular agenda item which consider costs; partnership funding and risk.

b) Councillor Brar asked the following question of Councillor Clark, Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure:

In December 2019 a 13 year old was hit by a speeding car on Switch Back Road, losing their life; the third fatality on this road since I lived in Cookham. The young man's mother and other residents have been lobbying for a speed camera. Will you assure residents that measures will be put in place for a speed camera?

Written response provided after the meeting: Firstly, I would wish to extend our sympathies to the family and friends of Max Simmons, who was tragically killed whilst crossing Switchback Road North.

Whilst colleagues have met with traffic officers from Thames Valley Police to discuss the circumstances surrounding the recent unfortunate crash, we don't have full details of this crash as yet, as investigations are ongoing. This case is going to court and we are unlikely to have any further information until after this and the Coroner's Inquest. It would be unwise for the Council to make any further comment at this stage. We will nevertheless take on board any relevant information and concerns about highway issues that are identified by the Police.

The Council continuously monitors road safety based on injury crashes reported to us by the Police. Whilst I appreciate that concerns have been raised about road safety in the area, our information is that there have been six reported injury crashes on this section of road over the past ten years. None of these identified speeding as being a contributory factor and none involved pedestrians.

Therefore, I will wait until we have further information from the Police before commenting further

c) Councillor Jones asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:

Could the Lead Member for Planning give us an update on the status of the BLP and the estimated timescales for inspection?

Written response provided after the meeting: Members will be aware that the Council consulted on proposed changes to the Borough Local Plan at the end of 2019. I and a number of senior officers attended a range of community meetings, and we were pleased that so many interested parties took the further opportunity to be involved. Officers of the Planning Department have since been busy reviewing all of the representations received.

They have also maintained an active dialogue with the Planning Inspector and the Programme Officer to secure the reopening of the examination of the BLP as soon as is practical. We are currently awaiting an update from the Inspector as to a likely timetable, and we will provide updates via the Local Plan section of the Council's website as soon as we are able.

88. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

It was agreed that remaining motions would be deferred to the next meeting:

a) By Councillor Hill

This Council agrees to reduce the number of signatures required for a petition to be debated at Full Council from 1500 to 1000 in the interests of democracy by allowing residents to more easily get direct access to their elected representatives on issues of importance to them.

b) By Councillor W. Da Costa

Councillor W. Da Costa confirmed he had withdrawn his motion.

MEETING

The meeting, which began at 7.00pm, finished at 11.57pm.

Signed.....

Date.....