AT A MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Maidenhead on Tuesday, 20th July, 2021

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

In Attendance Virtually: Councillors Joshua Reynolds and Catherine Del Campo

Officers: Andrew Durrant, Adele Taylor, Andrew Vallance, Emma Duncan, Kevin McDaniel, Hilary Hall, Lin Ferguson, Karen Shepherd, David Cook and Suzanne Martin

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carroll, Shelim, Taylor and Werner.

15. COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That:

i) The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2021 be approved.
ii) The minutes of the meeting held on 4 May 2021 be approved.
iii) The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021 be approved

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

17. 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. These were noted by Council.

The Mayor highlighted that the Garden in Bloom competition had now closed. Certificates and rosettes had been made available to Members. If there were any questions, Members should contact the Mayor’s Secretary.

18. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

a) Deborah Mason of Riverside ward asked the following question of Councillor Stimson, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:

Does the Lead Member agree that the UK is facing ecological freefall, that biodiversity gain must be the over-riding priority in all natural habitats owned by the Council and that assumptions we have made in the past about public rights must be reassessed in view of this?

Written response: *The council is committed to delivering nature recovery and biodiversity net gain. The Natural Environment is one of the four themes of our strategy with the intent to protect and enhance our natural environment, raise awareness of biodiversity and green our towns and cities. We have been working closely with stakeholders to develop a borough-wide biodiversity action plan, that will support improved habitats across the borough. Any decisions that the council makes will be guided by the evidence of the specific case, using our internal and independent expertise, rather than making blanket assumptions. Allowing some controlled access can reduce overall risks to wildlife and habitats as well as providing valuable opportunities to educate, inform and raise awareness of these critical issues.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Mason asked whether the Cabinet Member would therefore agree that in the case of Battlemead, the council has already ensured there was sufficient access for the public including the long sought for Millennium Way link between Widbrook Common and the Thames Path and that the unnecessary path across the East Field could wait to be implemented until after ecologists have assessed the bedding in of the ecological management plan in five years' time. This would prioritise biodiversity gain that would benefit all people of the borough over the desire of a small number of people for another view of Cliveden and set a great example of controlled access for the benefit of nature.

Councillor Stimson responded that Battlemead Common had been a long haul for everyone, but she hoped it was getting to a stage where there was a consensus, though this would not be until 3 August. She recognised that the world was facing significant biodiversity costs; a 75% loss of species since she had been 10 years old. The borough would do everything it could to mitigate against this but the site had been bought for accessibility and biodiversity and was trying to manage both aspects. The ultimate decision had not yet been reached as ecological reports were being read through. She had a good idea the causeway would be opened for half the year, but it had been two years of decision making and she knew exceptionally good biodiversity gains were being made. The council wanted to encourage people to enjoy biodiversity and enjoy the place rather than closing it off entirely.

b) Ed Wilson of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Will the Lead Member confirm how much RBWM has collected through the Adult Social Care Precept since its' inception?

Written response: *I am pleased to confirm that since the inception of the Adult Social Care Precept in 2016-2017, £29,812,493 has been collected over the six years. This is broken down as follows:*

FINANCIAL YEAR	**ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRECEPT**
	£
2016/17	1,191,500
2017/18	3,061,000
2018/19	5,054,000
2019/20	5,109,000
2020/21	6,557,243
2021/22	8,839,750
TOTAL	**29,812,493**

This also shows our determination to collect the necessary funding to increase investment in adult social care and ensure we provide the best for our local residents.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Wilson asked if the lead member could give some examples of where the money had been spent in Windsor?

Councillor Johnson responded on behalf of Councillor Carroll. He explained that the almost £30m had been spent in three key areas. The funding had been used for more nursing beds for residents suffering with dementia and other complex needs which included two care homes within Windsor (Queens Court and Sandown Park). At Queens Court the council had commissioned 88 frail/elderly nursing beds, 18 dementia beds and 10 residential beds. At Sandown Park the council had commissioned 20 beds and accommodation for the frail and those suffering from dementia. There had also been significant investment in Queens Court when the new contract commenced in 2017. The council also provided grants to the Spencer Denney Day Centre in Windsor and the Old Windsor Day Centre operated by Age Concern Slough and Berkshire East.

c) Ed Wilson of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Hilton, Cabinet Member for Finance and Ascot:

Will the Lead Member for Finance advise by ward which roads and pavements were improved under the Clewer & Dedworth Improvement Programme?

The table below provides the full details requested:

Ward	**Clewer & Dedworth Improvements**	**Type of work**	**Works including fees**
Clewer & Dedworth West	Pierson Road	Joint Repairs and surface treatment	55,690
Clewer & Dedworth West	Kingsfield	Joint Repairs	9,151

Clewer & Dedworth West	Hayse Hill	Joint Repairs and surface treatment	36,038
Clewer & Dedworth West	Alden View	Joint Repairs and surface treatment	9,649
Clewer & Dedworth East	Bell View	Joint Repairs and surface treatment	43,765
Clewer & Dedworth East	Bell View Close	Joint Repairs	8,788
Clewer & Dedworth East	Clifton Rise	Joint Repairs	28,303
Clewer & Dedworth East	Mill Lane, Clewer	Surfacing/Lining	13,686
Clewer & Dedworth East	Stephenson Drive	Surfacing/Lining	12,046
Clewer & Dedworth West	Wolf Lane (2 locations)	Surfacing/Lining	32,696
Clewer & Dedworth West	Cawcott Drive (patching)	Patching	13,363
Clewer & Dedworth West	Dedworth road resurfacing	Resurfacing	54,765
Clewer & Dedworth East	Vale Road (patching)	Patching	16,993
	Footway Schemes		
Clewer & Dedworth West	Dedworth Road	Reconstruction	15,739
Clewer & Dedworth West	Holly Crescent	Reconstruction	5,372
Clewer & Dedworth East	Hatch Lane	Reconstruction	12,676
Clewer & Dedworth East	Orchard Avenue	Patching	6,655
	Other		
Clewer & Dedworth East	Spencer Denney		6,987
Clewer &	Parks	Clewer Play area	24,063

Dedworth East			
	Total		**406,425**

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Wilson commented that the list was incorrect. For example, Mill Lane was not in Clewer and Dedworth East, nor was Stephenson Drive. He commented that it was no wonder that Cipfa had got some of their conclusions wrong if this was the information the council was providing them with. He requested a revised list with the correct ward details.

Councillor Hilton apologised as he had taken the information he had been provided at face value. He would get the information checked and ensure Mr Wilson was provided with the correct information.

d) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

In 2019 Councillors granted permission to dispose of the 50% freehold in the Nicholson Shopping centre on the understanding of multi-billion pound backing from " €22bn" Tikehau Capital. When did the Council become aware that funding for the Nicholson Quarter was no longer secured, and when was this reported to Members?

Written response: *Funding for the Nicholson Quarter is secured and the developer is proceeding, Tickehau and ARELI Reast Estate remain committed to the scheme.*

The questioner may have misunderstood how this is being funded. Tikehau Capital is an investment fund and they are funding the redevelopment. Tikehau is however a retail fund so they have always said they would hold the retail assets created. They are now looking for partners in the market at present for the other assets that are to be delivered, including investors and occupiers, as is standard practice for very large mixed-use developments such as this.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that he felt it was ironic that he had been gently accused of misunderstanding how the Nicholson's deal was being funded. It was probably true as he was not sure that he or any other resident could understand it until all the contracts had been transparently published. Mr Hill referred to a retweet by Councillor Johnson that stated 'Tikehau Capital and Areli Real Estate are in talks with funding partners for their £500m mixed use redevelopment'. Given that the demolition was approved with all the risks of non-funding falling on residents, Mr Hill asked if RBWM considered sharing in the profits through a joint venture and could he explain clearly which parts of the Nicholson's Quarter were currently fully funded, and which parts were not.

Councillor Johnson responded that he remained fully confident that the scheme was funded to the point of being able to progress to the next stage. It was for that reason that Cabinet had a number of months previously approved a paper seeking to utilise the council's powers of compulsory purchase. On 22 July 2021 Cabinet would also be considering powers of appropriation to facilitate the development on the site. It was fair to say however that, as with all major strategic regeneration sites, there was always an element of additional funding to be acquired. He reiterated that he was confident that funding was in place to proceed to the next stage. In terms of the overall phasing over the long time there was a market requirement for funding partners to

come forward. It was exactly right that Areli were looking for that to secure the development for the benefit of Maidenhead.

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

In light of the s114 'bankruptcy' by Slough Borough Council, and their £159m deficit projected for 2024/25 what is RBWM's equivalent projected year end general fund reserve figure for 2024/25, and does RBWM share any joint ventures/financial interests with SBC that may be affected or miscalculated?

Written response: *The reserve position for 2024/25 would be at a similar level to the current £6.7m. The newly published Medium Term Financial Plan shows the savings required to achieve balanced budgets each year that would maintain the general reserve at its current level. (As part of the budget each year the s151 would of course review the exact required level). RBWM does not share any joint ventures/financial interests with Slough BC that may be affected or miscalculated due to the recent s114 notice there.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hill commented that in the Medium Term Financial Plan, despite there being a £16m black hole in the five-year finances with as yet unidentified savings, the council would nonetheless be aiming to 'build up the overall general reserves to mitigate against risks'. The answer given made it clear that it was expected that the general reserves would remain static at around £6.7m for years to come. Bearing in mind Slough's mis-stated reserves fell by around 90% more or less overnight and that risks sometimes did happen, how did the Cabinet Member plan to mitigate against risks when he already knew that the idea of building up general reserves was a non-starter.

Councillor Hilton responded that he felt Mr Hill had misunderstood what the general reserve did. The general reserve was used to manage day to day risks and changes in accounts. Reserves fell into three categories: unusable reserves, usable reserves, and provisions. Unusable reserves represented the value of capital assets such as buildings and also the pension fund. These were monies that could not be used to support the revenue budget. Usable reserves could be used to support the revenue budget and provisions were set aside to cover anticipated future liabilities. The council published a statement on reserves in its financial report every two months. Usable reserves were £72m but that included some NNDR business rates S31 reserves that were held. Provisions were reported as £9.5m.

19. PETITIONS

No petitions were submitted.

20. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

Members considered the appointment of an Independent Person.

Councillor Rayner explained that, if appointed, Keith Robinson would be the council's third Independent Person. This would add resilience to the process and the standards regime. The Independent Person role was important as their views were sought by the

Monitoring Officer on allegations against a councillor as to whether an investigation should be undertaken. The person complained about could also seek their view. The Independent Person could also advise on other standards and conduct matters and take part in a Statutory Officer Panel. Councillor Rayner thanked Mr Robinson for putting himself forward for the role.

Councillor Price asked how much time the Independent Person gave to the council as £1000 did not seem very much. Councillor Rayner responded that it would depend on the caseload during the year.

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That full Council notes the report and:

- **i) Appoints Keith Robinson as an Independent Person under s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011.**
- **ii) That £1000 be added to the Member Allowances budget to cover the cost of the allowance to the new Independent Person.**

21. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN

Members considered the appointment of a number of Chairmen positions.

Councillor Johnson explained that he wished to propose an amendment to the recommendations, to include nominations for Vice Chairmen. He also wished to withdraw the recommendation to amend the Chairmanship of the Windsor Town Forum.

Councillor Price asked if the proposal meant that the current situation at the Windsor Town Forum therefore remained. Councillor Johnson confirmed that this was the case; Councillor Bowden would remain as Chairman and Councillor Rayner as Vice Chairman.

Councillor Baldwin asked if there were any concerns or consideration given to the role of Councillor McWilliams as Cabinet Member for Housing in proposing his appointment as Vice Chairman of one of the Committees.

Councillor Johnson responded that members of the Cabinet had previously sat on the Development Management Panels, including in the position of Chairman. Providing the usual declarations on conflict were declared he had no issue with another member of Cabinet being the Vice Chairman.

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

RESOLVED: That:

- **i) Councillor Haseler be appointed as Chairman, and Councillor McWilliams be appointed as Vice Chairman, of the Maidenhead Development Management Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.**

ii) Councillor Cannon be appointed as Chairman, and Councillor Bowden be appointed as Vice Chairman, of the Windsor and Ascot Development Management Committee for the remainder of the municipal year

22. REFERRALS FROM OTHER BODIES

i) COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - WINDSOR TOWN COUNCIL - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Members considered the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group.

Councillor Hilton introduced the item by stating that he wished to move the motion to establish a new town council for Windsor as detailed in Appendix A. He explained that in September 2019 an e-petition was started seeking support for the formation of a Windsor Town Council. The petition gained just over 600 valid signatures; some way short of the 1,661 needed to trigger a Governance Review. However, at its meeting on 28 July 2020, the council committed to undertake a review and approved the terms of reference.

It was agreed that responsibility for composing the recommendations would be delegated to a cross-party, Member-led Working Group comprising Councillor Shelim as Chairman, Councillor Cannon as Vice Chairman, Councillor Davies, Councillor Knowles, and himself, replacing Councillor Story when he had taken up his mayoral duties.

A consultation took place on the Terms of Reference and informed by this the working group developed the public consultation into the creation of a Windsor Town Council. This would not have been possible without the incredible support from the Head of Governance, Service Lead - Information Governance and Electoral Services, and Project Management Officer. On behalf of all Members of the Working Group he thanked the officers for their support, advice and expertise.

The second consultation made recommendations on proposed electoral arrangements including a single Town Council comprising 12 polling districts, 21 elected representatives and 10 wards with the first elections to take place in May 2023. Ten wards were proposed across the unparished parts of Windsor and to ensure fair representation twelve polling districts spanning the wards of Clewer & Dedworth East, Clewer & Dedworth West, Clewer East, Eton & Castle and Old Windsor, enabled the number of the electorate per Town Councillor to be broadly similar and within acceptable limits. The consultation also included sections on the powers of a Town Council and the likely financial implications.

The consultation process was described in section 8 of the report and included a leaflet with details of the proposals to all households in the review area, placing an advert in the Windsor Observer, use of the Residents Newsletter, the council's social media channels and a letter in the local press from a member of the Working Group.

Every effort was made to ensure that residents were aware of the consultation and the multiple means through which they could respond. A total of 679 responses were received during the consultation period. Residents were asked three questions: whether they agreed that the proposals would deliver effective and convenient local government, whether they supported the proposed electoral arrangements and if they

supported the creation of a Windsor Town Council as an additional layer of local government or believed the existing governance arrangements were sufficient. Roughly 520 said yes to these questions, 100 said no and 'don't know/no answer' varied between 11 and 60.

On the basis of the consultation the Working Group, by a majority vote, decided to recommend to Council the formation of a Windsor Town Council under the electoral arrangements detailed in the Appendices to the report.

Councillor Hilton detailed some of the issues considered by the Working Group in arriving at their conclusion. Only 3% of the 21,000-electorate responded to the consultation which questioned whether there was a mandate for a significant electoral and financial change. However, the Working Group accepted that most residents were supported by a parish council so, in principle, the formation of a Town Council was reasonable.

Some who responded had misunderstood the scope of the consultation and in Councillor Hilton's own words were seeking a 'unilateral declaration of independence' for Windsor rather than a Town Council with limited powers that would work with the borough council.

Residents of Windsor felt that their unique set of requirements as a tourism generating town were not adequately met with the current representation provided at borough level only, where the majority of councillors represented Maidenhead.

Councillor Hilton concluded that the Working Group's task was now complete, only Council had the authority to make the final decision and it therefore now needed to debate the Motion.

Councillor Knowles seconded the motion.

Councillor W. Da Costa stated that he was honoured to speak in favour of the proposal submitted by the Community Governance Review Committee after a very thorough and productive process. For over 700 years a town council for Windsor had existed, for the last half a century there had been a huge gap in the representation of local interests. There was now a historic opportunity to return a town council to the people of Windsor.

The formation of the Royal Borough with the Local Government Act of 1972 made sense to many although bizarrely left the whole of Windsor without localised representation, this despite 15 other parishes and towns in the borough retaining theirs. This was a huge anomaly which had left a democratic deficit for twenty thousand local people. Councillor W. Da Costa commented that surely the council trusted the people of Windsor enough to enable them to receive the same democratic representation as the other 130,000 borough residents.

When Berkshire County Council was dissolved in 1998 many of its services were devolved to the borough including education, refuse collection, housing and adult social care. Many of these issues discussed over the recent budget debates were centred around these core and important issues. However, the offset of this was that more localised issues such as the upkeep of Knights Close play park or zebra crossings at key areas including outside Dedworth Middle School had fallen outside

the council's budgetary priorities and requests for investment from himself, Councillor Carole Da Costa and Councillor Davey were regularly ignored.

The benefit of a Windsor Town Council was that it would be able to support the borough to deliver a gold standard service across the town, by addressing areas which were simply out of reach of the borough. In Clewer and Dedworth there was much good work going on including the West Windsor Hub and the Clewer and Dedworth project and yet there was still some scope for more; a unified community response based on a single point of contact with democratic accountability would strengthen these community activities further.

Councillor W. Da Costa highlighted that there were 15 parish councils across the borough. The arguments against bringing the same democratic accountability to the people of Windsor, seemed to denigrate their importance and impact. In a recent paper on the libraries the lead member was celebrating the effect parish and town councils had in ensuring this valuable resource was maintained. In Datchet to the East and in Boyn Hill to the West, the Parish Council was lauded as being very influential in mobilising the community to ensure that the service was maintained. These parish councils retained the element of democratic accountability missing in so many community groups, they were therefore accountable to the whole community and not just a few selected people, truly plural and representative organisations.

The report presented to Members was thorough and well produced and the response rate was high considering the demands of the pandemic and the dryness of the constitutional matter. Fortunately, Windsor residents had been able to overlook the misinformation which was shared in earlier reports, such as a Windsor Town Council only being responsible for allotments, or that unlike other parishes a Windsor Town Council would be responsible for the cost of street lighting thus increasing the precept considerably. Councillor W. Da Costa felt that Windsor residents deserved more trust and respect than this and steps should be put in place to ensure they were not misled in this way in any future report.

Councillor W. Da Costa was delighted however that the Community Governance Review had tackled this misinformation head on and should be commended for doing so, however he hoped this had not affected individual responses. He was delighted that following this the public responses delivered a six to one mandate in favour of overturning a fifty-year hiatus and bringing local democratic representation back to the people of Windsor. When speaking to local people, or reviewing the posts on social media, the word which regularly appeared was 'pride'. Councillor W. Da Costa did not expect those who did not live in the town or who were already supported by parish or town council representation to fully understand why or how Windsorians such as himself felt this was so important. However, he urged council to show the ambition which Windsor, a nationally and internationally recognised town, deserved and support the very important motion.

Councillor Cannon explained that he was part of the Community Governance Review Working Group, which had been an excellent example of cross-party working. A lot had been discussed and the consultation had been put out to every premises that would have been affected. 21,000 people would be impacted by the council's decision on the issue but there had been a 3% return rate of people responding to the consultation. This had not been a referendum, but a consultation designed to inform

the Working Group of people's views, not just a binary yes/no but also any other ideas that could be considered.

There had been lots of misinformation, much from people with their own agenda of wanting a Windsor Town Council regardless. If a Windsor Town Council was formed, there would be an increase in the precept for residents from day one. The money the town council would receive equivalent to the Special Area Expenses would pay for services. This would not account for clerking costs, office accommodation, meetings or councillor expenses. 21,000 people would be looked after by this Town Council. Other parish councils of a similar size had three or four members of staff. He did not believe that a mandate of 3% was sufficient justification to increase council tax for 21,000 people. In addition, the work a Town Council would take away from the borough would impact on the wider contracts that covered the whole borough. This would likely increase costs for the Town Council but also for the remaining element for the borough. This would put financial pressure on the residents in the rest of the borough.

Councillor Cannon stated that he did not think that the council had heard a cry for a Town Council from the residents of Windsor. It had heard a cry from several people who had claimed to serve the residents of Windsor and he failed to see that this had been evidenced in any way.

Councillor Davies commented that as a Windsorian and representing a Windsor ward, it had been a privilege to take part in the Community Governance Review into the formation of a Windsor Town Council. She thanked Councillor Shelim in his absence for his excellent chairmanship of the Review, which made possible positive, full, and frank discussions. She also thanked the officers, especially the Service Lead – Information Governance and Electoral Services, and Head of Governance for their expert advice and guidance.

When the Community Governance Review process started, like all the group Members Councillor Davies had undertaken to not prejudge the decision but to make it based on the evidence placed before her: the responses from residents and from organisations and businesses with a stake in Windsor. The Group had received some extremely detailed and considered responses from both individuals and organisations and she thanked everyone who had taken the time to share their views.

Councillor Davies stated that she was quite clear that the process followed was sound and the analysis of the responses was rigorous. Approximately 700 responses to a consultation which affected only 12 polling districts and on a topic which was, as yet, an abstract concept rather than an already-existing service or entity was, she believed, very positive proof of the level of interest and support. The overwhelming majority of Windsorians who responded to the consultation were in favour of creating one town council to cover the whole unparished area.

As a Liberal Democrat Councillor Davies supported the principle of devolving power to the lowest practicable level and the excellent work done by 15 Parish and Town Councils in other parts of the borough, and the commitment shown by an army of Parish and Town Councillors, were an exemplar of civic society at its best. Improving the physical environment, supporting libraries, speaking for the community on planning issues, providing support to the vulnerable in times of emergency such as flooding and Covid; these were just a few examples, and the currently unparished

area of Windsor would undoubtedly benefit greatly from gaining a similar cohort of town councillors. Many councillors were aware of this as they had been parish and town councillors in their own area for many years. Councillor Davies concluded that she therefore had no hesitation in supporting the recommendation for the formation of one Windsor Town Council to cover the currently unparished area.

Councillor Bowden stated that he lived in central Windsor; he had lived in the same street for 25 years. When he moved to the area, he had already heard of Datchet as he had travelled on the trainline and was also involved in an organisation based there. He then started hearing about a place called Dedworth and Clewer. He later heard of other areas to the west of the borough. He was learning all the time. He became a councillor in 2015 for Clewer East ward. He then became ward councillor for his own ward of Castle in 2019. In his ward there were nearly 5000 people on the electoral role. Councillor Bowden highlighted that 600 people responded to the consultation. Every day as he went around his ward he got stopped by people, including business people, and he asked them what they knew of a Windsor Town Council. The reply had always been 'What's that?' When he explained what it was, including that there would be an additional 21 councillors, people had asked what they were for. He had encouraged people to respond to the consultation. The proposal would see an additional 21 councillors, twice as many as currently existed for the area at borough level. Councillor Bowden felt this was nonsensical. The number of borough councillors had been reduced following the boundary review in 2019. Now the number would be blossoming with another 21.

Councillor Price asked if giving more say and power to local communities was the direction of travel the borough was intent on. A resounding yes if the Transformation Strategy and the proposed Corporate Plan were to be believed. She quoted from each to explain why the formation of a Windsor Town Council was exactly the direction of travel RBWM claimed it was following.

The approved Transformation Strategy stated that it set out the vision of 'building a community centric borough of opportunity and innovation'. The Strategy set out three key enablers to deliver that vision, one of which was 'Transforming our services by developing new community centric ways of working that empower residents and stakeholders to work alongside us to achieve our vision.'

The refreshed Corporate Plan was being considered later in the week by Cabinet. In this it stated the approach was to 'Empower individuals, communities and businesses to maximise their potential. Shape our service delivery around our communities' diverse needs' and 'get things right first time'.
It went on to build on the Transformation Strategy by stating 'Community centric service redesign is at the centre of the council's transformational thinking. Rather than change a service or system based on existing technologies or "how we have always done it", we will focus on the benefit for the customer or community. The move towards communities and partnership, creating a true borough council, will build a working culture of community empowerment and creativity. To do this we need to harness the power and talents of all stakeholders, from councillors and council staff, to our citizens, community groups, businesses and employers.'

Councillor Price stated that supporting the establishment of the Windsor Town Council would involve more of the Windsor community having a direct involvement in shaping Windsor and would show that Members truly understood the changes which were

required to deliver the Transformation Strategy and Corporate Plan. It would show Members understood that to deliver a different borough required changes to be made, and the creation of the Windsor Town Council was one of those changes.

Councillor C. Da Costa commented that there were a number of wards in Windsor which had an overlapping parish council, for example Eton and Castle where the Eton part was parished. The aim was to level the playing field to give everyone the opportunity so that in the invent of another issue such as a pandemic, there would be another level of community that could respond promptly to local needs.

Councillor Jones commented that this was not just a chance to improve local democracy but also to increase the access to local democracy. She was also a parish councillor and understood the benefits of having a parish council. As a borough councillor she worked with the parish council to improve the life of the local residents. Old Windsor was one of the first to implement support to the vulnerable during covid and did not have to ask for resources from the borough. The ease of access to the clerk and parish/town councillors, who were all local residents, could improve the relationship between local government and their residents. The town council could also act as a conduit for residents, saving time for both residents and the borough council.

Councillor Jones believed that a town council for the unparished areas of Windsor could bring benefits for both residents and the borough council. There had been mention of costs. It was very easy to mention large figures, but when this was broken down, if there was an annual cost of £100,000 for a clerk and office divided by the number of households, it was not very much at all. She asked how much this would equate to per household. She supported the recommendations put forward by the Working Group based on their robust analysis.

Councillor Davey welcomed the formation of the Windsor Town Council. There would be 21 additional voluntary councillors with a passion for helping others. He had seen the positive impact of Bray Parish council on his own ward as many hands made light work and it was local people dealing with local issues. If there was a problem with a contractor then the clerk was easy to find, they knew who to speak to at the borough with answers and solutions swiftly following. Contracts could be more easily shared out with local tradespeople, the regional economic multiplier effect given the opportunity to shine through, where £1 went to six other businesses locally. The precept could be grown, for items identified by the community as a benefit, through consultations. He urged Members to vote for a Windsor Town Council.

Councillor Stimson commented that given the 500 people that responded, this was one councillor per 23 people who responded. Councillor Carole Da Costa had spoken about the Dedworth community project. This had not come from the council but from a new way of doing things in the existing structure. She felt that, instead of creating another layer of council, it was important to look at another way of doing things thanks to the new strategy.

Councillor Clark stated that as he was not a Windsorian, he could look at the issue with an open mind. Adding an additional layer of governance and the additional cost for residents was not something he took lightly. He would therefore wish to identify the benefits of such a proposal. A response of about 500 had been in support. 20,000 not expressing support but potentially baring the burden of costs and not supporting the

proposal was not something he felt he could support. Councillor Price had quoted from the council's transformation agenda; Councillor Clark emphasised that it was the council that would deliver the transformation through the existing structures and by the existing councillors.

Councillor C Da Costa requested a personal explanation. She stated that the work done in Dedworth at the start of the pandemic and the creation of the West Windsor Hub was not done by the council but by the community working in partnership with churches and other community groups. It had been supported by, but not introduced or helped along by, the council.

Councillor Brar commented that as a Parish Councillor for Cookham Rise Ward for the past 29 years she believed that parish councils played a very important role in the local community as the eyes and ears of the local authority they served. In her ward she had two parishes, Bisham and Cookham, and each of these parishes looked after allotments, footpaths, lighting, cemeteries, flooding and commented on planning applications. She believed creating a Windsor Town Council would be a breath of fresh air for Windsor and its residents. If the borough decided not to support the Windsor Town Council then the other 15 parishes in the borough might be under threat. In that case she would be supporting the paper.

Councillor Tisi explained that she had grown up in Weymouth. It was a wonderful town steeped in history, which had its own distinct personality. It was not so different from Windsor in that respect. Although nearby in terms of geography to Portland, the two places were very different and people had a strong sense of where they were from, just like people in Windsor and Maidenhead identified strongly with their own towns. With the formation of a new Dorset council, Weymouth and Portland Borough council was disbanded and a new Weymouth Town Council was formed in 2019 to improve the town, look after many services and organise events.

In Weymouth, at the equivalent stage of consultation they had received 532 responses, with 68% pro-Town Council. This was deemed good enough to constitute a Weymouth Town Council. The recent consultation in the borough received around 700 responses; with 500 positive. It was worth noting that the population of Weymouth was 53,000 compared to 21,000 for the unparished part of Windsor, therefore the borough response rate was considerably higher; 3% compared to 1%.

On the number of respondents for the consultation, the statutory guidance did not mention what a good number was nor did it say anything about low response rates being a reason to assume the recommendation was not in the best interests of the majority of voters. The Working Group had reached a conclusion they believed was in the best interests of the people of Windsor. Councillor Tisi felt it was frankly insulting of previous speakers to suggest that there was no call from residents in Windsor for a town council and that there were some dark elements seeking this for their own means. Councillor Tisi explained that along with Councillor Davies, she had made an electoral promise to give residents the chance to have their say on this matter. Perhaps if the residents in Eton and Castle knew nothing about the proposals, the ward councillor could have worked a little harder to keep them informed.

Councillor Tisi stated that she wanted to talk about the town that she had called home for 10 years, the town where she was married, and was now raising her family. It was a wonderful place, with a strong sense of community that welcomed newcomers and

kept families tied for generations. Windsor was home to incredible charities that put their arms around people at their lowest ebb. There were thriving local business that were supported by the community, like The Swan pub and Cinnamon Cafe. People cared so much about their town that they had volunteered their time for years to get a neighbourhood plan adopted.

Councillor Tisi was proud to now call herself a Windsorian. She was highlighting this to show that the people of Windsor already organised and fought to demand better for their town and their residents and this was why they should have a town council. She had seen efforts to frighten Windsor residents into rejecting the proposed town council in case the precept was suddenly pushed up to astronomical levels to pay for future schemes. This argument held no weight when it was remembered that the council would be made up of the wonderful people from the community she had just described. Councillor Tisi commented that they themselves would be paying any such precept, so she questioned why they would they want to sabotage their efforts by alienating those who voted for them.

Councillor Tisi urged Members to do the right thing, give the people of Windsor the chance to do more to shape their community and support the Working Group recommendations.

Councillor Rayner thanked residents who had taken part in each stage of the governance review, in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Windsor. She had listened to their views and she appreciated there were some things that needed to be done together to make local decision making and community engagement better, though she did not think that adding an extra layer of democracy was the right way forward. Along with Councillors Shelim and Bowden, she represented part of the unparished area affected. The process had been long and detailed and had been debated widely with lots of local engagement. The electorate of 21,000 all received a leaflet and were given the opportunity to give their view. The first consultation had received 69 responses. The second consultation had received 679 responses; of those, 524 had indicated that they supported the formation of a town council. Therefore, very few of those who would be affected had taken part to vote for a town council. She did not believe this gave the appropriate mandate to establish a town council. However, it did indicate a wish for change and she would ask officers to look at how the council could do better and make improvements to the current system to do better. No-one knew how much the precept would change but it would have to fund administration, office and staffing costs and the costs of future elections. The current precept was included in the council budget and was detailed by service area. Another reason given for establishing a town council was to create a better community spirit and events. Councillor Rayner felt extremely fortunate in Windsor to have active groups such as the Lions and Rotary Club who organised events. She would be happy to work with the Windsor Town Council Steering Group to form a local residents association to raise funds for events and other activities.

Councillor Rayner explained that when she had first been elected this was in the ward of Eton Wick and she had encouraged the establishment of a village association and a waterways group, both of which were now thriving and engaged in community projects. Both the village association and community association had been critical in the pandemic as they had the structure in place. Both raised funds, organised business events, street parties, litter picks and many more things to improve the area. As an independent group, there was a huge amount that could be achieved. The

council needed to listen to residents to make improvements, but she did not feel that adding another layer of democracy was the right approach.

Councillor Baldwin commented that he regretted that the Chairman of the Working Group was absent. No-one he had spoken to had had a bad word to say about his Chairmanship and he had been looking forward to hearing Councillor Shelim's remarks. Councillor Baldwin felt he would surely have been more positive than his understudy, which probably explained why he was not present. The proposer's lacklustre effort and the other negative contributions from Conservative Members had left Councillor Baldwin with a sense that all was not well. He asked if it were possible that they all intended to vote against the motion? Councillor Baldwin recalled a time when their enthusiasm for the idea had been near boundless. On 26 May 2020, upon announcing his intention to set up the review, their Leader was heard to say "*However, on the fundamental issue of democracy, I have heard tonight the phrase 'Maidenhead Councillors taking decisions about Windsor' or 'We don't have a Town Council representing us', that somehow, we do not believe in local democracy, localism or empowerment. This is categorically untrue."*

He had been so keen to get started that he waived the formality of an e-petition triggering a motion and announced that a Governance Review would be undertaken. He re-took the oath when he seconded the motion before Council on 28 July 2020 and said: "*I very much look forward to having the debate and seeing the recommendations come forward from the Working Group*." He even expressed his 'absolute confidence' in his choice for Chairman. Councillor Baldwin wondered if that had now changed.

Councillor Baldwin commented that he had learnt in the last two years that by design the Conservative administration limited debate, made it harder for the voices of petitioners and consultees to be heard and practiced their own version of double think. Yet even by their own Orwellian standards the apparent and very abrupt flip-flop took the biscuit. If Conservatives members voted en-bloc to reject the recommendations then they would hear an outcry from all those who contributed to the Steering Group and the consultation. Countless hours of residents', Members', and officers' time had been wasted. What the voters would see was an administration that did allow their Maidenhead Councillors to take decisions for Windsor. What they would find was that they would not have a Town Council representing them. Instead, they would have a borough council led by Members who did not believe in local democracy, localism or empowerment.

Councillor Targowski said that he felt genuinely conflicted. He believed in localism however he had genuine concerns about the 3% consultation response. He also had concerns about the precept.

Councillor McWilliams commented that parish councils had been historically created to rationalise basic units of government, particularly in rural areas. This was an issue of democratic deficit at the time and about the efficiency of service delivery. The creation of a new tier of government should always be approached with caution as although it could do great things, it was not the answer to all problems. There did not appear to be specific problems that needed fixing by a new layer of government that could not be dealt with by the representatives already in post. There was a group who did want a town council but he did not fell that was enough in itself to create one. He had lived in both parished and unparished areas. The parish council in Cox Green, a relatively rural area, worked well, but in town centres all were closer to services that were

available. Councillors in urban areas could be the change they wanted to see. Community partnerships were possible to take forward schemes. Residents could decide on their representatives every four years. If the issue was not democracy or a specific problem, then the council must look at public opinion. If it saw huge amounts of support for a town council or there was a referendum, or an overwhelming vote for a party that wanted a referendum then perhaps the council could say a majority of people wanted a town council. 2.58% was no way a majority of the people of Windsor. He had heard that another layer of government would be created, not so solve a specific problem or resolve a heinous issue of a lack of democracy but because 2.5% of people wanted it. He did not think that was sufficient to create another layer of government.

Councillor Knowles commented that at the heart of the issue was equality. The actual response rate was 3.23%. When refined down to those liable to pay the precept, this came to 5%. Councillor Knowles referred to recent consultations. The library changes consultation had received 1000 responses from a potential population of 151,400. This was 1.67%, which was enough to guide the Cabinet to vary the plan. The consultation to create a pedestrian area around the Castle had received 350 responses representing 1.67%. The budget consultation had 820 responses from the whole borough, representing 0.54%. The climate change policy consultation came in at 0.23%. Set against these figures, the response rate for the Windsor Town Council consultation was quite good. A Community Governance Review was a legal process which did not require a threshold for response rates. The Working Group had tested the robustness of this with officers as the process went on. It was worth noting that it was not a vote for or against a town council, it was not a referendum. Instead, it was to inform the Working Group about views on the draft recommendations. No mandate was needed. Councillor Knowles asked, if thresholds were going to be set for future consultations, that they be published in the council constitution.

Councillor Knowles explained that his ward was part parished and part unparished. The ability to react quickly to local needs was the benefit of a parish council. This was clearly demonstrated by the town and parish councils being able to provide the framework of volunteers and administration during the pandemic. In contrast West Windsor had to start from scratch. Parish and town councils therefore played an important role in ‘Big Society’. The reliance would only increase in the future and having the framework in place was the key enabler. The misinformation around the costs to residents was disappointing from both sides. No one could forecast what the precept would actually be in future; only the first year was clear where the precept would remain the same because all the services would still need to be run by the town council. The only addition would be the clerk and premises, which he had costed at £3.25 per head. That was the cost of local democracy.

Councillor Knowles commented that during the consultation it had become clear that the people of Windsor felt disconnected from other parts of the borough, felt they had no control and were used as a cash cow for Maidenhead. Although some residents had exaggerated the view over the process and the outcome, this feeling would not go away. Supporting the recommendation in the report would go a long way to satisfy the need to engage.

Councillor Hilton commented that, knowing the decision would be taken by full Council, he had felt obligated to ensure that he had presented it in a balanced way. He thanked all Members of the Working Group. He also thanked all the residents who

made representations, particularly those who provided an explanation for their views. It had been suggested that a town council could put in pedestrian crossings. This was not correct as this would be managed by the highways team at the borough. This demonstrated the misunderstandings of the powers of a parish or town council.

Councillor Hilton commented that in July 2020 the administration had given those who wanted a town council the opportunity to gain support for it. This was assisted in every way, including a leaflet delivered to every home within the area, material in council newsletters and though social media channels. The desire on the part of everyone involved was to engage enough people to be certain that what was done was the right thing. Despite all the promotion, less people decided to respond to the consultation than signed the petition (600), which had never formally been submitted to the council.

Councillor Knowles stated he wished to raise a point of order that Councillor Hilton had presented the report but was now indicating he would vote against it. The Monitoring Officer explained that it was appropriate for a Member to make a proposal for recommendation and then change their mind during the course of the debate. It was important that councillors listened to all viewpoints given in the chamber. A Member proposing a motion was simply doing so to enable the debate to begin.

Councillor Davey commented that he wished to challenge the figures quoted as misinformation as there had been 600 online petition signatures but 1400 offline signatures.

On being put to the vote, 15 councillors voted for the motion; 20 councillors voted against the motion. The motion therefore fell.

Community Governance Review – Windsor Town Council - Final Recommendations (Motion)	
Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor John Baldwin	For
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	Against
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	Against
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor David Cannon	Against
Councillor Gerry Clark	Against
Councillor David Coppinger	Against
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	For
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Karen Davies	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	For
Councillor David Hilton	Against
Councillor Maureen Hunt	Against
Councillor Andrew Johnson	Against
Councillor Greg Jones	Against
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For

Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Councillor Ross McWilliams	Against
Councillor Helen Price	For
Councillor Samantha Rayner	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	Against
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Rejected	

Councillor Baldwin raised a point of order. He referred to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which required the council to formally agree the reasons for rejecting the proposal. The Monitoring Officer had advised him that the comments of Members in the debate would be sufficient once they were reduced into minutes and published. However the comments from those who had voted against the motion had all concentrated on either the sufficiency of the response to the consultation or the number of new councillors that would be created. He felt that none of those comments were covered by section 93 of the Act and under those circumstances the debate and the responses in the debate would not meet the burden of both publishing the decision and the reasons for making the decision. He urged the Mayor to ensure compliance with the law to seek a motion so worded that it could be agreed and meet the legal burden.

The Monitoring Officer responded that the requirement on the council was to give reasons where it made a decision on a CGR. There had been a substantial debate and Members had had sight of detailed papers in advance. The council's duty was to decide whether or not a Town Council for Windsor constituted effective and convenient government. There had been comments during the debate on the effectiveness and convenience of service delivery. Members had also spoken about the wishes of the local community whish was something relevant to take into account under the statutory guidance. As Monitoring Officer she was satisfied that Members had considered and given reasons within the debate, which would be satisfactory for the discharge of the council's legal duties.

At 8.45pm, the meeting was adjourned for 5 minutes. The meeting began again at 8.50pm.

Councillors W. Da Costa and C. Da Costa left the meeting.

ii) ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Members considered the annual report from the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Bateson explained that the Audit and Governance Committee had been re-established in 2020 in response to the CIPFA report on financial governance. This was to enable increased Member oversight of key financial processes and governance issues. The Audit and Governance Committee provided important assurance to the authority and to external auditors. Its function was to provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial control. Within the wider control environment, the audit committee held a responsibility to ensure probity, and held oversight responsibility for the finance system in general,

alongside governance and audit arrangements. It was concerned with the robustness of the authority's arrangements to implement its policies and to manage its resources.

At each meeting the Members of the committee received reports from the Finance team, and both internal and external auditors. The committee approved the financial year end accounts and received the external auditors' reports on the accounts. It also received quarterly progress reports from the Internal Auditors. It oversaw risk management and had addressed the CIPFA report's concerns around other issues, ensuring that the authority reported properly on Treasury Management and the development of an appropriate Capital Strategy. The committee had received 19 reports in the last year, as detailed in the report.

Councillor Hilton commented that in the run up to the 2019 election, which brought with it a reduction in the number of councillors from 57 to 41, there was a working group set up to consider the number of panels that 41 Members could support. The recommendation was made at the time to merge the Audit Committee with the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel. It was the CIPFA report in 2019 that had recommended its reinstatement, which Councillor Hilton felt was a very sensible thing to do as the Scrutiny function was different to the Audit function. The new Committee was doing a great job to hold relevant parties to account.

Councillor Jones thanked the finance team for the increased transparency and the Monitoring Officer for progressing that work. However, there was still work to do and Councillor Jones was unsure if the right structure was in place to ensure good governance and scrutiny. She welcomed the inclusion of training in the proposals for improved working methods.

Councillor Sharpe commented that the committee had been very useful in adding transparency. Everyone on the committee worked very well together to achieve that aim. There was still work to do and he had no doubt it would progress over the coming years.

Councillor Bateson thanked the finance team for their support to the committee. She was confident that in the next year the Committee would be able to make more progress.

It was proposed by Councillor Bateson, seconded by Councillor Sharpe, and:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Full Council notes the annual report of the Audit and Governance Committee.

iii) ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM

Members considered the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Forum.

Councillor Johnson introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Carroll. He thanked the Youth Engagement Officer, Youth Service Manager and the Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help for their energy, deep commitment and ongoing dedication to the Corporate Parenting Forum and moreover the work they did day in and day out to enhance the life chances of so many children and young people across the Royal Borough. Their enthusiasm, passion and professionalism had been simply awesome and he commended and thanked them for always finding a way to make the system work and to ensure the service had excelled. He also wished to thank all panel

members and attendees of the forum for their commitment and contributions, which were much appreciated and truly valued.

There was nothing more important to the administration than protecting, furthering and advancing the life chances and opportunities of the borough's young people and of course that had an amplified level of importance for vulnerable children and children in care. Before touching on some of the achievements of the forum, it was vital to state that the above objectives could only be achieved if the council listened to young people and to their views, thoughts, feelings and insights and in doing so understood what the lived experience really was and what more the council could do to make it better. That was why ever since becoming Chairman of the Forum Councillor Carroll had placed an unequivocal and emphatic emphasis on ensuring the meetings were open, enjoyable, flexible and collaborative. This was a stance that had been adopted by all Members of the Forum.

The Forum had learnt a great deal in the past year, both about the experiences of the young people and how to improve the situation. At times it had been profoundly illuminating and deeply thought provoking. On behalf of all Members, he thanked all the young people who attended the Forum.

Young people continued to be centrally involved in the Corporate Parenting Forum meetings and facilitated activities which aimed to highlight to Members how it felt to be a Child in Care or Care Leaver. The Corporate Parenting Forum had been highlighted by regulators as an example of excellent practice in involving children and young people in Council decision making/scrutiny mechanisms. The Corporate Parenting Forum supported the needs of young people within their caring responsibilities. The council remained remain collectively ambitious to evolve the Forum further.

Councillor Bhangra welcomed the report and thanked all Members for their involvement and hard work.

Councillor Tisi welcomed the report. She echoed the thanks to the Youth Engagement Officer who ran Kickback, the group for young people in care, and the young people who attended the meetings. She also thanked the Youth Services Manager who had compiled the report and the Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help for her continued dedication to the young people in our care.

It was an honour and a privilege to be a corporate parent and be Vice Chairman of the Forum. It was a meeting where Members left their ego at the door. All were working towards a common goal, to action real change to affect the lives of the young people in care, for example council tax support for young people up to age 25 would soon be coming to Cabinet as a recommendation from the Forum. The Forum responded to feedback from young people and made it reflect on the language used and its best intentions. All were learning more about the challenges faced by children in care and how it felt to be in their shoes.

Councillor Clark explained that he had been a Member of the Forum for a number of years; it was a privilege to be a Member. He reminded Members that they were all Corporate Parents and should have the aspiration to see the children in care perform as well as they could with the best possible outcomes. He highlighted Councillor Carroll's excellent chairmanship and that his aspirations for the young people was exemplary.

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That full Council notes the report and:

i) Notes the Annual Report from the Corporate Parenting Forum, attached as Appendix A

23. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

a) Councillor Bond asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Cabinet Member for Planning, Environmental Services, and Maidenhead:

Following the Greenpeace investigation into UK plastic recycling being dumped in Turkey, can you confirm which countries RBWM plastic waste is now being sent to please, giving a percentage breakdown, and also what supply chain audits are undertaken to ensure it is actually recycled?

Written response: *All plastics material collected by the borough in the blue bin recycling collections is sent for sorting in Warwickshire. From there recycling is sent to a range of destinations depending on the type of material. Plastics are sent to a company in Swinton, where it is sorted into further types and sent to a range of UK or EU based reprocessors to be flaked for manufacture of new plastic packaging. We report on a quarterly basis through the national Waste Data Flow System what has been collected for recycling and waste and the destinations of all materials. The contract with Pure for reprocessing of recycling, includes regular checks of the material we are sending to the MRF, which is designed to sort the recycling to provide the quality of material required by the reprocessers and to meet UK and international quality standards.*

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Bond commented that he welcomed that nothing was going to Turkish beaches and it was all dealt with in the UK or Europe. He thanked officers for updating the website with the information. He asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that the best solution for everyone was the waste hierarchy – reduce, reuse, repair, recycle.

Councillor Coppinger responded that the plant that carried out the initial sorting had a major fire the previous evening which had been reported in the press. The council was awaiting an update as to how they would proceed in future. He did not expect it to have any impact, but material was currently being stored at Stafferton Way. The government was currently undertaking a consultation on major changes to recycling including whether producers and retailers would be responsible for future collection. There were lots of changes happening, all in the right direction.

b) Councillor Knowles asked the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

The LGA peer review carried out last year identified areas of weakness in RBWM scrutiny process. Is it the intention to invite the LGA peer review team to revisit this and to assure us of progress being made to improve the system?

Written response: *Overview and Scrutiny was identified as a particular area for improvement in the LGA Peer Review that took place in September 2017 during which*

the LGA team recommended a number of suggested actions including all Member briefings, Member development, timely papers, ensuring the executive and scrutiny functions had more separation and a review of the number of Panels. During a follow up visit in September 2019 progress in implementation was noted and the Peer Review Team recommended that;

"The Council must now ensure that the supporting infrastructure is appropriate and well-resourced with papers prepared carefully and circulated on time. Scrutiny should move away from verbal only updates and build a deeper level of analysis with a focus on forward looking scrutiny and debate."

Since then the Council has adopted the "strong foundations" approach and in January 2021, the work towards building a more effective scrutiny function included Member training sessions, run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, who have worked closely with the LGA on scrutiny development so that Members could equip themselves with the skills to become effective scrutineers. To further embed a positive and purposeful culture of scrutiny at the Royal Borough, there is further work to do and this year the Council will see a focus on developing the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to help them add value to the business of the authority.

To this end scrutiny is an important theme in the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan, to be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on 29th July 2021 where a number of key actions are proposed. Members will be able to review the Action Plan once it is published later this week and attend the meeting to hear the debate on the proposed actions.

In terms of further reviews, I can confirm that I am in discussion with the LGA to timetable in a Peer Challenge in the next calendar year so that the Council can carry on its improvement journey, and once this is arranged I will advise Members.

Councillor Knowles confirmed he did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

c) Councillor Hill asked the following question of Councillor Clark, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity:

The Greenfields Zebra Crossing, surrounding road markings and street furniture are in a poor state of repair and the result of numerous residents and councillor complaints. When will this area of Stafferton Link Road be renovated and brought up to standard?

Written response: *After a recent reported incident near the crossing, the Highways team has been out to assess the site and this has indicated that the current markings are within the acceptable limits for maintenance. Therefore, no immediate action is required but this will be kept under review. The development of the nearby site at Statemans House is going through the planning process and will provide the opportunity to review the crossing and surrounding area and make any necessary improvements.*

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Hill commented with all the resident complaints, near misses and resident petition, how was a broken electric parking sign with shattered plastic obstructing the view of the Belisha beacon combined with failing road markings acceptable as a state of one of the borough zebra crossings.

Councillor Clark responded that Councillor Hill had raised issues of which he had been unaware but the response to the question was clear in terms of the advice he had been given that it did not warrant further action. However, in light of Councillor Hill's further comments, he would like to investigate it further and discuss it with Councillor Hill after the meeting.

Councillor Hill confirmed he would forward photographs to Councillor Clark.

d) Councillor Price asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

The delivery of the Transformation Strategy is key to RBWM achieving its long-term objectives. The Cabinet Transformation sub committee was formed last year. Its TOR included monitoring progress of delivery of the Transformation Strategy. The Constitution states it will meet quarterly. Why has it therefore only met once in September 2020?

Written response: *Thank you to Cllr Price for her question and I completely agree that the Constitution states that the sub committee should meet quarterly. However, the transformation team has been heavily involved in the operational delivery of the council's COVID response, including the support of the volunteers and clinically extremely vulnerable and delivery of the plan has been affected accordingly. Along with colleagues, they have been embracing innovation and invention, both a keystone of transformation throughout this period. As we start to move into a state of new normal and the team can focus efforts, the delivery plan is being developed for publication and a review of progress to date will be presented at a Cabinet Transformation sub committee (date to be confirmed), with the quarterly meetings now diarised thereafter accordingly.*

In summary, as the responsible Cabinet Member, I wish to make it clear that it has always been my earnest view and profound undertaking to ensure all staff have been given the unequivocal direction, support and steer to prioritise the COVID response to support the NHS aims and objectives of preventing death, preventing hospitalisations and protecting the public more broadly. There is nothing more important than those aims and objectives, and ensuring as a local authority we continue to do what is necessary to contribute to the extraordinary pandemic response we have seen locally and for which I am so deeply grateful to all our officers for the incredible job they have done and continue to do, and for their heroic professionalism during this difficult time.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Price commented that it was good to know that there had been progress on the strategy and that quarterly meetings would be now diarised. She asked if the Cabinet Member felt there was a need for a formal monitoring process with such radical changes taking place. The meetings dates had not yet been published; Councillor Price asked when it was anticipated this would happen.

Councillor Johnson, on behalf of Councillor Carroll, responded that the dates would be published as soon as possible. He would be speaking to the Cabinet Member after the meeting to facilitate that process.

e) Councillor Price asked the following question of Councillor McWilliams, Cabinet Member for Housing, Sport & Leisure, and Community Engagement:

The Transformation Strategy is clear that 'investing in strong foundations' is key to underpinning RBWM's three core values. Such underpinning includes 'modern and robust IT'. More and more information is being communicated exclusively to residents via the website. When will time, effort and money be invested in making the RBWM website easy to navigate and thus 'fit for purpose'?

Written response: *Thank you to Cllr Price for her question and I completely agree that the website is a crucial part of our communication and engagement work with our residents. The new website was developed and launched last year in the middle of the pandemic and that had an inevitable impact on the initial stages of embedding the new site.*

I am, however, very pleased to confirm that the website is constantly being reviewed but we are about to commence an overall review of the functionality of the website as part of the transformation programme which will also look at the resource available to support it.

However, it is important to state that we have implemented a number of updates in recent months with plans to improve and develop more as we move forward. In particular, I would draw your attention to the following:

- *The search functionality has been completely overhauled and a new search engine has been implemented. This has improved the accuracy of the search responses and allowed for a filtered approach to be taken.*
- *A website user group is being set up to engage with residents and they will act as a critical friend to the site helping to improve the 'look and feel' as well as the website content.*
- *We are in the process of embedding a feedback function onto all pages within the website. This will give users the ability to comment not only on the look and feel but to give views on the suitability of the content and language used within a specific page. This will be open and transparent for all to see.*
- *We are also working with a group of other local authorities who use the same content management system. This enables us to share best practice and knowledge as well as resources in order to enhance the delivery of the website.*

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Price commented that it was encouraging to read about progress. She asked if any dates could be given by which the following would happen:

- The website user group – and would the Cabinet Member ensure Members who were not IT savvy and those with disabilities
- The feedback function

Councillor Price also commented that it was good to hear the search function had been improved as she had previously found it faster to use a Google search. She asked if the Cabinet Member would share with the public at a later date, what he considered to be the key characteristics of a user-friendly website and thus what he was striving to achieve.

Councillor McWilliams responded that a website user group was something that could be looked at. He was entirely open minded to how it looked. He had already received a suggestion for a community review of the website; he would welcome proposals being put forward. He did not have specific dates at his fingertips but welcomed an email from Councillor Price after the meeting and he would pick the issue up. He would be more than happy to put details of the key characteristics into the public domain after the meeting.

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

On 21 June Datchet Parish Council passed a resolution requiring the Environment Agency to limit the Jubilee River conveyance capacity to a volume that is compatible with current Datchet flood defences and land drainage infrastructure. How will RBWM be demonstrating their support for the resolution?

Written response: *The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 places a duty on the council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, to co-operate with other public bodies identified as flood risk management authorities (FRMAs) to manage flood risk in the borough and across boundaries. The Environment Agency is the FRMA with responsibility for the management and operation of the Jubilee River. The council will therefore continue to work closely with the Environment Agency to manage local flood risk, including interactions with the Jubilee River, local flood defences and land drainage infrastructure.*

Datchet is within the scope of the River Thames Infrastructure Project, a partnership with the Environment Agency which focuses on flood risk management in the Datchet, Horton, Wraysbury and Old Windsor areas. The project includes engagement with local stakeholders, including Datchet Parish Council, and will consider options for flood risk management in the area.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Larcombe commented that unfortunately he had not been at the meeting as he sat on two other parish councils. He invited Councillor Cannon to explain precisely why Datchet Parish Council raised the motion about the sluice in the first place.

Councillor Cannon responded that he suggested the question should be asked of the parish council rather than himself.

g) Councillor Davey asked the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

One issue highlighted by the CIPFA Review of Governance 2020 was that there was “no appropriate challenge or recognition that challenge was a good thing”. What have you done to demonstrate to both the public and this council that you believe challenge is a good thing, and encourage both Members and residents to challenge?

Written response: *The Royal Borough is committed to an open and transparent decision making culture and since the CIPFA Governance Review, a number of improvements have been made to embed a culture of robust and appropriate challenge both from within the council and through engagement with residents and external partners. We have done considerable work on the values of the Council that*

support an open and honest culture. In particular much work has been done on ensuring that reports being presented for decision contain appropriate professional advice to enable Members to make robust and well thought through decisions. In addition, there are clearer processes to show how decisions are made and who is making them and officers have been trained so that the roles/responsibilities of officers and Members are better understood. We have opened up our meetings virtually and this is yielding higher levels of engagement with our communities. We are working together with our parish councils to develop a better understanding of what they are seeking to achieve. Members will have seen our changed approach to resident and stakeholder engagement being exemplified in our community development response, our libraries transformation, development of the new corporate plan and the consultations that happen throughout the Royal Borough. This opens up the Council to constructive challenge in a way that we haven't done before, so that we can make better decisions about issues that matter to our communities.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Davey commented that he appreciated the efforts of officers making consultation possible and would encourage the journey. His primary concern was the way many challenges were met by senior Cabinet Members on social media channels. Looking to find fault with residents as well as Members with heated exchanges resulting in a myriad of accusations felt rather churlish and far from encouraging. He requested Councillor Johnson's assurance that he would aim to lead by example and encourage challenging engagement in a positive way moving forward.

Councillor Johnson responded that all Members needed to take responsibility for their own behaviour, maintain standards on social media and call out bad behaviour. Collectively of late he felt standards had improved, assisted by the new code of conduct. He recognised that there was always room for improvement.

h) Councillor Davey asked the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

The CIPFA Review of Governance 2020 suggested the new Audit Committee, and an Independent Chair. Why did you not take up the recommendation for an Independent Chair?

Written response: *At the July 2020 meeting of full Council Members considered a proposal for the transfer of audit oversight functions from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel to a separate Audit and Governance Committee. Following debate, during which Councillor Davey was present, the report was unanimously agreed which included the following:*

i) Approves amendments to the constitution detailed in Appendix A to establish an Audit and Governance Committee.

ii) Appoints Councillor Bateson as Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee and Councillor L. Jones as Vice Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

iii) Meeting dates for the remainder of the municipal year be set as:

- *14 September 2020*

- *9 November 2020*

- *16 February 2021*

iv) Notes the terms of reference of the Cabinet Transformation Sub-Committee detailed in Appendix B.

v) Delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to update and publish the council constitution in line with the recommendations in the report.

As I made clear during that debate, and as was ultimately agreed by all Members via the unanimous decision, the key requirements of the chair are the ability to robustly and accurately challenge decision making and without fear or favour, hold the council to account. A key requirement was also to propose and initiate suggestions to strengthen the council's overall position of robust governance. For that reason, I also made sure that the recommendation included the provision for the position of vice-chair to be given to a senior member of the opposition, with Councillor Lynne Jones currently holding that position.

The establishment of a sperate audit committee was a key recommendation within the CIPFA report and one we have had no hesitation in implementing following that unanimous approval at the July 2020 meeting of full council.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Davey commented that as the Leader knew, the Vice Chair had no real authority, only that ordained by the Chair and he had chosen not to answer Councillor Davey's question. He therefore asked what qualifications did the current Chair hold for what must be quite a technical role.

Councillor Johnson responded that they were the very same qualifications displayed 12 months previously at the July 2020 meeting when all Members present voted to endorse the paper to establish the Committee and install the current Chairman and Vice Chairman, both of whom he had confidence in to perform the role to the best of their abilities.

24. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Motion a)

Councillor Davey introduced his motion. He explained that at the last full council meeting Councillor Johnson had said the administration was candid when it got things wrong and there was always room for improvement. From the responses given to the questions by himself and Councillor Knowles it was apparent that while officers were doing their best to facilitate the recommendations made by senior members of other councils, there was a level of cherry picking by the administration.

Councillor Davey stated that not making use of the best possible chairs to ensure thorough governance was, in his opinion, short sighted. By way of an example, if there was a hung council next time around he would strongly recommend Councillor Hilton as Chairman of Planning as he had shown exemplary leadership in this area. By making Councillor McWilliams Vice Chair on Planning went against many of the recommendations in those reports.

Councillor Davey commented that he was probably very naive and idealistic wanting council to be more accountable, more transparent and open to public criticism, actually 'Putting Residents First' not just being a soundbite. Every Councillor who took the time to read the reports would find their own issues which needed addressing and so it would be good to have those discussions, to identify those issues and look for cross-party agreement on how they might be resolved. Officers would be best placed to advise what had been addressed, what was in the pipeline and what had not been possible to achieve thus far.

Residents were crying out for the council to make contractors accountable. Tivoli had been allowed to not perform; every week there was another complaint from a resident about the grass not being cut. Last week Councillor Davey had been told the shears they used to trim hedges were not working. He asked how was that the council's problem? Did it just keep paying them or did it challenge and set an example?

CIPFA were asked to review Governance on the £350,000 Clewer and Dedworth Neighbourhood Improvements capital scheme that was allowed to go more than £50,000 over budget. Two years on, his first question to the council still seemed to get a regular mention at Full Council. Scrutiny not realising its potential was another comment. He had written to the Chair of Infrastructure asking why no topics had been selected. At the last Council meeting Councillor Johnson had said that there was a lack of ambition in bringing forward credible ideas to scrutiny. The previous year, he had encouraged Members and residents to bring forward their ideas and issues that mattered to them. Over 40 topics had come forward, there were still a dozen or more on the work schedule. His reward was to be pushed to one side.

Councillor Johnson had said the administration was candid when it got things wrong and there was always room for improvement. He suggested Members be candid, vote for the motion and ensure each and every issue was challenged and addressed, putting residents first. That would be a major success for the administration.

Councillor Jones seconded the motion.

Councillor Hilton commented that the Corporate Peer Review took place four years previously and as the report from the June 2019 follow up meeting explained, was acted upon. He quoted from that report: *'The Council has clearly embraced the findings from the Corporate Peer Review Challenge in 2017 and evidenced its proactive response through an Action Plan, the implementation of which has been carefully monitored.'*

Councillor Hilton continued that since the Peer Review, not only had the world changed but so had the Council. Crucially a new Chief Executive had taken up his post in February 2019 and began a review of the officer structure, capacity and financial governance. The Chief Executive commissioned CIPFA to carry out a review of financial governance. Their findings were established partly through a review of processes and interviewing both officers and Councillors but importantly through the hands-on process of developing the council's 2020/21 budget. The final report was published in June 2020.

One of the Chief Executive's earliest actions to improve financial governance was to recruit a Head of Resources and S151 officer. Adele Taylor joined the Council in March 2020 and she in turn recruited Andrew Vallance as Head of Finance; both were

appointments that greatly strengthened the council's finance capability. So as not to lose sight of the recommendations in the CIPFA review, the Director of Resources developed a CIPFA Review of Governance Action Plan. An action plan that has led to significant improvements to financial governance. Progress on the action plan was reported to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis so challenge on the rate of progress was invited.

There were 25 individual actions in the plan of which all but six been completed.
Of those outstanding.

- There were two that related to training of officers and Members that would continue into the future
- The review of the Property Company would be presented to Cabinet on 22 July 2020.
- Internal audit of reconciliations was planned for completion in September.
- Improved reporting of debt management to be included in budget monitoring reports had happened. However, this issue was complex with debt emanating from multiple sources. Some such as Housing Benefit Overpayment and Council Tax were robustly managed but a new process for managing Adult Social Care debt had fairly recently been established and was delivering a return. Action in the area of debt management was on-going.
- A specific project to identify opportunities to increase the use of purchase orders was also ongoing.

Councillor Hilton highlighted that good governance was not static but processes needed to change as the world around changed. Relatively recently, to strengthen governance, a new Monitoring Officer had joined to head the department; she had already reorganised her team and was having a positive impact on the way the council did business.

Councillor Hilton commented that Councillor Davey should be aware the administration was determined to continually improve and act upon good advice and guidance such as that included in the CIPFA report. It was already doing what Councillor Davey's motion asked it to do and more and Councillor Hilton thanked Councillor Davey for giving him the opportunity to explain this to a wider audience. The only issue he had with the motion was setting a timeline of March 2022 for completion. In these uncertain times, it would be very wrong to fetter the finance team's ability to manage and change their priorities. He therefore could not support the motion.

Councillor Johnson highlighted the response to Member question b where it confirmed the council was in discussion with the LGA to timetable a peer review in the next calendar year to continue on the improvement journey. He appreciated that this information was not known to the proposer of the motion at the time of submission. The council had never been more open. He had received many positive comments, particularly from residents who had attended Cabinet to hold the Cabinet to account and ask questions. The administration had taken the decision to undertake a forensic scrutiny of governance structures. As had been discussed at the June 2020 Cabinet meeting, the key findings had been endorsed. As he had said at the last meeting, there was always room for improvement, particularly in relation to scrutiny. Part of that onus fell on individual Members of the Panels. Overall, the general direction was good, and challenge was welcomed to ensure better outcomes for residents.

Councillor Stimson commented that several Members of the Opposition had commented on improved transparency and as Councillor Hilton had said, so much had already been addressed. She knew as a Cabinet Member how stretched officers were and to be going over things that had already been addressed was a waste of resources.

Councillor Larcombe commented that one of the issues he had was the funding of the River Thames Scheme. It seemed to him that the CIPFA report had never looked at the scheme. He could not be certain but he did know that Datchet Parish Council were not told until August 2020 that the River Thames Scheme was unaffordable. The victims were waiting for the next flood and nothing had been done in nearly 20 years. There was a lot of talk about transparency, but he was still waiting.

Councillor Knowles stated that at the heart of the issue was good management practice of setting an end date for a process. It would not be unreasonable for members of the public to expect some sort of conclusion well before three years after the initial report. It would be worthwhile to add some impetus to get through the recommendations and allow a line to be drawn under the reports in good time before the next elections.

Councillor Jones commented that Councillor Hilton had misunderstood the intention of the motion. Addressing the recommendations by March 2022 did not mean completing them by then. Those that were in progress or were not taken forward would require an explanation as to why the decision had been taken. There were more recommendations across the organisation than just those of a financial nature. The motion would underline the council's commitment to transparency and good governance. It would also put a line under all three reports. She would be more than willing to take part in a Member group to undertake the review.

Councillor Davey wanted to reinforce that council officers were doing a fantastic job. Opposition challenges were holding the administration to account, for example he had seen press releases issued after an issue had been raised. The key point was the reports stated that Cabinet Members should not be on panels or committees but a Cabinet Member had just been appointed as Vice Chairman of a Development Management Committee.

Councillor McWilliams requested a personal explanation. The Mayor ruled it was not a personal explanation.

The vote was taken by a show of hands. 13 Councillors voted for the motion; 20 Councillors voted against the motion. The motion therefore fell.

CONTINUATION OF MEETING

At this point in the meeting, and in accordance with Rule of Procedure Part 4A 23.1 of the council's constitution, the Chairman called for a vote in relation to whether or not the meeting should continue, as the time had exceeded 9.30pm. Upon being put to the vote, those present voted in favour of the meeting continuing.

Motion b)

Councillor Davies introduced her motion. She explained that humans had already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which were being felt in the UK and around the world. The distressing scenes of severe flooding in Germany and Belgium in the previous week and the hot weather in the UK were just two of the most recent examples. Global temperatures had increased by 1.2 degrees from pre-industrial levels and the natural world had reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals currently threatened with extinction.

Unless there was a drastic change in course, the world was set to exceed the Paris Agreement's safe 1.5 degree limit. Pledges like the Paris Agreement and updated emissions targets were not legally binding. The gap between pledges and policies left the world on course for catastrophic warming of nearly 3 degrees. As the IPCC's 2018 report made clear, every half a degree made a world of difference: severe climate impacts with 1.5 degrees of warming, such as extreme weather patterns causing flooding and heat waves, got significantly worse with 2 degrees. According to the IPCC, limiting heating to 1.5 degrees may still be possible with ambitious action from national and local authorities, civil society, the private sector, and local communities.

The UK was also one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world; more than one in seven of its plants and animals faced extinction and more than 40% were in decline. 95% of much-loved hedgehogs had been lost. The UK needed a legally-enforceable nature target so that by 2030 nature was visibly and measurably on the path to recovery, in line with the Global Goal for Nature and the Leaders' Pledge for Nature .

The UK was the first country to enter legally binding, long-term carbon budgets into law, as part of the 2008 Climate Change Act. In June 2019, the Conservative Government led the way on amending the Climate Change Act with the more ambitious target of achieving a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the UK by 2050. Theresa May MP stated that the UK had a 'moral duty to leave this world in a better condition than what we inherited'. This was an important and commendable start, but the problem with the current net zero target was that it was no longer in step with the current science and the rapidly changing world.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill, if it became law, would require the government to develop a strategy to address the emergency that would ensure:

- The ecological emergency was tackled shoulder to shoulder with the climate crisis in a joined-up approach
- The Paris Agreement and the Leaders' Pledge for Nature were enshrined into law
- The UK took full responsibility for its entire greenhouse gas and ecological footprint
- An independent, temporary Climate and Nature Assembly was set up, representative of the UK's population, to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the emergency strategy.

110 MPs from seven political parties had co-sponsored or supported the Bill; joined by 28 peers, including Conservative peer Baroness Verma, former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change; and 80 councils had passed a

motion in support of the Bill, including over a dozen Conservative-led county, district, city and borough councils. Councillor Davies urged that the borough joined these local authorities in declaring its support for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill and asking the two local MPs to sign up to support the Bill in Parliament.

Councillor Brar seconded the motion put froward by Councillor Davies because she believed it was important the local authority should be leading to support the CEE bill as it had done so when it had declared a climate and environmental emergency in June 2019. She felt it should be lobbying the government and the local MPs to support this to make it a law.

The international community was trying to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. The climate and natural world was changing fast and action was needed now; the government needed to play its part. At the current level the planet would heat by 2.4 degrees. That may not sound like a lot but every time it increased it would bring more destruction like flooding and crop failure all over the world. At 4 degrees the heat alone would kill hundreds of thousands every year. It was not too late; catastrophe could be prevented by shifting to a zero carbon economy in a way that protected jobs and upgraded democracy. This was where the CEE bill came in and it had been written with help from top scientists. Now parliament needed to make it law; for that it needed the support of the majority of MPs. The council could support the bill and should also support the spirit of the bill with practical actions to increase and support biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions.

The council had adopted an Environment and Climate Strategy which included the commitments to support biodiversity and achieve biodiversity gain. Supporting biodiversity not only helped wildlife but also contributed to carbon reduction. It was therefore disappointing that the council was still planning to go ahead with plans to put a new footpath through a sensitive wetland area at Battlemead. Every decision the council made should help it achieve the strategy, but the proposal for a new footpath went against the strategy. This proposal would make it even harder for the council to deliver its strategy. Councillor Brar wanted to make sure nature was there for her new granddaughter. It would require the government to rapidly reduce the entire carbon footprint and keep from crossing the 1.5 degree threshold.

Councillor Stimson commented that the previous week she had had a long and frank conversation with Councillor Davies about the CEE Bill. The Bill was introduced as a Private Members Bill. It did not yet have the support of a single Conservative MP. She wanted to find out why so spoke to a number of people. Three key issues prevented it from ever becoming law. She also thought it would slow down progress on addressing climate change. One of the key parts was the inclusion of a citizens' assembly, which would slow the process when the issue was an emergency. The bill had been amended several times already to take account of action by the government.

On a personal level Councillor Stimson said she was happy to work with residents in the borough to develop a biodiversity strategy. An Action Plan would be forthcoming. The borough was now one of 100 councils and the C40 cities signed up to carbon neutral before 2050.

Councillor Del Campo highlighted the findings of the Climate Change Committee's Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk, which had been published in June 2021, and suggested that the country was not quite on the road yet. In summary, new evidence showed that the gap between the level of risk faced and the level of

adaptation underway had widened. The UK had the capacity and the resources to respond effectively to these risks but had not yet done so. 61 risks and opportunities had been identified, and they needed to be addressed urgently as a nation. It was not true to say enough was being done.

Councillor Davey commented that the council include 5G as part of its climate strategy, yet it used 20-30 times the electricity and required slave labour to produce the batteries.

Councillor Bowden highlighted that 20% of the world's electricity usage was for the internet. Light pollution from cities was still on the increase. A bitcoin mining operation had been identified as a significant heat sources in the Midlands. He commented that silly ideas got involved in drawing out electricity. There was a need to reduce internet usage, streetlights and other uses to reduce carbon emissions.

Councillor Jones commented that although she applauded that the council had signed up to reduce carbon usage by 2050, she highlighted that Councillor Davies had proposed the target at full Council previously but had been voted down.

Councillor Davies commented that she had approached Councillor Stimson for information after the papers had come out therefore she had been speaking to her under the impression she was aware of the motion in the agenda. She valued her conversations with Councillor Stimson. According to experts, the bill was designed specifically to reverse the impact of climate change. The bill required the UK to take responsibility for its fair share of greenhouse gas emissions, restore biodiverse habitats. The Environment Bill was an important post Brexit bill which filled the gap in legislation, but it was not far reaching enough to address the urgency of the current situation. The pace of climate change was outstripping the actions taken to mitigate it. She was glad to hear about the move to carbon neutral to 2050 and the government's climate initiatives, but this did not mean the foot could be taken off the gas. The temporary citizens assembly run by independent experts and representative of the UK population would work directly with the Climate Change Committee before the strategy was taken before Parliament for approval.

A named vote was taken. 13 Councillors voted for the motion; 20 Councillors voted against the motion. The motion therefore fell.

Motion b (Motion)	
Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor John Baldwin	For
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	Against
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	Against
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor David Cannon	Against
Councillor Gerry Clark	Against
Councillor David Coppinger	Against
Councillor Carole Da Costa	No vote recorded
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	No vote recorded
Councillor Jon Davey	For

Councillor Karen Davies	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	For
Councillor David Hilton	Against
Councillor Maureen Hunt	Against
Councillor Andrew Johnson	Against
Councillor Greg Jones	Against
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Councillor Ross McWilliams	Against
Councillor Helen Price	For
Councillor Samantha Rayner	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	Against
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Rejected	

25. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on item 13 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.