

## CABINET

THURSDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillors Andrew Johnson (Chairman), Stuart Carroll (Vice-Chairman), David Cannon, David Coppinger, Samantha Rayner, David Hilton, Gerry Clark, Donna Stimson and Ross McWilliams

Also in attendance: Councillor Christine Bateson, Councillor Simon Werner, Councillor Helen Price, Councillor Gurch Singh, Councillor Karen Davies, Councillor Ewan Larcombe, Councillor John Baldwin, Councillor Amy Tisi, Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra and Councillor Simon Bond

**Officers:** Duncan Sharkey, Emma Duncam, Adele Taylor, Andrew Valance, Hilary Hall, Andrew Durrant, Kevin McDaniels and David Cook.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence received.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were approved.

### APPOINTMENTS

None

### FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet considered the contents of the Forward Plan for the next four months and noted the changes made since last published including the addition to December 2021 Cabinet of the Cipfa Governance Review update report.

### CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

#### A) COUNCIL TAX BASE 2022/23

Cabinet considered the report regarding the Councils statutory requirement to set the Council's tax base for 2022/23.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed that this was a technical paper that after considering single person discounts, empty homes policy, exemption and an allowance for non-collection sets out the number of band D properties in the Borough by Parish. This information was used by the council, police, fire and rescue service and parish councils to set their precepts. The Royal Borough had amongst the highest collection rates for council tax of 99.5%. There had been an increase of 556.87 Band D properties from last year which will deliver an additional £630K of CT revenue.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet noted the report and:**

- I. Approved the Council Tax base for the whole of the Borough area, for 2022/23 at 69,736.32 as detailed in this report and appendices. This is an increase of 556.87 over the 2021/22 base, a 0.80% increase.**
- II. Noted a Council Tax collection rate of 99.5% for 2022/23**
- III. Noted an estimated deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund in 2021/22 of £376,176 of which the Council's share is £300,000**

**B) DEMAND FOR SCHOOL PLACES**

Cabinet considered the report regarding the projections of demand for school places within the Royal Borough.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health informed Cabinet that

the last eighteen months had seen a significant demographic change, with reduced net inward migration, in addition to lower birth rates, likely to significantly reduce future demand for school places over previous expectations. There continued to be considerable uncertainty about future demand as net inward migration could return to previous levels and boost demand again.

The Lead Member informed that the Royal Borough was nearing completion of its secondary school expansion programme, work to expand St Peter's Middle School and been completed earlier in the year and the project to expand Windsor Girls' School from September 2022 was underway, with a planning application expected to be submitted by the end of the year. He thanked officers for the level of detail within the report.

Cllr Tisi asked if there was a reason why there had been an increase in children looking to get their education outside the borough. The Director for Children's Services informed that over the last three to four years there had been an increase in the demand for grammar school places which resulted in more pupils being educated outside the Royal Borough. There was still demand for borough school places from outside the borough as standards and choice increased.

Cllr Rayner mentioned the excellent work of the headteacher of Eaton Wick School as they had recently received an improved Ofsted rating of Good. The Lead Member replied that about 97% of our schools had reached a rating of Good or Outstanding and he wanted to see this rise to 100%.

**Resolved Unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report.**

**C) NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN MAIDENHEAD**

Cabinet considered the report regarding the demand for primary school places in Maidenhead.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health informed Cabinet that the report followed the previous report and considered the demand for primary school places in Maidenhead. Projections indicated demand was likely to be lower than previously expected. The report also provided the outcome of a public consultation on a number of options for providing new places.

The consultation asked for views on proposals to open a new primary school on the 'Chiltern Road' site in Maidenhead; and to expand Larchfield Primary and Nursery School, Lowbrook Academy, St Luke's Church of England Primary School and St Mary's Catholic Primary

School. The report proposed a strategy to allow new primary school places to be provided quickly if demand rises more quickly than now anticipated. Consultation had also taken place with schools and the Schools Improvement Forum and Schools Forum.

The Director of Children's Services informed that with regards to recommendation 5 permission was given to start the process for a new free school on Chiltern Road if required but with regards to Larchfield Primary and Nursery School permission was only to start a consultation.

Cllr McWilliams said that he welcomed the report that agreed that now was not the time to expand Cox Green but glad that this was just put on hold until it was appropriate to undertake the works.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:**

- I. gives in principle agreement to the opening of a primary free school on the Chiltern Road site.**
- II. notes the inclusion of budget in the Royal Borough's 2022/23 capital programme for new primary school provision, which could be used to fund the wider refurbishment of the site.**
- III. requests a report in February 2022 on options for temporary occupation of the Chiltern Road site, and its refurbishment, ahead of any new free school opening.**
- IV. requests that demand for primary school places in Maidenhead is kept under review, and that proposals for expansion at Lowbrook Academy, St Luke's Church of England Primary School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School are brought back to Cabinet for consideration in Autumn 2022, or earlier if required.**
- V. delegates authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health, to:**
  - start the free school competition process for a new primary school at Chiltern Road.**
  - carry out public consultation on a more detailed proposal for the expansion of Larchfield Primary & Nursery School.**

**In both cases decisions to proceed should take into account the target of 5% surplus places, both locally and across Maidenhead as a whole.**
- I. requests a new report, in Autumn 2022, providing an update on school places and a review of the strategy for primary places in Maidenhead.**

**D) DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23**

Cabinet considered the report regarding the Council's proposed draft revenue budget for 2022/23 based on information as we currently know it.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed Cabinet that this was the third draft budget of this term he had the pleasure to present. The 2020-21 budget met, for the first time, all of the requirements of financial legislation associated with budget setting, an important step in establishing robust financial governance.

Covid 19 dominated 2020-21 and but for a robust budget and government support we and many other councils could have been in s114 territory. That year saw a step change in our financial capacity and capability that enabled us to work through Covid scarring and set a balanced and workable budget for 2021-22.

To help balance that budget and maintain a commitment to support the most vulnerable the administration made the very challenging decision to review and transform the Library Service. Following what turned out to be a very positive consultation with residents, Parish Councils and members of the opposition, opening hours were reduced but no Libraries were closed. On all measures RBWM Libraries continue to compare favourably with the best and he could

understand why the Department of Culture Media and Sport had shown an interest in our model. This Administration faced up to difficult issues.

The Council had just endorsed the 2021- 2026 Corporate Plan which was designed to set our focus on driving the change we want to see in the borough's future. It was based on evidence of the most important challenges we faced and sets out our priorities for change. The revenue and capital budgets provided the resource to enable us to deliver against those goals.

The October Comprehensive Spending Review set out the funding available to support the 2022/23 budget. This increased grant funding by £1.6 billion a year for three years and announced that all Council's core spending power would increase by around 6.2% including CT increases.

For Windsor and Maidenhead this meant additional grant funding of £3million and this had been included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. This was a reasonable assumption to make but it was not without risk until the final settlement was announced.

If correct it lead to a balanced budget for 2022/23 with Council Tax increasing by 3% made up of 2% CT and 1% Adult Social Care precept, importantly for residents the overall increase will be 2% less than last year and well below Government's measure of inflation.

The draft budget was included at Appendix A on page 592. This showed key movements from the 2021/22 plan including inflation, demographic growth, reversing out more than £8 million of Covid costs. Importantly it included investment and growth bids and service savings and income generation proposals.

Unlike last year proposed growth is greater than savings by £2million, where savings are made much had been re-invested into the Corporate Plans re-aligned goals and priorities and not cutting our spending.

The Corporate Plan sets out our priorities, goals and aspirations so it was appropriate to explain a few of the budget proposals through the narrative of the plan.

Priorities in the plan include:

- Quality infrastructure that connects neighbourhoods and businesses, well we are adding £300K to the revenue budget to align ourselves to the National Bus Strategy.
- Taking action to tackle climate change, the budget includes £250K a year in support of our Climate strategy.
- Children are our future and borough schools do a great job in helping them achieve their aspirations but there is a cohort of young people who for well documented reasons have difficult lives. We propose to invest more than £10 million over the next 5 years to support young people and to meet the corporate plan's thriving communities' goals.
- This year the Council purchased Cedar Lodge in Windsor to be used as temporary accommodation and Officers were recruited to manage the apartments, adding another officer to create a team will enable us to bring in-house the management of temporary accommodation and reduce overall costs by £65K. As the Leader had said many times, when it makes good business sense, we will bring subcontracted services back in-house.
- In all comparisons he had seen we are amongst the Country's lowest cost Councils, our issue is income so I am delighted that under commercialisation it is proposed to recruit a fixed term post to review all council current fees and charges, to maximising sponsorship and advertising and identify new opportunities that will deliver revenue of £50K rising to £100K.

Cabinet were informed that the proposals contained in the report would be subject to extensive consultation in order to inform final decisions at Cabinet and Council in February 2022 next year.

The Director of Resources informed that with regards to funding it would not be until mid December 2021 that we would get a breakdown of funding into their different grant areas. This was the best estimate officers could make based on assumptions and available information.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Member and officers for all their work in putting together this administrations third draft budget. The councils financial position had been stabilised. There was a long term vision in place, increased investment, tackling climate change, investment in housing, support for the most vulnerable and decreased crime and anti social behaviour with a zero tolerance approach. He was pleased to see a decrease in increasing council tax which was below inflation and the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest in England outside of London and the lowest in Berkshire. They would continue to drive the transformation strategy.

The Chairman informed that this was the earliest a draft budget had been presented, as promised last year. This would give more time for scrutiny and fully funded alternatives to be put forward for consideration. Consultation would start early December and end in January. This administration did listen but the challenge was to put forward alternatives that were either supported by savings or increased revenue. Council Tax could be increased but this would need a consultation at significant costs, money that was best used on services.

The Lead Member for Planning, Environmental Services and Maidenhead informed that he had proposed a small but significant move toward carbon neutrality by changing the waste collection to a fortnightly cycle and removing the Saturday collections. This required the additional purchase of 6 vehicles in 2022/23 funding would partially come from S106 and CIL.

The Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking informed that within his portfolio revenue income had been identified. The enforcement and environmental crime contract had been renewed in line with their zero tolerance stance. Parking numbers have been increasing as we come out of the pandemic and there would be more enforcement to maintain compliance and availability. The Liberal Democrats has said there were plans to charge in rural parking but this was not the case, he had no plans to introduce rural parking charges. At December Cabinet he would be proposing a resident parking discount scheme.

The Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure mentioned that there was £500,000 included for improvement schemes, support for walking and cycling, increased investment in bus services and there has been the bus service improvement plan submitted to government for improved services and supporting climate change.

The Lead Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside said she was pleased to see the £250,000 per year for three years invested in the climate change partnership that can support organisations that brought forward innovative and sustainable ideas.

Cabinet were addressed by Mr Ed Wilson who said it was a great achievement to publish this draft budget so early. Many council's struggled to produce a draft budget for consultation and he was sure the opposition would be putting forward sensible suggestions. With regards to the MTFs he said it was an important document and needed to be more prominent within the report, in five years there would be over £100 million of services each year, £70million less debt and a lot of mayor investment. In ten years there would be no short term debt. There was a lot of information within the document that residents would like to know and thus it should be more prominent. There was also a lot of infrastructure being proposed. He felt that with regards to reserves there could be more clarity.

The Lead Member for Finance said that with regards to contingencies it was said that if not used they would go into reserves. Regarding capital projects this was laid out in the Capital Programme that would be presented separately. During the Pandemic the council had control over its expenditure but not its receipts.

The Deputy Leader of Council said that she supported the draft budget and that last year library services faced a difficult challenge but this had been turned around and was now being looked at as a sustainable model. This was also the second year in a row where staff were being given a pay rise which was well deserved. She looked forward to the consultation and what our residents have to say.

Cllr Baldwin said he was pleased to see the administration following a Liberal Democrat policy of looking at insourcing of services. He had been informed that it could cost as much as £150,000 to support such schemes therefore it needed more investment within the budget. He highlighted the £220,000 for New Homes Bonus and asked what this was, is it linked to planning applications. He also made reference to the additional grant funding that had been announced by Government and asked how this would be divided between councils as there was no detail and experience showed this authority would get zero. If this was the case and grant receipts were not what were assumed what was the plan B?

The Chairman replied that with regards to insourcing or outsourcing this would be done when it was best for the council and our residents. We looked at VFM and quality of service provision. There were many implications of bringing a service back in house such as pensions. With regards to the New Homes Bonus this had been in place for 11 years and was introduced during the Lib Dem coalition.

Cllr Baldwin was also informed that this was the last year of the new homes scheme and that with regards to grants this was contained within the report and as mentioned was based on our best assumptions and calculations.

Cllr Werner mentioned the £3million grant assumptions and asked how confident was the Lead Member in this, would this be support grants and not RSG. There was no plan B, if we did not receive the grant what savings or cuts had been looked at to cover this £3million assumption. There had been a lot of cuts to the arts and this budget shows zero funding to the arts, where was the support to save the arts within the borough. With regards to fees and charges it mentions an average 4.8% increase but no detail, there could be large increases in some areas and none in others how are we to know. With regards to the purchase of new waste trucks and the removal of Saturday collections, at O&S it was said this was reverting back to the original contract pre pandemic. If this was the case why the additional costs, was the original contract not sufficient. He was pleased to see insourcing mentioned and was happy to give advice.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Werner for his comments and said there was still a long way to go in the process. He looked forward to see tangible funded suggestions to this draft budget. With regards to the arts the administration were currently in discussion with Norden Farm and now was not the appropriate time to discuss in public. There were plans for a local lottery to help support grants to organisations. He also said that with regard to waste vehicles this had been explained by the Lead Member earlier.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot said with regards to a plan B he had not seen a Liberal Democrat plan A. with regards to the Government grants he had faith in his officers who had considerable experience, had held plenty of meetings with Cipfa, other S151 officer and government departments.

Cllr Price mentioned that she welcomed the proposed introduction of a local lottery. With regards to consultation she mentioned that there was no mention of all O&S Panels being consulted on Corporate O&S. She also mentioned that during last years consultation a number of community groups had been missed and although she informed them it was too

late to allow them make meaningful representation with only three replying. There were also a number of residents who responded, she wanted to see the number increased and that their views were listened to. Only one recommendation (rural car parks) made last year had been implemented.

The Chairman intervened and clarified to Cllr Price that this was about this years draft budget and not last years consultation. He reassured her that he had asked the Head of Communications to include all the community group Cllr Price had raised. He also said it was for all Cllrs to help encourage residents and groups to take part in the consultation. With regards to scrutiny he said Corporate O&S would be reviewing the budget in December and other panels could in January.

The Monitoring Officer said that Corporate O&S Panel would be leading on the budget scrutiny this year and if risks were identified they could be sent to other panels to review. Members of other panel would be invited to take part in the Corporate O&S review.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health said that he was pleased to see this draft budget that had people at its heart. We wanted to consult with people, invest in people and in services. Adult Social Care was continued to be invested in and adaptation to individual needs. There would be a focus on transformation as one fit did not suit all. There would also be continued work in dealing with the pandemic and driving us out of it. With regards to Children's services he noted the £10 million investment over the next 5 years. There would be continued investment in staff and a drive to reduce agency staff so social workers had manageable workloads. There was an increase in social care and a focus on domestic abuse and helping our most vulnerable residents. There were two key words; people and investment.

The Lead Member for Housing, Sport and Leisure, and Community Engagement informed that last year there were over 800 responses to the consultation and he hoped this year would be higher, compared to other authorities this was good. He encouraged as many community groups to take part. With regards to housing there was investment in addition officers and supporting people stay in their own homes. There was capital investment in areas such as John West House and support for increased affordable housing. There was also investment in supporting our leisure centres.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet agrees the draft budget that will be consulted upon prior to final budget setting during February 2022 including:**

- I. The draft budget and revised Medium Term Financial Plan set out in Appendix A.**
- II. The proposed investment and growth proposals set out in Appendix B.**
- III. The proposed savings and income generation proposals set out in Appendix C.**

**E) DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 - 2024/25**

Cabinet considered the draft Capital Programme for 2022/23 – 2024/25.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed Cabinet that the paper sets out the draft capital strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25, the draft capital programme 2023/23 to 2024/25 and the capital cash flow.

he recommend that Members read the capital strategy, the strategy had been recently reviewed by the Audit and Governance Committee and they agreed it was a very readable document that clearly sets out how the Councils manages its long-term capital investment programme and how this related to the Corporate Plan.

Cabinet were informed that we had relatively high levels of borrowing and even with what were historically low interest rates this had an impact on the revenue budget. Our Capital programme was therefore focused on fully funded schemes and unavoidable capital investment. Using this strategy, the Capital Programme was prioritised into four key areas:

- Regeneration schemes
- Major Strategic Acquisitions
- Efficiency Projects
- Operational schemes

These were funded from, capital grants, developer contributions in the form of S106 and CIL, partner contributions, capital receipts and prudential borrowing; With the latter leading to a charge on the revenue budget.

Appendix B on page 635 sets out the aggregate 3-year Capital Programme by Directorate and the following pages show detailed schemes. The programme would increase borrowing by £64.1 M of which £44.7 million related to schemes approved in previous years. He anticipated additional capital investment of £6.6 million and £5 million in 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. The impact of this was reflected in the Revenue Budget and MTF Plan

A number of major schemes were included in the programme that were linked to Corporate Plan priorities these were set out in appendix C on page 644 and included Affordable Housing, Broadway Car Park, Vicus Way Car Park and River Thames schemes. The total cost of these schemes over the next three years was £44,732,000. Some would enable the generation of future Capital Receipts; other schemes will generate future revenue income.

Fully funded capital bids were shown in appendix D on page 644. Constraining capital spending meant fewer capital projects for 2023/24 the most significant being:

- The completion of the Vicus Way car park.
- There is £1.5 million to deliver against the Cycle Action Plan.
- £6.6 million on highways and footway maintenance, surface water flooding and bridge repairs.
- £750K on street lighting.
- £9M the River Thames schemes.
- £8m on affordable housing and temporary accommodation.
- £400K For Leisure Centre maintenance and equipment upgrades.

Cllr Larcombe mentioned that with regards to the River Thames Scheme the paper refers to £10 million being spent on Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury and Old Windsor and borough wide schemes. The report later refers to £8 million on River Thames Schemes. He said that flooding was mentioned in various places throughout the report and although it was not right to have all in a single line but he asked if they could all be listed together. He asked if the £10 million was for Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury and Old Windsor only and would not be spent elsewhere and that there would be consultation before it was spent.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot replied that appendix C showed approved schemes and asked Cllr Larcombe to email him the flood schemes he wanted to see batched together and he would ask finance if this was possible. Cllr Cannon also mentioned that the money was ring fenced for flood liaison schemes along the Thames and there would be consultation with parish councils and stakeholders.

Cllr Werner mentioned that he was keen on an alternative budget and capital programme suggestions but this was dependent on his previous questions being answered. He also mentioned that a couple of years ago members were asked to submit capital bids for their wards but his was put on hold and he could not see any mention of it returning within the report, also some residents had asked him what had happened to the Charters Leisure Centre that had been promised.



The Chairman replied that the administration were still committed to the Charter's LC project but only when it was prudent. With regards to alternative budget proposals he said that Cllr Werner had been a councillor long enough to know how to submit and fully funded alternative proposal, such as funding eco homes.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed that with regards to the withdrawal of members capital bids this had been undertaken after consulting with officers during that years budget build, he had apologised to members at the time. Not proceeding with the scheme had allowed fund to go into projects such as the councils purchase of new laptops that had resulted in the flexibility required during the pandemic.

Cllr Rayner supported the paper and was pleased to see money going towards the Guildhall.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and comments on:**

- i) **The draft Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A**
- ii) **The draft consolidated capital programme for 2022/23 – 2024/25 in Appendix B.**
- iii) **The capital cash flow in Appendix E**

F) **TRANSFORMATION OF DAY OPPORTUNITIES**

Cabinet considered the report regarding the recommended changes to the day opportunities model for older people and people with a learning disability.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health informed Cabinet that he sought their approval to implement the recommended changes to the day opportunities model for older people and people with a learning disability to ensure that services meet the needs and aspirations of residents.

The original proposal recommended the closure of Windsor Day Centre and Oakbridge Day Centre and retaining Boyn Grove Centre to enable a building bases service for people who needed one. This would be complemented by a service out in the community for those people who do not want or need to be building based.

Consultation was undertaken, he thanked Cllr Rayner for her work in Windsor, and needs analysis, the final recommendations are to close Windsor Day Centre and Oakbridge Day Centre, retaining Boyn Grove for older people and people with a learning disability. 102 survey responses were received: 57 people (66%) told us they were either a person who used current day services or their family carers, the remaining 45 people were either members of the public who did not currently use services or from groups representing the community.

For people with a learning disability who need a building-based service in the Windsor area, the recommendation was to create a smaller building-based day centre offer for people with a learning disability in Windsor at the Mencap building. There were already building-based day centres with sufficient vacancies for older people in the Windsor area, Spencer Denney Day Centre operated by Age Concern Windsor and The Old Windsor Day Centre run by Age Concern Slough and Berkshire East. Both day centres receive grant funding from the Council.

Should the recommendations be approved it would ensure that there were building-based day opportunities across the borough and also provided community-based services for people who either did not want or need to be in a day centre.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot mentioned how 14 years ago in Ascot it was decided to provide transport from those who needed support for shopping trips. Providing this support they learnt that there was a desire to be a part of the community and not just go to day

centres. These proposals allowed people to choose the type of service and support was best for them.

Cllr Davies thanked officers for mailing the consultation as it was difficult to undertake during lockdown. She mentioned that with regards to Oakbridge Day Centre there were residents who used the building and it was planned to provide alternative provision at the Mencap building in Windsor, however this was dependent on capital funding for upgrading the disabled use toilets and adaptations to the kitchen. She asked if this funding was not secured what would be done. She was informed that if capital funding was not available they would still look at meeting these needs. The Care Act meant we had a duty of care and the Lead Member had made this provision a priority in the capital build process and was confident that the funding would be available as part of the budget build.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:**

- i) Notes the outcome of the consultation and the needs analysis.**
- ii) Approves the final recommendation to close Windsor and Oakbridge Day Centres, retain Boyn Grove and to create a smaller Day Centre in Windsor for people with a learning disability.**

**G) 2021/22 FINANCE UPDATE REPORT - REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONTH 6**

Cabinet considered the report regarding the latest financial update.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed Cabinet that as we moved further into the year the availability of transactional and operational data had created greater certainty over the year end outturn position and most services had improved. We now projected a favourable variance of £46K on the revised revenue budget which was an improvement of £389K on month 4.

Cabinet were informed that at the year-end general reserves were now projected to be £7.105M and above the minimum level of £6.7M. There had been a host of budget movements, so he highlighted those that he saw as significant.

In children's Services the picture was complicated, particularly for the deprived, Covid had been the cause of increased domestic abuse, increased levels of referrals and greater complexity of need for children needing placements. This all added to cost but it is made worse, because there was a supply shortage of care places and care providers had opportunistically increased charges. In 2019 a high-end placement cost £250K a year today the has doubled to £500K.

He was delighted to see that the tender for Home to School transport had changed a projected £254K overspend into an underspend of £50K.

Finance had legitimately used just over £500K of the Control Outbreak Management Fund to support the cost of children's placements.

With regards to the Dedicated Schools Grant, over the years the deficit had increased to £3.4M. In a recent conversation with the Director of Children's Services' there was a risk that the council might be called upon to support the deficit, rather than just the schools. The Lead Member had agreed that additional context on this risk would added to the month 8 Finance monitoring report.

Place had suffered more than any other directorate with loss of income, parking revenues in Windsor and Maidenhead were 68% of the budget but based on this data £3Million of the covid reserve allocated to parking would cover the loss.

Leisure centres, run by Leisure Focus, were having a difficult year and, although it was not clear, thanks to Sales Fees and Charges, we would have some income in the order of £500K. We had entrusted some of our most significant revenue generating assets to Leisure Focus, a presentation by Mark Camp-Overy the MD, gave him some confidence that he will improve our leisure offer to residents and sensitively add a dash of commercialism that would increase the financial return.

In Adult Social Care the reported overspend on Mental Health Services sets into sharp relief the impact that Covid has had on some people's lives. Overall ASC was forecasting an overspend of £506K or 1.2% of their £40M budget. Table 19 on page 744 showed that across all services the number of people requiring a service had increased from just over 1000 to 1153 an increase of 11.5% So he might have expected the overspend to be higher. The council have had continuing funding support from the CCG but also costs have been contained, which told us that Optalis and our in-house teams are doing some great work.

Cabinet were asked to consider two new capital projects:

Purchase of Waste Vehicles to deliver the collection model of fortnightly general waste collection, recycling and food waste weekly and green waste fortnightly the contractor required six additional waste vehicles. Two vehicles would be purchased in the current financial year with a further four vehicles to be purchased during 2022/23. Approval was sought to vire £235,000 from the Infrastructure Delivery Programme budget to purchase two waste vehicles with no additional financial impact on the capital programme in the current financial year

Datchet Barrel Arch flood mitigation scheme.

Datchet Barrel Arch was a Victorian brick-built culverted watercourse running west to east through the centre of Datchet. It discharges into the recreation ground ditch, the Penn Road culvert and ultimately into the Datchet Common Brook. Following a comprehensive CCTV structural survey, an outline scheme had been drawn up and costed to line the brick culvert to protect the structure and reduce future maintenance at an estimated works cost of £220,000. £60,000 funding was available in-year to cover survey and design fees. There was no reason to delay the barrel arch project, as it will contribute to the objectives of the River Thames Infrastructure Scheme to mitigate flood risk in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury. Approval was sought to vire £220,000 of capital budget from the River Thames Scheme Infrastructure project for Datchet Barrel Arch repairs.

Cllr Werner mentioned that over the last four months the budget had gone from left to right, overspend to underspend. He asked if the Lean Member was confident that he now had a handle on the budget. He also asked that with regards to the need to purchase waste vehicles was this a failure of the original contract as we had reverted back to a previous position so there should be no increase costs.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot replied that given we had a budget of over £101 million he would not call the recent variations as varying wildly. The Chairman said that as long as there were no significant external impact they were confident in the budgets position.

The Lead Member responsible for the waste contract said that as mentioned earlier in the meeting the additional costs was due to a decision to move towards a zero carbon position and bringing back a five day collection.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report including:**

- I. The Council's projected revenue and capital position for 2021/22.**
- II. Approves a capital budget virement of £235,000 to purchase two waste vehicles.**
- III. Approved a capital budget virement of £220,000 from the River Thames Infrastructure Project to the Datchet Barrel Arch project to mitigate flood risk in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury.**

H) ACHIEVING FOR CHILDREN RESERVED MATTER CONTRACT AWARDS  
(EXTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES)

Cabinet considered the report regarding Achieving for Children Reserved Matter Contract Awards.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health informed cabinet that the appointment of Achieving for Children's independent external auditor was a matter reserved to Cabinet as part of the Local Authority governance in its role as an owner of AfC. The existing contract with Grant Thornton LLP come to an end this year and AfC requires new independent external auditors to be in place for January 2022.

The report outlined the approach to the procurement and, due to the complexity involved in requiring a procurement decision from all three of AfC's owning councils, it is requested that authority be delegated to the Royal Borough's S151 officer in consultation with himself as Lead Member to approve the new auditor alongside their equivalents in London Borough of Richmond and Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:**

**Delegates to the Council's S151 Officer in consultation with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Health, Mental Health and Children's Services the appointment of the new independent external auditor for Achieving for Children.**

I) PROVISION OF INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES

Cabinet considered the report regarding the provision of internal audit services.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed Cabinet that the Council entered into a shared internal audit agreement with Wokingham Borough Council which for a number of reasons had not met expectations, the council gave notice and the agreement would terminate on the 31st March 2022. An evaluation of options for internal audit established a partnership arrangement as the preferred option.

A number of partnerships were approached and only the South West Audit Partnership put forward a proposal that met the Council's needs, improves the service and saves money. The partnership included 6 county and unitary authorities, 8 districts and 11 police authorities.

The Audit and Governance Committee considered the report on the 21st October 2021, asked some challenging questions and endorsed the proposals.

**Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet considered the recommendation of Audit and Governance Committee, notes the report and agrees that:**

- I. **The Council becomes a member of South West Audit Partnership for the delivery of internal audit services from 1st April 2022.**
- II. **The Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee is appointed as the Council's representative on SWAP's Owners' Board.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion**

took place on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

A) NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN MAIDENHEAD

Cabinet noted the Part II appendix.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.45 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....