

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING

held on 29 July 2021

Present:

Cllr L S Lyons (Chair)
Cllr S Hussain (Vice-Chair)

Cllr S Ashall	Cllr K Howard
Cllr A Azad	Cllr D E Hughes
Cllr T Aziz	Cllr I Johnson
Cllr A-M Barker	Cllr C S Kemp
Cllr A J Boote	Cllr A Kirby
Cllr M A Bridgeman	Cllr R N Leach
Cllr J Brown	Cllr R Mohammed
Cllr K M Davis	Cllr L M N Morales
Cllr S Dorsett	Cllr M I Raja
Cllr G W Elson	Cllr C Rana
Cllr W P Forster	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr D Harlow	Cllr M A Whitehand

Absent: Councillors M Ali, N Martin, E Nicholson and J R Sanderson.

1. MINUTES.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Ordinary Meetings of the Council held on 20 May and 24 May 2021 be approved and signed as true and correct records.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Ali, Councillor Martin, Councillor Nicholson and Councillor Sanderson.

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

The Mayor reported on the many events he had attended since May, including the American Memorial Day at Brookwood Cemetery, the VJ Day Anniversary event, the Horsell Garden Safari, visits to local schools and youth groups and the launch of the Wheels for All initiative with Woking Cycle Club.

It was noted that a Civic Ceremony would be held on 6 September 2021 and the Civic Service on 12 September 2021.

4. URGENT BUSINESS.

No items of Urgent Business were considered.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor A Azad declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor K M Davis declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Harlow declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor C S Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mrs Fisher could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Planning, Giorgio Framalitto, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mr Framalitto could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Neighbourhood Services, Geoff McManus, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mr McManus could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Housing, Louise Strongitharm, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mrs Strongitharm could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items

concerning Woking Football Club and/or the GolDev Woking Limited development. The interest arose from her husband having a small shareholding in Woking Football Club. The interest was such that Mrs Clarke could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor I Johnson declared an interest in respect of Item 6 – Petition – Instigate Inquiries and Investigations in Light of Dr Edila's Report, Item 8f – Recommendations of the Executive and Committees (Notice of Motion – Cllr T Aziz – Review of the Operation of Woking Borough Council's Planning Department), and Item 9 – Update on Council Decisions Following the Independent Investigation into the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments – in light of reference within the reports to Woking Football Club. The interest arose from his wife's position as Chairman of Woking Football Club and was such that Councillor Johnson left the meeting during the determination of the items.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor S Dorsett declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 6 – Petition – Instigate Inquiries and Investigations in Light of Dr Edila's Report, Item 8f – Recommendations of the Executive and Committees (Notice of Motion – Cllr T Aziz – Review of the Operation of Woking Borough Council's Planning Department), and Item 9 – Update on Council Decisions Following the Independent Investigation into the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments – in light of reference within the reports to Woking Football Club. The interest arose from his membership of the Cards Trust (the supporters' club for Woking Football Club). The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

Subject to the outcome of the determination of Agenda Item 11 – Council Group Companies – Appointment of Directors – the following additional declarations of interest were received from Officers.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the following companies: Thameswey Limited, Victoria Square Residential Limited and VSW Hotel Limited. The interests were such that Mrs Fisher could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the following companies: Thameswey Limited, Thameswey Developments Limited, Thameswey Housing Limited and Thameswey Guest Houses Limited. The interests were such that Mrs McIntosh could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Giorgio Framallicco, Director of Planning, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the following companies: Thameswey Limited, Thameswey Energy Limited, Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited, Thameswey Solar Limited, Thameswey Maintenance Services Limited, Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited, Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities Limited, Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Cemetery Limited, Brookwood Park Limited, Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited and Brunswick Road (Pirbright) Residents Company Limited. The interests were such that Mr Framallicco could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Geoff McManus, Director of Neighbourhood Services, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the following companies: Thameswey Limited, Thameswey Energy

Limited, Thamesway Central Milton Keynes Limited, Thamesway Solar Limited, Thamesway Maintenance Services Limited, Thamesway Sustainable Communities Limited, Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities Limited, Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Cemetery Limited, Brookwood Park Limited, and Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited. The interests were such that Mr McManus could advise the Council on those items.

6. PETITION - INSTIGATE OF INQUIRIES AND INVESTIGATIONS IN LIGHT OF DR EDILA'S REPORT WBC21-027.

The Council had before it a report on a petition seeking the Borough Council to instigate appropriate inquiries and investigations following on from the report prepared by Dr Gifty Edila. The petition had been signed by 647 individuals and was presented at the meeting. The Mayor welcomed Andy Caulfield, representative for the petitioners.

The Petitioner spoke in support of the petition, emphasising the concern of residents over the findings of the investigation by Dr Edila. Members were invited to ask questions of the petitioner before moving to the debate.

Councillor Forster moved and Councillor Aziz seconded that "This Council accepts and notes the petition and reaffirms the Council's commitment to implementing the Gifty Report".

The proposals was supported by the Council and, following discussion of the points raised by the petition, it was agreed to reaffirm the Council commitment to implementing the recommendations of Dr Gifty's report.

RESOLVED

That this Council accepts and notes the petition and reaffirms the Council's commitment to implementing the Gifty Report.

7. QUESTIONS.

Copies of questions submitted under Standing Order 8.1 together with draft replies had been published before the meeting. The replies were confirmed by Members of the Executive, supplementary questions were asked and replies given.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES WBC21-031.

Councillor A Azad moved and Councillor S Ashall seconded the reception and adoption of the report and recommendations from the meetings of the Executive held on 17 June and 15 July 2021.

Councillor L Morales moved and Councillor T Aziz seconded the reception and adoption of the report and recommendations from the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 20 July 2021.

8A. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR L LYONS - CONSTRUCTION SITE NOISE LIMITS.

The Council considered the recommendation of the Executive in respect of Councillor Lyons' motion on construction site noise limits. The Mayor advised that he had submitted the motion to Council before being elected Mayor and that in his role as Mayor he would not speak or vote on the item.

The Motion had been considered by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive and the report before the Council recommended that the motion as amended be supported.

Councillor Hughes moved and Councillor Barker seconded the following amendment to the recommendations before the Council:

“(vi) a review be conducted after 1 year to determine the scale of the problem at that time and if further measures need to be considered.”

The Council supported the amendment and the Motion as amended was agreed nem con.

RESOLVED

That the measures as proposed within the report, together with the measures recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out below, be adopted.

- (i) Ward Councillors to be consulted where a Prior Consent Notice has been submitted requesting noisy works outside of usual hours, to the extent this is practically possible, before a decision is made;
- (ii) a quarterly report be prepared and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing details of noise complaints received;
- (iii) the communication with local residents on upcoming noisy works be improved by the use of the Council website and social media, ensuring consistency of the use of direct communication to local residents such as letters and door knocks; and
- (vi) a review be conducted after 1 year to determine the scale of the problem at that time and if further measures need to be considered.

8B. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR W FORSTER - GREEN FLAG AWARD.

Councillor Kemp introduced the recommendation of the Executive to support the motion submitted by Councillor Forster which proposed that Officers should be asked to investigate how to improve the Borough's parks and open spaces so that more would be eligible for a Green Flag award.

The motion proposed that:

“This Council notes that more people than normal have enjoyed spending time in Woking's parks since the first national lockdown was ordered due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Council acknowledges that one of the Borough's open spaces, Brookwood Cemetery, has been granted a Green Flag Award, whereas in neighbouring Guildford Borough, ten of

their parks have Green Flag Awards. The Council notes that our parks could be better managed for the residents who use them, the environment and future of our Borough.

Accordingly, this Council resolves to ask Officers to investigate how to improve the Borough's parks and open spaces so more would be eligible for a Green Flag Award and enable local people to enjoy their leisure time in better public spaces."

The recommendation was welcomed and it was

RESOLVED

That the Motion be supported.

8C. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR M RAJA - BROOKWOOD CEMETERY BURIAL CHARGES.

The Council was presented with the recommendations of the Executive in respect of the motion submitted by Councillor Raja on the burial charges levied at Brookwood Cemetery. The Executive had proposed an amended form of wording for the Motion as follows:

"The Council notes that since Woking Borough Council has taken over Brookwood Cemetery, the initial charges introduced in 1 August 2015 have been frozen and the service provided by the cemetery to the Woking community has conspicuously improved.

Therefore the Council:

- i) expresses its appreciation of the frozen charges from 2015 and encourages the board of Brookwood Cemetery to freeze in 2022/3 for 50 years Exclusive Right of Burial, including the establishment of free resident infant graves;
- ii) notes the system offering a discount to local taxpayers in both the south and the north cemetery; and
- iii) is happy to offer both i) and ii) despite the increasing pressure on Council finances and the need to generate income to fund services."

Councillor Raja alleged that the report considered by the Executive had contained misleading or incorrect information in respect of the charges made and stated that a review should be undertaken with a comparison with the charges of similar cemeteries in the County. Councillor Raja therefore asked for the motion as originally submitted to be considered by the Council. The recommendations of the Executive therefore fell and the motion as originally submitted became the substantive motion before the Council as follows:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a massive increase in deaths across the country, with 20% more deaths registered from March 2020 to the end of the year than would be expected under pre-pandemic conditions.

Since Woking Borough Council has taken over Brookwood cemetery, the effective costs for burials have gone up, putting further strain on families who've lost loved ones in these difficult times. We are not offering local residents discounts on burial charges, a scheme that is common in many local authorities.

Due to the high death toll from COVID and the consideration that many families have lost multiple family members, this council will

- i) Reconsider the burial charges it has introduced to the cemetery
- ii) Introduce a system offering a discount to local taxpayers, as is common among many parishes.”

Councillor Hussain supported the motion and moved an amendment that a discount should be introduced for residents wishing a plot on the higher ground within the Cemetery. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Aziz.

Councillor Ashall drew the Council’s attention to the report considered by the Executive and noted that the charges were set by the Brookwood Cemetery Company and not Woking Borough Council. The objective of the Executive’s amended wording had been to request that the current charges continued to be kept at the same levels. The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Davis, undertook to raise the points identified with the Brookwood Cemetery Company, noting that the Council had to be realistic about the costs incurred in managing a cemetery.

The Mayor referred to the motion as originally submitted by Councillor Raja and amended with the addition of (iii) that residents be offered a discount on burials within the cemetery. In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against the motion, as amended, were recorded.

In favour: Councillors T Aziz and M I Raja.

Total in favour: 2

Against: Councillors S Ashall, A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, D Harlow, K Howard, I Johnson, C Kemp and C Rana.

Total against: 11

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor Lyons, and Councillors A-M Barker, A Boote, M Bridgeman, W Forster, D Hughes, S Hussain, A Kirby, R Leach, R Mohammed, L Morales, D Roberts, M Whitehand.

Total present not voting: 13

The motion therefore fell by 2 votes in favour to 11 votes against.

RESOLVED

That the Motion be not supported.

8D. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR M RAJA - SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE PLANNING AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES.

The Council considered the recommendation of the Executive in respect of the motion submitted by Councillor Raja in support of the work of the Planning Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the Executive had not been supportive of Councillor Raja’s motion and had recommended an amended motion as follows:

“In the past year, the need for training to support Members of all parties who serve on all committees has been highlighted by the nature of remote working. This Council agrees that in respect of officer time, training and resources, all committees of the Council should be supported properly and expresses its appreciation that training and support for committee chairs has already been put in train by this administration.”

The recommendation by the Executive was agreed nem con.

RESOLVED

That the Motion, as amended by the Executive, be supported.

8E. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR T AZIZ - PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (HIF) SCHEME.

The motion submitted by Councillor Aziz on public consultation around the Housing Infrastructure Fund scheme had been considered by the Executive. The Executive had not been supportive of the Motion and had recommended an amended Motion to read as follows:

“When the successful Housing Infrastructure Fund bid for £95m was made, the Council did not know it would succeed and therefore did not consult in detail on building the homes in the town centre afforded by the scheme.

In order to address this, this Council agrees:

- i) the HIF scheme housing requirement be part of the Town Centre Masterplan consultation;

This Council also notes:

- ii) the commitment already made by the Council as part of the HIF project; and
- iii) the housing numbers already agreed by the Government.”

Councillor Aziz requested that his motion as originally submitted be debated. Accordingly, the recommendations of the Executive fell and Councillor Aziz’s original motion, as set out below, became the substantive motion for consideration.

“While we fully believe in development, improvement and raising Woking’s profile it seems odd and contrary to democratic principles that we do not consult public on major plans.

It strikes most odd that the council consulted on building 2180 homes, as in the DPD, but did not consult on 5000+ homes in the town center and simply wishes to adopt the HIF scheme.

This motion calls for:

- 1) The HIF scheme housing to be put to public consultation with full honest disclosures.
- 2) The council cease to make any further promises on HIF to any bodies until such consultation is complete.
- 3) The council re assess the scheme’s housing targets under new market conditions, (especially post COVID) public opinion and if needed is open to renegotiations with central government.”

The Members of the Council debated the proposals, noting the concerns over the HIF scheme and the development of a Town Centre Masterplan which would shape the future of the town centre through public engagement.

The Mayor referred to the motion as originally submitted by Councillor Aziz and in accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against the motion were recorded.

In favour: Councillors T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Boote, M Bridgeman, W Forster, K Howard, I Johnson, D Hughes, A Kirby, R Leach, L Morales, M I Raja and D Roberts.

Total in favour: 13

Against: Councillors S Ashall, A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, D Harlow, S Hussain, C Kemp, R Mohammed, C Rana and M Whitehand.

Total against: 12

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor Lyons.

Total present not voting: 1

The motion was therefore carried by 13 votes in favour to 12 votes against.

RESOLVED

That the Motion be supported.

8F. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR T AZIZ - REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S PLANNING DEPARTMENT.

The Council considered the recommendations of the Executive in respect of Councillor Aziz's motion seeking a review of the operation of the Borough Council's planning department. The Executive had not been supportive of Councillor Aziz's motion and had proposed an amended motion as follows:

"In recent times, Woking Borough Council's Planning Department has recommended a number of planning applications subsequently voted down by the Planning Committee.

In addition, applications have been called in by Members and subsequently agreed by Councillors against officer advice even when previous refusals on identical schemes had already been issued – or enforced.

This Council calls for an LGA-appointed review of the operation of the planning function of Woking Borough Council, including the steps taken by officers and Members to come to decisions in performing their professional and statutory duties."

In consideration of the recommendation before the Council, Councillor Barker moved and Councillor Howard seconded an amendment to delete the first two paragraphs of the recommendation, reducing the recommendation to the following:

“This Council calls for an LGA-appointed review of the operation of the planning function of Woking Borough Council, including the steps taken by officers and Members to come to decisions in performing their professional and statutory duties.”

Councillor Aziz advised that he was content with the amendment as moved by Councillor Barker.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against the motion were recorded.

In favour: Councillors S Ashall, A Azad, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Boote, M Bridgeman, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, W Forster, D Harlow, K Howard, S Hussain, D Hughes, A Kirby, R Leach, R Mohammed, L Morales, M I Raja, C Rana, D Roberts, and M Whitehand.

Total in favour: 23

Against: None.

Total against: 0

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor Lyons.

Total present not voting: 1

The motion, as amended, was therefore carried by 23 votes in favour to no votes against.

RESOLVED

That the Motion as amended be supported as follows:

“This Council calls for an LGA-appointed review of the operation of the planning function of Woking Borough Council, including the steps taken by officers and Members to come to decisions in performing their professional and statutory duties.”

8G. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR T AZIZ - INVESTIGATION INTO NEW VISION HOMES.

The Council had before it the recommendation of the Executive in respect of Councillor Aziz’s motion seeking an investigation into New Vision Homes. It was noted that following discussions with Officers, an amended form of wording has been agreed with Councillor Aziz which had addressed the concerns of Officers.

The Council welcomed the motion as amended and resolved nem con to agree the motion as follows:

“Over the past few years, New Vision Homes has repeatedly shown itself to be unable to deal with housing issues in the properties they manage.

Recently the Housing Ombudsman judgement criticizes severe Maladministration in a case where an elderly resident was left without heating or hot water for 3 years and council

failed to take any appropriate action to resolve the situation and council has been fined £6000.

Thus, in light of these failures in maintaining council properties, this motion calls for the Council to learn from such cases as it plans its Housing Services for the period after the NVH contract ends in 2022. The lessons learnt, along with an improvement plan, should be reported to, and progress monitored through, the Housing Task Group to ensure that residents benefit from an improved service going forward.”

RESOLVED

That the motion, as amended, be supported.

8H. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR M ALI - ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENTS TO POSITIONS WITH THE COUNCIL AND RESIDENTS' PANEL.

The Council received the recommendation of the Executive in respect of a motion submitted by Councillor Ali in respect of the eligibility of residents to take up positions with the Council and the Residents Panel. It was noted that the Executive had not been supportive of Councillor Ali’s original motion and had agreed an amended Motion to read as follows:

“This Council should not discriminate against those who take an active interest in local matters merely because they are openly critical of the Council.

Thus, the Council:

- i) resolves that the view of any resident regarding planning policies or other Council matters should not be used against them as criteria in determining their eligibility to positions within the Council including, but not limited to, directorships, resident panels and other bodies; and
- ii) undertakes to review all criteria and terms used ahead of the next round of appointments.”

The recommendation of the Executive was agreed nem con.

RESOLVED

That the motion, as amended by the Executive, be supported

8I. HOUSING STRATEGY

Councillor Harlow, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, presented the recommendations of the Executive for the adoption of the Housing Strategy 2021 to 2026. The Housing Strategy was welcomed by the Council as a very positive piece of work.

RESOLVED

That (i) the Housing Strategy 2021-2026, as attached to the report, be approved; and

- (ii) the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Strategy and to update the action plan as required.

8J. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Executive had recommended the adoption of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2021 to 2031, which had also been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12 July 2021. The Strategy identified five key priority areas to deliver the Council's vision for the health and wellbeing of Woking's population, and an action plan to achieve the vision.

The Council welcomed the Strategy and congratulated the Officers on the work undertaken to achieve the Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031 be approved.

8K SCHEME OF DELEGATION - PLANNING.

Councillor Morales, Chairman of the Planning Committee, introduced the recommendation of the Planning Committee which sought authority for the determination of details reserved by condition submitted by the Council and their companies/ entities to be undertaken by the Development Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee until 7 September 2021.

The proposal was agreed nem con.

RESOLVED

That Applications for approval of details reserved by condition submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities are delegated to the Development Manager for determination in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee (or in her absence, the Vice-Chairman) for a temporary period until the 7 September 2021 Planning Committee.

9. UPDATE ON COUNCIL DECISIONS FOLLOWING THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO THE WOKING FOOTBALL CLUB AND ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENTS WBC21-028.

At its meeting on 7 January 2021, Full Council had considered Dr Gifty Edila's recommendations following her independent investigation into the Woking Football Club and associated developments. The Council had resolved that Dr Gifty Edila's recommendations should be accepted and that Officers should report back to Council, on 29 July 2021, on progress made against the recommendations.

The Council now had before it a report which outlined the steps the Council had undertaken in respect of the adoption of the recommendations and to ensure continuing compliance with the same.

The action to-date was welcomed by the Council and the recommendations before the Members were agreed.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be allocated an annual budget of £20,000;
- (iii) the Legal Services department shall take steps to seek Lexcel accreditation and budget shall be allocated to cover the costs of the appointment of a consultant and an Administrative Officer;
- (iv) the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution be updated; and
- (v) an update report on the recommendations set out in Dr Gifty's report is reported to Council in February 2022.

10. PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW 2023 WBC21-026.

The Council was advised that at the beginning of June 2021, the Boundary Commission for England published proposals for a review of the Parliamentary Boundaries across the Country as part of its initial consultation arrangements. The report before the Council outlined the implications of the Commission's proposals for Surrey as a whole as well as the Borough of Woking and proposed a response to the consultation.

The proposals would result in the Parliamentary Constituency boundary changing to fully reflect the Borough's boundary. The two Guildford wards of Pirbright and Normandy, which currently came under the Woking Constituency, would in future fall under the Parliamentary Constituency for Surrey Heath.

It was considered that the proposal for Woking was to be welcomed, resulting in a Constituency that matched the Borough's boundary and simplifying Woking's Parliamentary election processes. The Council supported the proposed response to the Commission's consultation, welcoming the proposed boundary change for the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking.

RESOLVED

That a formal response is sent to the Boundary Commission of England welcoming its proposed boundary change for the Parliamentary Constituency of Woking on the grounds that the new Constituency would become coterminous with the local authority boundary, be within the statutory electorate range and give Woking Borough a stronger voice.

11. COUNCIL GROUP COMPANIES - APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS WBC21-029.

The Council considered a report proposing the appointment of directors to a number of Council companies to provide strategic oversight. The attention of Members was drawn to a supplementary paper which set out additional appointments necessary. It was noted that

the list of companies would be reviewed over the coming months with a view to streamlining the number of companies.

RESOLVED

- That (i) officer directors be appointed to the Boards of the Council's companies as outlined in the body of the main report before Council; and
- (ii) directors be appointed to the Boards of the Council's companies as set out in the addendum report.

12. MEMBERSHIP OF THE WOKING JOINT COMMITTEE WBC21-033.

The Council was invited to appoint an additional Member to the Woking Joint Committee, in line with the Committee's Standing Orders. Councillor Azad nominated and Councillor Ashall seconded the nomination of Councillor Dorsett to the position. Councillor Aziz nominated and Councillor Boote seconded the nomination of Councillor Bridgeman to the position.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against each nomination were recorded.

In favour of Cllr Dorsett: Councillors S Ashall, A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, D Harlow, S Hussain, C Kemp, R Mohammed and C Rana.

Total in favour of Cllr Dorsett: 11

In favour of Cllr Bridgeman: Councillors T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Boote, M Bridgeman, W Forster, D Hughes, L Morales, M I Raja and D Roberts.

Total in favour of Cllr Bridgeman: 9

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor Lyons and Councillors K Howard, A Kirby, R Leach and M Whitehand.

Total present not voting: 5

Councillor Dorsett was therefore appointed to the Committee by 11 votes to the 9 votes received by Councillor Bridgeman.

RESOLVED

That Councillor S Dorsett be appointed to the Woking Joint Committee.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION WBC21-032.

Councillor A-M Barker

The following motion was moved by Councillor Barker and seconded by Councillor Aziz. Councillor Barker asked for the motion to be determined on the night.

“This council calls for a full, independent and comprehensive audit of all the assets and liabilities of Woking Borough Council; and all companies in which it has an interest whether by means of shareholding (however large or small) or any other means of influencing the activities of said company. The audit report is to contain a comprehensive Statement of Affairs identifying, amongst other things:

- An independent auditor's assessment of the current net realisable value of each of the assets
- Full details of all borrowings including their terms and conditions
- Full details of all the preferential creditors and the amounts owed
- Full details of outstanding contractual obligations involving future income to be received and future expenditure to be incurred
- Details of any fixed or floating charges on any assets
- Full details of any grants, loans or other contracts which contain performance conditions which, if not met, would incur financial penalties for the Council or any of its companies.

Council officers should work with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to appoint an appropriate Independent Auditor

The auditor must:

- Be allowed full and unfettered access to all the documents and information required
- Provide monthly progress reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Complete the audit and the full report by the end of December 2021.”

Councillor Barker spoke in support of the motion, stressing the importance to undertake the work immediately, overseen by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The motion was debated and following the discussion Councillor Azad moved and Councillor Ashall seconded the following amendment:

“This council calls for a full, independent and comprehensive review of all the assets and liabilities of Woking Borough Council; and all companies in which it has an interest whether by means of shareholding (however large or small) or any other means of influencing the activities of said company. The report is to contain a comprehensive Statement identifying, amongst other things:

- An independent reviewer's assessment of the current net realisable value of each of the assets
- Full details of all borrowings including their terms and conditions
- Full details of outstanding contractual obligations involving future income to be received and future expenditure to be incurred

- Details of any fixed or floating charges on any assets
- Full details of any grants, loans or other contracts which contain performance conditions which, if not met, would incur financial penalties for the Council or any of its companies. Council officers should work with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to appoint an appropriate independent reviewer

The reviewer must:

- Be allowed full and unfettered access to all the documents and information required
- Provide monthly progress reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Complete the review and the full report by the end of December 2021.”

Councillor Barker welcomed the amendment and, on being put to the Council, the motion was supported as amended.

RESOLVED

That the Motion, as amended, be approved.

Councillor A Kirby

The following motion was moved by Councillor Kirby and seconded by Councillor Morales and referred to the Executive on 9 September 2021 in accordance with Standing Order 5.7.

“Pollinator Plan for Woking

This Council notes the systemic importance of pollinators to our food supply and economy, as well as their intrinsic value to nature in Woking Borough. This Council also notes the success and popularity elsewhere across the UK of the ‘No Mow May’ campaign, during which grass verges were left undisturbed by mowing during this critical month for flowers, wildlife and pollinators in particular.

The Council acknowledges the existing local work in this area of the ‘Planet Woking’, ‘Woking Environment Action Group’ and other voluntary organisations, in supporting bees and other pollinators through the sowing and planting of wildflowers. The Council recognises the importance of wild meadow spaces to the public realm, residents’ enjoyment of the Borough – and the benefits to the visual appeal of our communities.

The Council also acknowledges the success of its own existing wildflower strategies, which have so far been run on a more site-specific basis.

Accordingly, this Council resolves to instruct Officers to arrange for a broad and Borough-wide set of policies, classifying our grass cutting activities in each location according to the frequency of mowing required. This should result in a set of Borough-wide ‘wildness grades’ associated with different levels of mowing.

This system should be designed to achieve four key things:

- 1) Maximise the level of diverse wild flora and fauna in all council-maintained grassland, with the first assumption for maximum biodiversity
- 2) Continue to ensure public safety and amenity where essential (such as sports pitches or road verges)

- 3) Create an easily understandable set of 'wildness grades' to enable residents to understand and engage with the Council's grass cutting policies
- 4) Allow Council contractors to refocus on keeping public footpaths clear of vegetation

This Council resolves that the vast majority of grassland within this scheme will be left unmown during the entire period 1st May – 1st June, excluding only the most exceptional of locations within the 'least' wild category, as outlined for exceptional reasons of safety or public utility mentioned above. Beyond this initial distinction of inclusion in the 'No Mow May' principle, further grades of reduced cutting should be considered – up to and including a policy in some locations of cutting grass only once per year in August.

Council instructs Officers and the relevant Portfolio Holder to create a clear set of such 'wildness grades' for Woking grassland and to allocate all grassy areas maintained by Woking Borough Council to one of these 'grades' – with a preference for the most wild to suit each location.

Council also resolves that Officers should report back to Full Council at their earliest convenience with estimates of the potential net savings from such a systematic and organised policy of reduced grass-cutting, so that all Councillors can debate the best use of these savings for other purposes.”

Councillor A Kirby

The following motion was moved by Councillor Kirby and seconded by Councillor Forster and referred to the Executive on 9 September 2021 in accordance with Standing Order 5.7.

“Freedom to vote by post

This Council believes that democracy is best secured by maximising electoral turnout and participation, as much as that democracy must start by more literally securing residents' votes.

It is therefore with regret that this Council notes the proportion of people voting by post in the Borough did not rise between 2019 and 2021, despite this year's elections being the first to be held since the arrival of Covid-19. Despite the understandable caution from residents around in-person events – and for many even medically-advised isolation – the proportion of local people voting by post in fact fell.

In light of these facts, this Council recognises its responsibility to better uphold and inspire democratic participation through challenging times. This Council also recognises the importance and legal status of the fully independent Electoral Commission.

This Council notes that Woking Borough is an outlier in asking residents already on the electoral register for photo-identification in order to support their application for a postal vote, contrary to official guidance and legal requirements as set out by the Electoral Commission.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- 1) Reflect the latest exact wording used by the Electoral Commission on its own website, when describing the process of registering to vote by post, on all relevant communications whether in print, digital or in person.

- 2) Remove all other restrictions, suggestion of restriction, advice to follow legally unnecessary steps, or any other effective impediment created by the Council's advice or processes, on the ability of residents to register for a postal vote.
- 3) Proactively communicate this change to residents, via all Council-controlled media channels and to issue a public statement to all local media on behalf of this Full Council, clarifying the change and the exact contents of this motion."

14. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC.

The Mayor moved and Councillor Hussain seconded that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item.

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 15 in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Local Government Act 1972.

Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

15. QUESTIONS.

The Council noted a question received from Councillor Ali which made reference to exempt information. A copy of the question submitted under Standing Order 8.1 together with the draft reply had been made available electronically.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 10.25 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____