

MINUTES  
OF A MEETING OF THE  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING**

held on 21 July 2022

Present:

Cllr S Hussain (Mayor)  
Cllr M I Raja (Deputy Mayor)

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Cllr H Akberali   | Cllr D M C Jordan  |
| Cllr A Azad       | Cllr C S Kemp      |
| Cllr T Aziz       | Cllr A Kirby       |
| Cllr A-M Barker   | Cllr R N Leach     |
| Cllr J Brown      | Cllr L S Lyons     |
| Cllr A Caulfield  | Cllr L M N Morales |
| Cllr G T Cosnahan | Cllr J P Morley    |
| Cllr K M Davis    | Cllr S M Oades     |
| Cllr S Dorsett    | Cllr D Roberts     |
| Cllr G W Elson    | Cllr J R Sanderson |
| Cllr W P Forster  | Cllr T G Spenser   |
| Cllr P J T Graves | Cllr M A Whitehand |
| Cllr I Johnson    |                    |

Absent: Councillors M Ali, A J Boote and E Nicholson

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

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

**2. MINUTES.**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 19 May and 23 May 2022 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

**3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.**

The Mayor started his communications by paying tribute to Dame Deborah James, who had recently passed away of bowel cancer while receiving care at the Woking and Sam Beare Hospice.

Reference was also made to events recently attended by the Mayor, including Byfleet Parish Day and a visit to Barnsbury School for Democracy Week. The Mayor also acknowledged the amazing fund raising efforts of Jacob, a local eight year who had raised money through selling cupcakes and lemonade in support of the WWF.

**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 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 Legal and Democratic Services, Joanne McIntosh, 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 McIntosh could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Place, Giorgio Framalico, 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 Framalico could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Communities, 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 Members' Code of Conduct, a declaration of non-pecuniary interests was made in respect of Item 7D – Review of Community Grants – on behalf of any Members with affiliations or appointments to any bodies which may be impacted by the proposals. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor I Johnson declared an interest in respect of Item 7D – Review of Community Grants arising from his wife's employment by Citizens Advice Woking, a group referred to in the report considered by the Executive. The interest was such that Councillor Johnson left the Council Chamber during the determination of the item.

## **6. QUESTIONS.**

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

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE.**

Councillor A-M Barker moved and Councillor W Forster seconded the reception and adoption of the report and recommendations from the meetings of the Executive held on 16 June and 14 July 2022.

### **7A. Notice of Motion - Cllr K Davis - Housing Allocations EXE22-041**

At its meeting on 31 March 2022, the Council had referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

"It is vitally important that our residents directly benefit from new housing development in their local area. The Council already requires a 2-year local connection for applicants joining its Housing Register for affordable homes, as well as expecting any shared ownership homes secured through the Section 106 process to be first marketed to those living or working in the Borough.

However, the Council should consider going further in promoting a "Local First" approach by:

- Investigating any further flexibilities that could be incorporated into the Housing Allocations Policy to prioritise local residents;
- Exclusively marketing any new homes built and sold by Thamesway for a set period of time to residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area;
- Considering a local connection policy for any new homes delivered under the Government's new "First Homes" tenure that prioritises residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area before opening up to the Borough."

At the meeting of the Executive, the Leader had advised that, whilst the Executive was broadly supportive of the Motion, there were concerns in relation to some of the criteria suggested. The Leader had therefore proposed the following amendment:

"It is vitally important that our residents directly benefit from new housing development in their local area. The Council already requires a 2-year local connection for applicants joining its Housing Register for affordable homes, as well as expecting any shared ownership homes secured through the Section 106 process to be first marketed to those living or working in the Borough.

However, the Council should consider going further by asking officers to develop a scheme, in which, taking into account all other considerations of housing allocations, new homes are offered first to those with local connections, for a period of 3 months. These local connections should be flexibly defined by ward, neighbourhood area, a certain distance or a natural boundary.”

The recommendation of the Executive to support the motion as amended was introduced by the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Johnson, and welcomed by the Councillor Davis.

RESOLVED

That the motion, as amended by the Executive, be approved.

**7B. Notice of Motion - Cllr D Roberts - Benefits Management EXE22-042**

At its meeting on 31 March 2022, the Council had referred the following Notice of Motion from Councillor Roberts to the Executive.

“The council undertakes programmes of work to deliver benefits to the borough and controls are put in place to ensure the work is delivered on time, on budget and to scope. Whilst delivering to scope should result in the delivery of benefits, it may not always be the case. Complex projects spanning many years can require interim decisions to balance budgets, timescales, and scope because of issues arising throughout the life of the project.

This council is committed to both best practice and transparent project reporting including benefits tracking from the point at which it is considered for approval by members through to the conclusion and delivery of the project.

This council will therefore investigate how it will implement benefits management on all major projects as part of existing standard project controls such as risk and issues management.”

Before it had been considered by the Executive, Councillor Roberts had suggested an amendment to the wording following discussion with Officers as follows:

“The council undertakes programmes of work to deliver benefits to the borough and controls are put in place to ensure the work is delivered on time, on budget and to scope. Whilst delivering to scope should result in the delivery of benefits, it may not always be the case. Complex projects spanning many years can require interim decisions to balance budgets, timescales, and scope because of issues arising throughout the life of the project.

This council is committed to both best practice and transparent project reporting including benefits tracking from the point at which it is considered for approval by members through to the conclusion and delivery of the project.

This council will therefore investigate how it will improve its current benefits management practices to ensure that changes to benefits are tracked during the execution phase and reported to any council meeting in which project decisions are being made or project updates are being received by members. Also to report back, to full council, an analysis of any differences to the benefits captured at the time the project was approved against benefits realised at project closure.”

The Executive had welcomed the amended Motion and had agreed to recommend it to Council. The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Barker, introduced the recommendation.

Members of the Council welcomed the proposals, which would provide for the wider management of benefits from projects of the Council.

RESOLVED

That the motion, as amended by the Executive, be approved.

**7C. Supplementary and Amended Priorities - Woking for all Strategy EXE22-051**

The Council had before it the recommendations of the Executive for the proposed supplementary and amended priorities to the Council's Woking for all Strategy 2022-27. The Strategy had been refreshed to build upon the new administration's key priorities of financial responsibility, a Masterplan for the Town Centre, and making the Council carbon neutral.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Barker, introduced the recommendations, highlighting the key elements of the Strategy which included extensive community engagement, financial stability of investment in companies, achieving carbon zero, environmental initiatives such as the flood relief scheme in Byfleet, reviewing the Victoria Arch scheme and undertaking a programme of play area refurbishments.

The proposed Strategy was welcomed by Members of the Council, noting the ambitions of the Authority.

RESOLVED

That the supplementary and amended priorities for 2022-23 to the Woking for all Corporate Strategy 2022-27, as attached to the Executive report, be adopted.

**7D. Review of Community Grants EXE22-046**

Councillor Forster, Deputy Leader of the Council, introduced the recommendations of the Executive to establish a new partnership between the Council and the Community Foundation for Surrey through which the Community Foundation would administer community grants on behalf of the Council. Under the arrangements, community organisations would be able to apply for funding from a range of sources through one single expression of interest to the Community Foundation. A commissioning approach would be adopted for larger organisations, such as Citizens Advice Woking.

There would be a number of additional benefits for applicants, including full support during the application process, funding opportunities throughout the year and greater investment in the voluntary sector. Overall the proposals would result in a very efficient mechanism for the distribution of funding to the voluntary sector. An annual report would be brought to the Council setting out the support for the voluntary sector.

In introducing the proposals, Councillor Forster moved and Councillor Barker seconded an amendment to the recommendations before the Council, proposing an additional recommendation as follows:

“(iii) The Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder with responsibility for the voluntary sector, along with two Council officers, join the Woking Community Fund Panel to represent the Council and advise and vote on grant applications.”

The Members of the Council were invited to debate the amendment and concern was raised over the absence of representation by the Labour Group and Independent Group and the potential democratic deficit. However, the Council was advised that those appointed to the Woking Community Fund Panel would be required to make a significant commitment. The possibility of inviting the Labour Group and the Independent Group to nominate an observer for the Fund Panel would be considered.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against the recommendations, including the amendment, were recorded.

In favour: Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Caulfield, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, J Morley, S Oades, M I Raja, D Roberts and J Sanderson and T Spencer.

Total in favour: 18

Against: Councillors A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, C Kemp, and M Whitehand.

Total against: 7

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor S Hussain.

Total present not voting: 1

The recommendations were therefore carried by 18 votes in favour to 7 votes against.

#### RESOLVED

- That (i) the proposed new partnership between Woking Borough Council and the Community Foundation for Surrey be endorsed and take effect for grants in 2023/24;
- (ii) delegated authority to be given to the Strategic Director – Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to oversee the new partnership between Woking Borough Council and the Community Foundation for Surrey; and
- (iii) the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder with responsibility for the voluntary sector, along with two Council officers, join the Woking Community Fund Panel to represent the Council and advise and vote on grant applications.

#### **7E. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) EXE22-043**

Councillor Roberts, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, introduced the recommendation of the Executive to approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as updated. Included within the Strategy was a pilot to reduce the off-street parking charges on Saturdays as a measure to encourage visitors to the town centre. Several questions were raised over the proposals, including on the readiness of the car parks for a new charging scheme and what the intention was at the end of the pilot, which was scheduled to occur just before Christmas 2022.

The points raised during the debate were responded to, including clarification over the parking pilot and the positive outcomes that the pilot could achieve, before the Members were directed to the recommendation before the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as updated be approved.

#### **7F. Company Governance EXE22-048**

The Members of the Council were presented with the recommendations of the Executive which sought to modernise the Council's governance arrangements with respect to its oversight of its wholly or part owned companies. The recommendations had been drawn up following a review of the governance of the Council's subsidiary companies as part of the medium term financial resilience assessment produced by the professional services firm EY.

The proposed arrangements, based on guidance prepared by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), would improve openness and transparency, address conflict issues by removing Councillors from company boards, and formalise provision of Council services to group companies. The Leader would be appointed as the Council's Shareholder Representative, and a Shareholder Advisory Group (SAG) with the Leader of the Council and members of the Executive would be established. There would be a key role for the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who would be invited to attend meetings of the SAG.

The Council debated the proposals at length, with concern expressed over the democratic deficit that would result and suggestions that cross party representation should be included. Councillor Brown moved and Councillor Dorsett seconded an amendment which would see a new (ii) added to the recommendations as follows:

"(ii) openness and transparency are vital to this council and to ensure it is upheld in all matters related to our arms length companies.

The creation of the Shareholder Advisory Group be politically proportional, to ensure that its companies act in the interests of the Council as shareholder and contribute to the Councils objectives."

Before the matter was debated, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised that the amendment would have significant implications on the wider proposals, including the Terms of Reference of the SAG and the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was made clear that, should the Council support the amendment, further work would need to be undertaken to redraft the proposals before being brought back to the Council.

The Leader of the Council responded by making clear that the proposals were based on the Council's Strong Leader arrangements and the Executive structure, with the scrutiny function provided through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was reiterated that the model was based on best practice issued by CIPFA and that the amendment would require significant changes to the proposed governance model.

Following the debate on the amendment, the Mayor advised that, in accordance with Standing Order 10.8, a vote would be held and the names of Members voting for and against the amendment recorded.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| In favour:                | Councillors A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, C Kemp, M I Raja and M Whitehand.  |
| Total in favour:          | 8  |
| Against:                  | Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Caulfield, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, J Morley, S Oades, D Roberts and J Sanderson and T Spencer. |
| Total against:            | 18   |
| Present not voting:       | The Mayor, Councillor S Hussain.   |
| Total present not voting: | 1  |

The amendment was therefore lost by 8 votes in favour to 18 votes against.

The Mayor directed the Members of the Council to the substantive recommendations following a closing statement by the Leader of the Council. In accordance with Standing Order 10.8, the names of Members voting for and against the recommendations were recorded.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| In favour:                | Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Caulfield, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, J Morley, S Oades, M I Raja, D Roberts and J Sanderson and T Spencer. |
| Total in favour:          | 19   |
| Against:                  | Councillors A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, C Kemp and M Whitehand.  |
| Total against:            | 7  |
| Present not voting:       | The Mayor, Councillor S Hussain.   |
| Total present not voting: | 1  |

The recommendations were therefore carried by 19 votes in favour to 7 votes against.

#### RESOLVED

- That (i) the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Council's Shareholder Representative;
- (ii) the creation of a Shareholder Advisory Group be approved, as detailed in the report, to ensure that its companies act in the interests of the Council as shareholder and contribute to the Council's objectives;
- (iii) the Terms of Reference of the Shareholder Advisory Group, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved;

- (iv) Directors to the Group Companies, as outlined in Appendix 3 to the report, be appointed;
- (v) the Shareholder Liaison Service be established to lead on managing contractual arrangements with the companies and in holding of the companies to account;
- (vi) the establishment of Head of Shareholder Liaison Service at Grade W8 and Project Officer on Grade W5 be approved;
- (vii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to approve final terms and enter any Service Level Agreements where corporate functions provide support services to group companies;
- (viii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to approve final terms and enter any Data Protection or Information Sharing Agreement; and
- (ix) the Constitution be updated accordingly.

## 8. NOTICES OF MOTION.

### Councillor A Azad

The following motion was moved by Councillor Azad and seconded by Councillor Kemp. Following a request of Councillor Azad, the Mayor agreed for the Motion to be determined on the night, rather than referred to the Executive.

“This council expresses its huge sadness at the death of Dame Deborah James, who had strong local connections with Woking and was in the care of Woking and Sam Beare Hospice when she died.

Her inspirational words and actions have helped so many people and the Bowelbabe Fund has raised over £7million for clinical trials research as well as promoted bowel cancer awareness.

Her humour, dignity and zest to help others during a long illness have touched the entire nation. This council resolves that it is appropriate, subject to consultation with her family and their wishes, that some public and permanent commemoration of Dame Deborah James be established in Woking to honour her life, memory and achievement.”

The motion was fully supported by the Council.

RESOLVED

That the motion be supported.

### Councillor A-M Barker

The following motion was moved by Councillor Barker and seconded by Councillor Forster. In view of the nature of the Motion, the Mayor advised that it would be considered on the evening, rather than referred to the Executive on 8 September 2022.

Councillor Barker spoke in support of the motion, recognising the impact of the rising costs of living and the urgency to act to support residents.

“This Council notes that:

- On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the energy price cap by 54 per cent.
- In light of the increased energy price cap, the average standard tariff energy bill is rising by £693 per year. The average pre-pay meter energy bill is increasing by £708 per year.
- Evidence shows that use of foodbanks across Surrey has increased by 300% compared with the same month in 2019 including use by households who are working and have never had to ask for help until now.

This Council further notes:

The decision taken in June 2022 to impose a ‘Windfall Tax’ on the super-profits of oil and gas companies and to redistribute this as a one-off payment of £400 to households later this year. Though the Windfall Tax is welcome, Council believes it does not go nearly far enough and the Government should be doing much more to support local people through the Cost-of-Living crisis.

This Council resolves to:

- Organise for a Woking Cost-of-Living Emergency Summit in the Autumn, with stakeholders such as Citizens Advice Woking, Home-Start Runnymede and Woking, Maybury and Sheerwater Community Trust, Lighthouse, Surrey Welfare Rights Unit, Woking Chamber of Commerce and York Road Project to draw up a joint plan to alleviate the impact on Woking residents, especially those in the most vulnerable households.

This Council therefore declares a ‘Cost of Living Emergency’ and calls on the Government to immediately reduce the standard rate of VAT from 20% to 17.5% for one year, saving the average Woking household a further £600 this year.”

The Members discussed the implications of the motion and Councillor Dorsett moved and Councillor Brown seconded the following amendment.

“This Council notes:

In light of the challenges faced by residents we need to look at what practical steps this Council can take in assisting our residents.

One such area where we can choose to make a difference is in their Council Tax bills in the forthcoming year.

This Council resolves:

To reduce Councils Tax Bills for all Band A – D residents in 2023/24 by reducing the Working proportion of Council Tax by 10%. This should be worked into the MTFS going forward, ready to be implemented at the start of April 2023.”

Before the amendment was debated, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised against the course of action outlined in the amendment in the absence of advice from the Council’s Director of Finance on the implications for the Council’s financial position.

The Council agreed to move to the vote without debate and, in accordance with Standing Order 10.8, the names of Members voting for and against the amendment were recorded.

In favour: Councillors A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, C Kemp and M Whitehand.

Total in favour: 7

Against: Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Caulfield, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, J Morley, S Oades, M I Raja, D Roberts and J Sanderson and T Spencer.

Total against: 19

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor S Hussain.

Total present not voting: 1

The amendment was therefore lost by 7 votes in favour to 19 votes against.

The Members returned to the debate on the motion before Councillor Barker was given the option to make a closing statement, summarising the proposals and responding to the points raised during the debate. The Council was then invited to vote on the motion itself in accordance with Standing Order 10.8. The names of Members voting for and against the amendment were recorded.

In favour: Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Caulfield, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, J Morley, S Oades, D Roberts and J Sanderson and T Spencer.

Total in favour: 19

Against: Councillors A Azad, J Brown, S Dorsett, C Kemp and M Whitehand.

Total against: 5

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor S Hussain, and Councillors K Davis and G Elson

Total present not voting: 3

The motion was therefore carried by 19 votes in favour to 5 votes against.

RESOLVED

That the motion be supported.

Councillor W Forster

The following motion was moved by Councillor Forster and seconded by Councillor Leach and referred to the Executive on 8 September 2022 in accordance with Standing Order 5.7.

“The Council notes that Belarus and the United Kingdom are the only European countries that use First Past the Post for their national elections.

This Council believes that Proportional Representation ensures all votes count, have equal value, and those seats won match votes cast. Under Proportional Representation, Parliaments better reflect the age, gender and protected characteristics of local communities and the nation. Members of Parliament better reflecting their communities leads to improved decision-making, wider participation and increased levels of ownership of decisions taken.

Proportional Representation would also end minority rule. In 2019, 43.6% of the vote produced a Government with 56.2% of the seats and 100% of the power. Proportional Representation also prevents ‘wrong winner’ elections such as occurred in 1951 and February 1974.

Proportional Representation is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not for Westminster elections.

This Council therefore resolves to write to the Prime Minister and Woking’s Member of Parliament calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws to enable Proportional Representation to be used for future General Elections.”

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and ended at 10.35 pm

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_