



COUNCIL

28 September 2023

To: The Mayor and Members of
WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO A MEETING

You are hereby summoned to attend an ORDINARY MEETING of the COUNCIL to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking on THURSDAY, THE TWENTY EIGHTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2023 at 7.00 pm to transact the business specified in the agenda overleaf.

JULIE FISHER
Chief Executive

Civic Offices,
Woking

NOTE: Filming Council Meetings

Please note the meeting will be filmed and broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording may also be used for training purposes within the Council. Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However, by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed.



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests and other controlled sources

www.fsc.org Cert no. SA-COC-001794
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. (Pages 5 - 6)

- (i) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests from Members in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.
- (ii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources, Kevin Foster declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mr Foster may advise on those items.
- (iii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Communities, Louise Strongitharm, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Strongitharm may advise on those items.
- (iv) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Transformation and Digital, Adam Walther, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mr Walther may advise on those items.

3. MINUTES. (Pages 7 - 24)

To approve the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 20 July 2023 and 22 August 2023, as published.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

5. URGENT BUSINESS.

To consider any business which the Chairman rules may be dealt with under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC WBC23-036. (Pages 25 - 28)

To receive questions from Members of the Public of which due notice has been given.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WBC23-37.

To deal with written questions submitted by Members of the Council. Copies of the questions and of the draft replies (which are subject to amendment by the Leader of the Council) will be published shortly before the meeting.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Council to receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council (or their nominated spokesperson), Committee Chairmen and/or the Chief Executive.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND OFFICERS WBC23-035. (Pages 29 - 34)

To receive and consider recommendations from the Executive. Included within the report is an addendum drawn up by Officers.

9a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) EXE23-064.

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published - 20 September 2023

Note: At the close of the meeting the Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Raja, would like to invite the following to join him in the parlour:-

Councillors Aziz, Akberali, Barker, Boote, Caulfield, Davis, Dorsett, Forster, Graves, Javaid, Jordan, Lyons, Morales, Morley, Mukherjee, Nicholson, Spenser, together with Officers attending the meeting.

Schedule Referred to in Declaration of Interests

Council-appointed directorships

Kevin Foster, Strategic Director – Corporate Resources	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	VSW Hotel Limited
Brookwood Park Limited	Victoria Square Residential Limited
Export House Limited	Victoria Square Woking Limited
Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited	Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited
LAC 2021 Limited (Dormant)	Woking Shopping Limited

Louise Strongitharm, Strategic Director – Communities	
Rutland Woking (Carhouse Lane) Limited	Rutland Woking (Residential) Limited
Rutland (Woking) Limited	

Adam Walther, Head of Transformation and Digital	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	Thameswey Developments Limited
Brookwood Park Limited	Thameswey Energy Limited
Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited	Thameswey Limited
Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited	Thameswey Solar Limited
Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited	

Council 20 July 2023

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING

held on 20 July 2023

Present:

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

Cllr T Aziz	Cllr A Kirby
Cllr A-M Barker	Cllr R Leach
Cllr A Boote	Cllr L Lyons
Cllr J Brown	Cllr L Morales
Cllr G Cosnahan	Cllr J Morley
Cllr K Davis	Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr W Forster	Cllr S Oades
Cllr P Graves	Cllr L Rice
Cllr S Greentree	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr A Javaid	Cllr T Spenser
Cllr I Johnson	Cllr M Sullivan

Also Present: Claire Storey, Independent Co-Opted Member

Absent: Councillors H Akberali, A Caulfield, S Dorsett, D Jordan, C Martin and S Mukherjee

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Akberali, Caulfield, Dorsett, Jordan, Martin and Mukherjee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources, Kevin Foster 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 Foster could advise 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 on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Transformation and Digital, Adam Walther, 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 Walther could advise on those items.

3. MINUTES.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 18 May 2023, 22 May 2023 and 20 June 2023 be approved and signed as true and correct records.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

The Mayor referred to the numerous engagements he had been privileged to attend, meeting hundreds of local residents. He had been impressed by a couple who had raised over £2,000 through a plant sale for the Mayor's chosen charity, Woking Community Hospital. The 76th Pyrford and Wisley Village Show had been a great success, as had the 75th anniversary celebration of the NHS. The most enjoyable event had been the Mayor's Bowls tournament in which all the local bowls clubs had participated, raising over £400 for the Mayor's charity.

Forthcoming engagements included a visit to Woking's twin town in Germany, Rastatt, accompanied by members of the Town Twinning Association, including a number of former Councillors. In August the Mayor would be walking hundreds of miles in the hills and mountains of Kashmir in Pakistan.

5. URGENT BUSINESS.

No items of Urgent Business were considered.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC.

Questions had been received from three members of public. The questions, together with the replies from the Portfolio Holders, were presented as follows.

Question 1 – Neil Hughes

It was noted that Neil Hughes had been unable to attend the meeting.

“Going forward, would the council agree that all planning applications submitted in a conservation area should be detailed rather than outline (i.e. outline being an application with a number of conditions)?”

Supporting Statement

“The contentious outline planning application PLAN/2022/1161 regarding the Phipps / Chequers corner plot in St Johns appeared to be a crafted strategy on behalf of the applicant rather than going through the tighter scrutiny expected of a detailed planning application for a conservation area. In any case, if an outline application is ultimately accepted, the planning officer / committee should clarify (to the objectors) why outline is

being accepted, specifically with reference to The Planning Handbook which indicates "outline planning permission is not normally accepted in conservation areas as it is difficult for councils to evaluate the impact of a proposal without seeing the full details", an opinion which is also supported by planning professionals."

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

"In relation to the submission of outline planning applications for development within conservation areas, planning legislation and guidance does allow for this, so the Council cannot say no in principle to accepting all such applications. However, the legislation does allow councils to request additional information, if it is considered necessary, to enable an application to be determined. In the specific case you have referred to, officers considered that they had sufficient information to allow the application to be determined as submitted, taking into account it is an allocated site for flatted development of 2-3 storeys, and indicative plans were submitted with the application. The Council retains the ability to scrutinise the detailed plans when they are submitted as reserved matters, and Members may request that these details are considered by committee. So in this case I am happy that officers followed appropriate procedure.

In my view each case should be considered on its merits, and I would expect officers to request further detailed information if, in their view, that information is necessary to determine the application.

You have referred to the Planning Handbook. For clarification, this is not a Woking publication, it is not planning legislation nor government guidance, neither is it part of Woking's planning policy framework, and as such carries no legal status."

Question 2 - Talitha Spiers

The Mayor welcomed Talitha Spiers to the meeting and invited her to put her question to the Portfolio Holder.

"As I reside in a flat overlooking the area known as the Triangle I would like to know exactly what is going on there at the moment?"

Reply from Councillor Will Forster

"The Council is in discussion with Partners including Homes England to bring forward an affordable and sustainable proposal for this site. I hope to bring a report on the outcome of those discussions to the Executive in the Autumn."

Question 3 – Bella Di Manno

It was noted that Bella Di Manno had been unable to attend the meeting.

"Will the gym and fitness services be affected?"

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

"The Council recognises the significant importance of exercise in maintaining health and wellbeing. The Borough is currently well served by 4 Council-owned leisure facilities, including 5 swimming pools. With the Council facing an £11 million budget gap for next financial year, it is necessary that the Council reviews all its discretionary services (including leisure facilities), so that they can be delivered with reduced subsidy from the

Council. We are currently seeking resident' views on our discretionary services and would encourage you to complete the online survey by 10 August 2023."

The Mayor thanked those members of public who had submitted questions, and Talitha for attending the meeting to present her question.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

The Leader of the Council provided a summary of the Council's financial position, outlining the activities of recent weeks and the plans for the coming months. The long awaited Government Review had been reported on 25 May 2023, at which stage the Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities (DHLUC) had announced an intervention at Woking, appointing Commissioners to oversee an improvement programme. On 7 June 2023 the Council had declared a S114 statement.

Woking Borough Council had three major issues to tackle; a gap of £11m in the general fund, borrowing of £1.9b with annual payments to meet that borrowing of over £60m, and a deficit of £1.2b. The Council was working to address the financial position and the report later on the agenda would put in place the broad approach to achieving a balanced budget. This included the need to review the discretionary services offered by the Council, and a public survey had been undertaken which was due to end on 10 August. In addition, a strategic review of the Council's assets would be undertaken.

The Council would be meeting again on 22 August 2023 to agree an Improvement and Recovery Plan which would be submitted to the Government. The Plan would first be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. On 28 September 2023, a further meeting of the Council would be held to agree the specific service changes, informed by the public survey and a budget-focussed meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE WBC23-030.

The Council had before it a report on the recommendations from the Executive, setting out the extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 15 June 2023 and 13 July 2023. In accordance with the Constitution, the recommendations were deemed to have been moved and seconded.

8a. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR E NICHOLSON - RETROSPECTIVE SURFACE WATER ACTION EXE23-046

At its meeting on 15 June 2023, the Executive had received a notice of motion from Councillor Nicholson, which had been previously submitted to Council at its meeting on 30 March 2023. The Executive had been asked to support the motion, subject to an amendment to the motion, replacing the words 'South West Trains' with the words 'Network Rail and South Western Railway' reflecting the fact that South West Trains had been replaced by South Western Railway, and to include reference to Network Rail. The Executive was supportive of both Cllr Nicholson's Motion and the amendment, and agreed an amended Motion to read as follows:

"Retrospective Surface Water Action

The latest State of the UK Climate report indicates the UK has become wetter over the last few decades, although with significant annual variation. 2011-2020 was 9% wetter than 1961-1990. From the start of the observational record in 1862, six of the ten wettest years across the UK have occurred since 1998.

The recent UK climate projections (UKCP18) provide the most up-to-date assessment of how the UK climate could change over the 21st century. Overall, the UK is expected to experience wetter winters and drier summers.

However, rain that does fall in summer will likely be more intense than what we currently experience. For example, rainfall from an event that typically occurs once every 2 years in summer is expected to increase by around 25%. This will impact on the frequency and severity of surface water flooding, particularly in urban areas.

In towns and cities, flash floods are a growing problem. Concrete can't soak up rainwater, so in heavy downpours it has nowhere to go except into drains, overloading sewers and setting off flash floods. During the recent heavy rainfall, the water caused slippages within the station underpass and led to pooling of water within areas of the town centre.

Therefore this motion proposes that this Council:

1. Engages with Network Rail and South Western Railway to seek to secure surface water drainage systems are retrospectively fitted to the two entrances to the station underpass and /or other measures to capture rainwater are installed to reduce the excess water overspill causing slippage within the underpass.
2. That Woking planning applications continue to be assessed with surface water drainage systems in mind and that the County, as the lead flood authority is consulted on planning applications where required.
3. That Woking Borough Council work proactively with the partners to green Victoria Square, and introduce features such as rainwater gardens in line with the aspirations of the town centre Masterplan."

The Members welcomed the ambition of the motion, and raised an number of points in support, including the importance of dealing with the consequences of climate change and the recently created planning policy document for climate change, currently out for consultation.

RESOLVED

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

8b. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR K DAVIS - DIGITAL SPINE CONNECTION EXE23-047

Earlier in the year, Councillor Davis had submitted the following notice of motion, which had subsequently been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 15 June 2023. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Councillor Roberts, introduced the recommendation of the Executive to support the motion, and fully supported the objective to provide gigabit capable broadband to local businesses and residents. Councillor Davis thanked the Portfolio Holder for his comments, explaining that the intention was to encourage others to ensure all residents could access fast internet.

“At the March Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting, Enterprise M3, the Local Enterprise Partnership discussed the Guildford to Basingstoke Digital Spine and confirmed that Woking would not have a spur to join the Gigabit link. Connecting to the Internet via Gigabit links is a key part of the Digital Strategy as it is important for the economic output of the borough as well as the limitless opportunities high speed links provides to residents. Would the Council please investigate opportunities that exist with a view to ensuring that the borough is connected to the fastest possible digital backbone as soon as possible and certainly within three years if it cannot be achieved within the Digital Strategy period.”

The proposals were welcomed and it was the Council agreed to support the motion.

RESOLVED

That the motion be supported.

8c. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) EXE23-041

The Council received the recommendations of the Executive in respect of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (the MTFS) for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Roberts advised that a timetable with clear milestones had been drawn up as part of the Strategy which included a further update in September 2023.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the key points of the update, including the creation of an updated Budget Timetable and a new focus on budget proposals through additional scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The MTFS was a five year plan and would continue to be updated on a quarterly basis.

The Portfolio Holder addressed the £11m shortfall in the General Fund and referred to the consultation underway to identify savings, to be considered by the Council at the end of September 2023. Included within the proposals was the redundancy of approximately 60 full time equivalent (FTE) members of staff, for which a full and open consultation would be run. All decisions would be fully challenged and scrutinised throughout the process.

In respect of the deficit of £1.2b, the position was currently being reviewed and further discussions with the Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities (DHLUC) were expected in the coming weeks.

The proposals before the Council were debated at length, with Members recognising the impact on residents, business and Council staff. Councillor Brown expressed concerns over the proposed increase in parking charges for the coming year, and the potential increases in subsequent years, and the impact on the number of drivers using the car parks. Councillor Brown further advised that he could not agree to the indefinite suspension of the Investment Programme, and the impact on the flood alleviation scheme in Byfleet. In view of this, Councillor Brown moved and Councillor Davis seconded the following amendment to the recommendations of the Executive:

“To add:

Point (V)(ii) Due to the pressing nature of the works and the significant progress made, the Byfleet Flood Alleviation Scheme is prioritised, so that as soon as the funding becomes available this crucial investment project is unsuspended. Measures will also be taken to find this funding as soon as possible, including liaising closely with external stakeholders to ensure its prompt delivery.”

Councillor Brown advised that construction had been due to start in 2024, to be completed in the subsequent year, and as such it was hoped that the Council would prioritise the work so that the work could be undertaken once funds had been identified. The Leader of the Council stated that the flood alleviation scheme was a critical project and was clearly included in the Investment Plan. However, the Investment Plan was currently suspended and only when the Council was able to spend funds on the Plan could the priorities be confirmed. The Leader added that Officers were looking for other funding opportunities that could be used to progress the flood alleviation scheme.

Sympathy was expressed with those impacted by the suspension of the Investment Programme, including the residents of Byfleet affected by flooding. However, there were a number of key projects which had now been paused, including the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme, and it was not felt that Council should make policy changes without due consideration. It was also noted that the amendment had not been discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Committee's scrutiny of the MTFS report. In respect to the earlier point on parking charges, the Council was advised that, as outlined at the meeting of the Executive, the Council had to raise 20% more income through parking charges. A parking strategy would determine how the increased income would be achieved, and it was not proposed to increase income by raising individual parking charges by 20%.

Following the debate, Councillor Roberts was provided with the opportunity to respond to the points raised before the Mayor referred the Members to the amendment proposed by Councillor Brown.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the amendment was put to a vote. The names of Members voting for and against the amendment were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors A Boote, J Brown, K Davis and S Hussain.

Total in favour: 4

Against: Councillors T Aziz, A-M Barker, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, A Javaid, I Johnson, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, J Morley, E Nicholson, S Oades, L Rice, D Roberts, T Spenser and M Sullivan.

Total against: 19

Present not voting: The Mayor

Total present not voting: 1

The amendment was therefore lost by 4 votes in favour and 19 votes against.

The Mayor referred the Council back to the recommendations from the Executive. The issue of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds was raised, amid concerns that the funds would not be available going forward. The Interim Director of Finance had, however, sought to reassure Members that the CIL funds would be available as the Council's reserves recovered.

Councillor Roberts was offered the opportunity to respond to the points raised during the debate, noting the comments on the CIL funds and the extensive work being undertaken by Officers, before the Mayor directed the Council to the recommendations.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the recommendations were put to a vote. The names of Members voting for and against the amendments were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Boote, G Cosnahan, K Davis, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, A Javaid, I Johnson, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, L Morales, S Hussain, J Morley, E Nicholson, S Oades, L Rice, D Roberts, T Spenser and M Sullivan.

Total in favour: 22

Against: None.

Total against: 0

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillor J Brown.

Total present not voting: 2

The recommendations were therefore carried by 22 votes in favour and no votes against.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the latest iteration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- (ii) approval of the proposed Flexible Use of Capital Receipts in 2023/24 and submission of a plan to DLUHC be delegated to the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder;
- (iii) the Parent Company Guarantee (PCG) be extended by delegation to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, for the provision of Gas to Thamesway Central Milton Keynes Ltd (TCMK); and
- (iv) from 1 April 2023 loans advanced to Thamesway Central Milton Keynes Ltd. (TCMK) to be at the relevant PWLB interest rate with no margin be approved.

8d. SHEERWATER REGENERATION EXE23-049

The recommendations of Executive in respect of the Sheerwater Regeneration scheme were introduced by Councillor Forster, Portfolio Holder for Key Projects. The scheme was no longer affordable and the recommendations sought to end the development agreement with Thamesway. Under the proposals, Thamesway would complete the three phases currently under construction (yellow, copper and red). The ratio affordable housing would also change.

The Council remained committed to delivering the scheme and would be consulting residents on the next steps, including options such as refurbishing properties rather than demolishing them.

The Members of the Council considered the impact of the proposals, in particular on the residents of Sheerwater, noting that properties had been left empty for far longer than had

been intended. The ambition to complete the scheme was welcomed, together with the intention of taking into account the views of residents. However, it was necessary to pause the scheme while other options were considered and alternative plans were drawn up in consultation with residents. The environmental credentials of the completed properties were highlighted and it was noted that the new shop units had nearly been completed.

The Portfolio Holder responded to the points raised during the debate and advised that the ambition was to take decisions in the Autumn to take away the uncertainty for residents.

The recommendations were agreed nem con.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the existing Development Agreement between the Council and ThamesWey for the delivery of the Sheerwater regeneration project be brought to an end;
- (ii) ThamesWey do not commence any new phases following those currently under construction;
- (iii) ThamesWey be authorised to take such actions, including seeking technical and planning approvals as necessary, to bring its involvement in the project to a cost-effective end in consultation with the Council;
- (iv) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to give an Executive Undertaking if the Planning Committee approves the changes to the affordable housing as outlined in the report;
- (v) negotiations between the Council and ThamesWey commence on an unwinding of the previously agreed barter arrangement; and
- (vi) the Special Lettings Policy adopted in 2017 be temporarily suspended until such as time as the wider scheme and Sheerwater Community Charter have been reviewed.

8e. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) RECOVERY PLAN EXE23-050

Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Housing, introduced the recommendations of the Executive in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget. The report considered by the Executive had provided an update on the HRA budget, including forecasts for the coming 5 years, along with actions that were being pursued to deliver a sustainable long-term HRA.

The Council faced an estimated deficit of £1.6m in the HRA budget, a deficit which was unlikely to be fully corrected until 2026/27. To address the deficit, the Council would seek to optimise rent income and review the charges put to the HRA to ensure that they were fair and reasonable. The deficit on the annual maintenance plan would be addressed through the disposal of vacant housing assets.

The Portfolio Holder explained the background to the deficit, which was due in part to the empty properties in Sheerwater, rent for which had not been received to support the HRA.

At the same time, the Government had introduced a cap on increases in rent, whilst inflation had risen significantly.

The Council supported the proposed measures as set out in the recommendations of the Executive.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the update on the Housing Revenue Account budgets be noted;
- (ii) the Housing Annual Maintenance Plan (AMP) budget for 2023-24, included in the Housing Investment Programme, be increased to £5,330,000 to allow essential and statutory remedial works to be completed, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (iii) the Strategic Director – Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be authorised to agree the disposal of vacant housing assets as required; and
- (iv) any capital receipts from disposals of vacant housing assets be held in the Major Repairs Reserve for investment in the maintenance of the Council's homes.

8f. PUBLIC REALM USAGE POLICY EXE23-040

The Public Realm Usage Policy had been updated to better manage the town centre spaces open to the public, and the events permitted within the town centre denoted boundary. The proposals had been considered by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive, and the Council was now recommended to adopt the updated Policy. It was noted Officers would consider how the Policy could be delivered on a cost neutral basis but not financially burden charities.

RESOLVED

That the updated Public Realm Usage Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

9. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS WBC23-029.

The Leader of the Council advised Members that the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, had resigned her role as director of a number of Council companies. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the Chief Executive had undertaken a recruitment process and had appointed a new Director – Colin Taylor – of the companies. Mr Taylor would provide strategic oversight, skills and knowledge for the benefit of the Companies.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the resignation of Julie Fisher as director of the companies outlined in Section 2.1 of the report with effect from 4th July 2023 be noted; and
- (ii) the appointment of Colin Taylor as director of the companies outlined in Section 2.2 of the report with effect from 5th July 2023 be noted.

10. APPOINTMENTS TO LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE WBC23-028.

The Council received a report proposing changes to the membership of Licensing Sub-Committee A and Licensing Sub-Committee B for the remainder of the Municipal Year. These changes would ensure that the Members of the Sub-Committee were also Members of the overarching Licensing Committee.

RESOLVED

- That (i) Councillor Leach be appointed to Licensing Sub-Committee A in place of Councillor Oades for 2023/24; and
- (ii) Councillor Sullivan be appointed to Licensing Sub-Committee B in place of Councillor Leach for 2023/24.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 10.21 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING

held on 22 August 2023

Present:

Cllr M I Raja (Mayor)
Cllr L Morales (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr H Akberali	Cllr A Javaid
Cllr T Aziz	Cllr I Johnson
Cllr A-M Barker	Cllr D Jordan
Cllr A Boote	Cllr A Kirby
Cllr J Brown	Cllr R Leach
Cllr G Cosnahan	Cllr S Mukherjee
Cllr K Davis	Cllr S Oades
Cllr S Dorsett	Cllr L Rice
Cllr W Forster	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr P Graves	Cllr T Spenser
Cllr S Greentree	Cllr M Sullivan
Cllr S Hussain	

Absent: Councillors A Caulfield, L Lyons, C Martin, J Morley and E Nicholson.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Caulfield, Lyons, Martin, Morley and Nicholson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources, Kevin Foster 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 Foster could advise 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 on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Transformation and Digital, Adam Walther, 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 Walther could advise on those items.

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

The Mayor reported on recent engagements including an event for the Surrey Mayors and Chairmen hosted by the Lord Lieutenant on 26 July 2023. A very generous donation of £1,165 had been received from a local function for the Mayor's chosen Charity for the year, Friends of Woking Community Hospital.

4. URGENT BUSINESS.

No items of Urgent Business were considered.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

No announcements were made.

6. IMPROVEMENT AND RECOVERY PLAN WBC23-32.

Councillor Barker, Leader of the Council, introduced the Improvement and Recovery Plan report before the Council. The report outlined the Council's response to the Secretary of State's Directions in the form of a single Improvement and Recovery Plan which combined the Fit for The Future programme and the Financial Recovery Plan. The Plan provided a clear direction for the Council's improvement ambitions that would ensure the continued delivery of the strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan.

The Improvement and Recovery Plan included proposed mechanisms for governance and assurance to enable senior Officers and Councillors to manage the delivery of the Plan, whilst also providing all staff, Councillors, the public and stakeholders with assurance on progress. The Plan would be regularly updated to reflect the changing nature of the programme, with changes to be approved through an agreed change control process.

The Leader set out the circumstances that had led up to the creation of the Improvement and Recovery Plan and the work that had been done to-date to address the deficit and budget shortfall faced by the Council. The priority for the Council was to resolve the financial issues and as part of the Plan many staff would face redundancy and services would have to be delivered differently, reduced or stopped altogether. The changes would be delivered through the four themes of the Plan – finance, governance, organisational and commercial – and the Leader spoke of the organisational changes that would come forward.

The Leader reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the draft Plan at its meeting on 14 August 2023 and, following a detailed discussion, had agreed to recommend to Council that recommendation (iv) should be clarified that the authority being given to the Executive was specific to making necessary amendments to the Plan. A paper setting out the recommendation of the Committee had been published in advance of the meeting, together with a position statement drawn up by the Chief Executive.

It was noted that a high response had been received through the public engagement exercise and that a full public consultation on future services would be undertaken from

October 2023. The consultation would be online, with printed copies available for those residents without access to the internet. The consultation would target those directly affected by the proposed changes.

Following the introduction by the Leader, the relevant Portfolio Holders introduced the proposals falling under the remaining key themes. Councillor Roberts outlined the financial recovery theme and the intention to put in place better controls and governance and agreeing a financial support package with the Government. Councillor Forster introduced the theme of commercial strategy, through which the Council would review its assets to identify the most appropriate courses of action going forward. Councillor Johnson spoke about the governance theme and the importance of effective oversight and accountability, noting that in the past risks had not been adequately assessed. The work undertaken to-date was outlined, including the changes to the Constitution and the establishment of the Shareholder Advisory Group.

The matter moved to the debate and, arguing that the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be strengthened, Councillor Davis moved and Councillor Hussain seconded an amendment which sought to ensure that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with the opportunity to see potential changes to the Plan before they were determined by the Executive. The amendment read (proposed new wording highlighted):

“(iv) authority be delegated to the Executive to approve changes to the Improvement and Recovery Plan as part of regular reporting arrangements. **Before any potential changes to the Improvement and Recovery Plan are implemented by the Executive, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are to receive early oversight for purposes of scrutiny.**”

The amendment was debated, with Members arguing for and against the proposed change, before the matter was put to a vote. In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against the amendment were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors H Akberali, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett and S Hussain.

Total in favour: 5

Against: Councillors A-M Barker, A Boote, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Morales, S Mukherjee, L Rice, D Roberts, T Spenser and M Sullivan.

Total against: 16

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillors T Aziz, A Javaid and S Oades.

Total present not voting: 4

The amendment was therefore lost by 5 votes in favour and 16 votes against.

The Council returned to the substantive recommendations and the proposals set out in the report. Concern was expressed over the level of redundancies and it was suggested that clear, key information on the changes should be made available for residents. Overall the Plan was welcomed, recognised as an essential step in taking the Council forward.

Following the debate, the Leader summed up the discussions and responded to points made, emphasising the desire to have scrutiny in public of the Council's changes to the Plan and the actions undertaken going forward. The general support for the Plan was welcomed, and the concerns over the ambitions and timescales of the Plan were noted.

The Mayor directed the Council to the recommendations before it, including the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Davis requested a named vote on recommendation (iv), as proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Recommendations (i), (ii) and (iii) were agreed nem con before recommendation (iv), as amended in light of the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was put to a vote.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against recommendation (iv) were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Boote, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, A Javaid, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Morales, S Mukherjee, S Oades, L Rice, D Roberts, T Spenser and M Sullivan.

Total in favour: 20

Against: Councillors J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett and S Hussain.

Total against: 4

Present not voting: The Mayor.

Total present not voting: 1

The recommendation was therefore carried by 20 votes in favour and 4 votes against.

RESOLVED

That (i) the Improvement and Recovery Plan be approved;

(ii) the reporting mechanisms be approved;

(iii) the first three months' progress since the beginning of the Government intervention on 25 May 2023 be noted; and

(iv) authority be delegated to the Executive to approve necessary amendments to the Improvement and Recovery Plan as part of regular reporting arrangements.

7. APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICER WBC23-033.

Councillor Barker, Leader of the Council, presented a report to Council proposing the appointment of an Interim Director of Finance (S151 Officer). It was noted that the Council's current Interim Director of Finance and S151 Officer, Brendan Arnold, would be leaving Woking Borough Council at the end of his contract term on 31 August 2023. Under S151 of the Local Government Act 1972, every local authority had to ensure that arrangements were in place for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

A recruitment process had therefore been followed which had resulted in the recommendation to appoint Eugene Walker as the Interim Director of Finance (S151 Officer). Councillor Barker briefly outlined the qualifications and experience of Mr Walker, noting that he had been previously engaged by the Council. The appointment would be for a six month period, during which a permanent replacement would be sought.

Some concern was expressed over the way in which the recruitment process had been undertaken and the absence within the report of details of the reasons behind the recommendation. However, whilst it was acknowledged that the process could have been more transparent, it was noted that the interview panel had consisted of a number of Councillors and the Lead Commissioner. Those Members on the interview panel confirmed that Mr Walker's experience had been impressive and had included serving as the S151 Officer at Sheffield City Council.

The Leader of the Council responded to the points raised during the debate and recognised the concerns over the process followed, lessons from which would be taken forward. The Mayor referred the Council to the recommendation set out in the report and called for a named vote.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8, the names of Members voting for and against the recommendation to appoint Eugene Walker as the Interim Director of Finance (S151 Officer) were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A-M Barker, A Boote, G Cosnahan, K Davis, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Morales, S Mukherjee, L Rice, D Roberts, T Spenser and M Sullivan.

Total in favour: 20

Against: None.

Total against: 0

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillors J Brown, S Dorsett, A Javaid and S Oades.

Total present not voting: 5

The recommendation was therefore carried by 20 votes in favour and no votes against.

RESOLVED

That Eugene Walker be appointed as Interim Director of Finance (S151 Officer) with effect from 1 September 2023.

8. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW WBC23-034.

Before the Council was a report which sought approval of plans for a statutory review of polling districts and polling places within the Borough of Woking in accordance with the duties placed on all local authorities by the Electoral Administration Act 2006. It was noted that it would be important to complete the review as soon as possible so the polling districts and places could be agreed in time for the next general election and scheduled local

elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. It was therefore recommended that the review should start on Monday, 2 October 2023, with a degree of preparatory work to be undertaken prior to the review including informal preliminary consultation.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the compulsory polling district and places review commences on Monday, 2 October 2023;
- (ii) the outline timetable for the review be approved; and
- (iii) approval be granted to follow the review process described in the report.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 9.47 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

COUNCIL – 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Executive Summary

The following questions have been received from a Member of Public. The individuals who raised the questions have been invited to attend the meeting. The relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to provide a formal response.

Question 1 – Karen Woodhead

“Why does the pool in park have to close?”

Supporting Statement

“I am a disabled woman. I go swimming every Monday and Friday. I get there by bus as I don't drive and not on a lot of money. My surgeon has recommended me to go to help lose weight and ease my joint. If this closes I will struggle to get to the nearest pool. Please reconsider the pool for disabled people as it not our faults and feels like we are suffering for your mistakes in the past.”

Question 2 – Gillian Bernadt

“If alternative sources of funding can be found to fill the funding gap (and create a saving of £700,000 per year over the 4 years proposed, as a major element of the proposed Leisure service savings) would the Council be willing to maintain support to the Pool through existing contract management arrangements?”

Supporting Statement

“The proposed withdrawal of funding to Pool in the Park (PITP) will have a massive impact on the community, in terms of health, well-being and sports education & water safety. Consultation over the summer showed PITP to be in the top three services residents wanted to be retained, showing its value and the popularity of the Pools as a community asset. The Council clearly needs to make a saving, and the scale of the saving to be made, as outlined in the MTFs makes PITP, as a major part of the Leisure service savings, an obvious choice to cut (not withstanding the above community value).

However It is unclear whether alternative funding sources have been explored to fund PITP. It is proposed that further work is undertaken to explore funding alternatives that could maintain facilities while achieving short term savings, in the order of £2-3million to 2027/28. The question addresses whether, if the community, working with members and local businesses could raise the funds needed, the Council would be willing to maintain contract and management arrangements for PITP, for the period of 3 years, to enable the pools to stay open during that period? After that the MTFs refers to a self-funding principle of delivery, which would need to be delivered at a reasonable cost to residents.”

Question 3 – Carolyn Edis

“At the PITP swimming lessons are available for toddlers up to senior citizens. Water aerobic classes are beneficial for those who suffer from arthritis, joint problems etc.

How confident are councillors that customers can be absorbed by Eastwood Leisure Centre bearing in mind that they already have a programme of lessons which may well subscribed?”

Supporting Statement

“I can attest fully to the benefits of swimming and water exercise. I taught at Woking pool at it was a privilege to see children and adults develop their swimming skills.

The aqua aerobic classes and swimming sessions have been of benefit to me as I now suffer from joint problems.

The Pool In The Park should not close...it will be a huge loss to Woking and its surrounding areas.”

Question 4 – Colin Evans

“One of the Council's main purposes is to provide public services and particularly to support the most vulnerable in our society. As a voter and council tax payer, I would like to understand how you can justify closing down the Pool in the Park and other key services that support the wellbeing and health of our community - effectively turning Woking in to a 3rd world town, when there must be alternative routes in the short to medium term around re-structuring the debt of selling off assets? The proposed approach is very draconian - effectively punishing our community in the short to medium term (and possibly for a lot longer) because of poor financial decisions made within past Council Meetings which many of today's councillors participated in!”

Supporting Statement

“My disabled son has attended Dolphins Club (at the Pool in the Park) for about 20 years and learnt to swim there and it provides a vital social dimension to his life. Without the Pool in the Park there will be no club! Equally importantly, many thousands of our children have learnt to swim there, so what is the Council's plan for 'today's' children learning to swim in the absence of a pool?”

Question 5 – Trudi Reid

“Can the council help facilitate a meeting between Freedom Leisure, the council, and a residents to develop a part community funded model for Pool in the Park so it can stay open away from Council Tax funding. There is enough support locally to organise community funding for this pool combined with a ticket price increase to save the pool from closure but residents need to understand how much hard cash is needed annually including maintenance costs.”

Supporting Statement

“I am a local mum with 3 children including one disabled child who has to swim daily and an active member of a local schools PTA. There is huge public support to keep Pool in the Park open and

Questions from Members of Public

feel residents deserve a chance to save the pool. I would like to combine with PTAs in all of the Woking schools to help deliver the community funded needed for Pool in the Park.”

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 20 September 2023

COUNCIL – 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND OFFICERS

Executive Summary

The Council is invited to consider the recommendations from the meeting of the Executive held on 14 September 2023. Set out below is an extract from the minutes of the Executive.

The Council is further asked to consider an addendum to this report drawn up by the Interim Director of Finance and S151 Officer. The addendum includes an additional recommendation for Council to consider. The appendix to this report sets out the recommendations of the Executive consolidated with the additional Officer recommendation.

THE EXECUTIVE – 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

9a. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Barker, drew attention to the positive and constructive discussion on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which had taken place at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 11 September 2023. Following points raised at the Committee, it was reiterated that Impact Assessments would take place on the proposals being put forward.

The Leader provided an update on the Council's companies. Due to the Council's critical financial position, the Leader explained that the Council would not be able to support or subsidise the companies moving forward and the Council and the companies would need to take advice on how to deal with the challenges presented. The Leader advised that the Council was in positive and supportive discussions with Government in respect of proposals that required borrowing support in order to get the best outcomes for the public purse and delivered the best value for money returns from the historic investments the Council had made. It was noted that the Council would only proceed with additional investment and borrowing where it had Government support and funding.

The Leader reported that Business Cases were being prepared for Government in order to secure Government support in relation to completing, or partially completing, specific schemes that were already in delivery by companies owned by the Council when the Section 114 Notice was issued, primarily ThamesWey and Victoria Square Woking Limited. It was noted that the Council had agreed to the deferral of loan repayments due from companies to the Council until 31 December 2023. This decision had been taken following legal advice and was supported by Commissioners.

The Executive heard that significant progress had been made in confirming this approach with Government and was being progressed for the Victoria Square and the Sheerwater Redevelopments. The Leader proposed an addendum to the MTFS that would be incorporated into the report when it was considered by Council at its meeting on 28 September 2023. The addendum would note that the Council's Investment Programme accommodated investment where full Government funding and support existed to facilitate the completion of assets that were partially complete and to deliver best value for the public purse. Attention was drawn to the capital planning principles contained in the July MTFS report, namely Principle C, which referred to items where following support from Government and Commissioners, resources were provided for specific schemes that were already in delivery when the Section 114 Notice was issued. Therefore, investment in Victoria Square and ThamesWey would continue where it was in accordance with Principle C. A further report

Recommendations of the Executive and Officers

would be brought back to the Executive to set out the actions being taken by Officers to implement those decisions.

Councillor Forster, Portfolio Holder for Key Projects, provided an update on the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme and advised that the Council and ThamesWey were in negotiations with Government around drawing down previously approved money to complete the Red, Yellow and Copper phases. Once negotiations had been completed and agreed, the Council would have a timescale on when those phases would be implemented.

Councillor Roberts, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced the report which set out the strategic financial approach that the Council needed to take to deliver the Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) and respond to the Section 114 Notice, whilst continuing to meet the Council's statutory duties. The Executive noted that the report included feedback from the recent resident engagement exercise, alongside next steps for public consultation on proposed changes to Council services.

The Portfolio Holder tabled a proposed amendment to recommendation (iv) to read "the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, has the delegated authority to now proceed with the full implementation of changes to Council staffing structures following consultation on those structures. These changes are contained in the MTFS Fit For The Future savings 3(A) Table of Annex 6 to the report". The Executive agreed the amended recommendation (iv) which would enable the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, to complete the staffing restructures required.

Executive Members highlighted the proposed savings in their individual Portfolio areas, including the phased closure of Pool in the Park, removal of community grant funding, closure of public conveniences, and removal of funding to arts, cultural and sports development. The Executive expressed much regret at the proposed savings contained in the MTFS whilst acknowledging that difficult decisions needed to be taken in order to put forward a balanced budget, which was a legal requirement. The Council would need to demonstrate it had 'its own house in order' before making a case to Government for financial support to deal with the estimated Deficit of £1.2bn due to the Council's historic investment strategy. Subject to the agreement of Council on 28 September 2023, formal public and stakeholder/service user consultation would commence on 2 October 2023 for six weeks to understand the implications of the savings proposals.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the MTFS and embedded MTFP are an estimate of the Council's current financial position at Q2, noting that the figures will change as further updating takes place;**
- (ii) it be noted that the Section 114 Deficit continues to be reviewed but is able to be used for conversations with Government to attain financial support and for other sundry purposes as referred in the report;**
- (iii) the Council consults on a number of the proposed savings contained within the MTFS, as set out in Annex 6 to the report; and**
- (iv) the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, has the delegated authority to now proceed with the full implementation of changes to Council staffing structures following consultation on those structures. These changes are contained in the MTFS Fit For The Future savings 3(A) Table of Annex 6 to the report.**

Recommendations of the Executive and Officers

Reason: The decision is sought to ensure open and transparent governance in the financial affairs of the Council in balancing the 2024/25 Budget.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 20 September 2023

REPORT ENDS

ADDENDUM

Capital Investment Programme for Council Controlled Companies

As previously reported in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), it owns or part owns 24 companies and due to its financial position it will not be able to support or subsidise these moving forward as it has sought to do in the past. This means that the Council and the companies need to take advice on how to deal with the challenges that this position presents. The main focus of significant work by officers and Commissioners that has been fed into Government has been on the Victoria Square and Sheerwater Regeneration schemes, both of which still have significant capital spending requirements relating to assets currently under construction but not complete. The other companies do not have significant requirements at this stage and will be reviewed in the coming months.

Despite the Council's critical financial position, we are in positive and supportive discussions with Government in respect of proposals that require borrowing support to get the best outcomes for the public purse and deliver the best value for money returns from the historic investments this Council has made. As a responsible Council we will only proceed with additional investment and borrowing where it has Government support and funding.

These discussions follow those principles within the S114 report and adopted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Business Cases have or are being prepared for Government to secure their support in relation to completing, or partially completing, certain specific schemes that were already in delivery by companies owned by the Council when the Section 114 report was issued.

Furthermore, companies are taking independent advice in relation to the assurances that they need to seek from the Council as funder in order to continue to operate the companies as going concerns whilst assets are completed in accordance with a managed exit plan.

To enable these activities to be undertaken in a managed way, the Council has agreed to the deferral of loan repayments and interest due from companies to the Council until 31st December 2023. This decision has been taken following external legal advice and is supported by Commissioners.

The implications of these actions are being managed within either existing resources or will be supported by additional resources from Government when business cases evidence this support is in the best interests of the public purse.

Significant progress has been made in confirming this approach with Government during the last few days in respect of Victoria Square. Government have indicated their support to allowing additional borrowing to enable completion of the development where this borrowing is for capital assets. This support will allow the remediation of the hotel cladding by contractors to be completed and the value of the asset for potential disposal to be maximised. The Council will progress the requests for additional borrowing where the support from Government means there is no additional financial burden on the Council's general fund budgets.

The Council as funder has received external legal advice on the subsidy control regime in respect of the implications of the both the loan repayment deferral and the provision of capital funding provided by Government.

Recommendations of the Executive and Officers

A business case for the Sheerwater Redevelopment is also in progress with Government but is not as advanced.

This addendum is proposed to the MTFFS report presented to Council at its meeting on 28th September. It proposes that the Council's investment programme accommodates investment where full Government funding and support exists to facilitate the completion of assets that are partially complete and to deliver best value for the public purse. This is in line with the capital planning principles set out in the July MTFFS and the s114 report as set out below.

The Quarter 1 MTFFS report to the 20th July 2023 meeting of Council asked Council to note that the capital investment programme had been suspended by officers following the issuing of the s114 report. In addition, paragraph 29 of the July MTFFS report referred to capital planning principles for the period of this MTFFS and the financial year 2024/2025 within which all new proposals must fit. Principle C referred to items where, following support from Government and Commissioners resources are provided for specific schemes that were already in delivery when the s114 report was issued.

Investment in Victoria Square and Thamesway (for Sheerwater Regeneration) will, therefore, continue where it is in accordance with Principle C. The s151 Officer will take the necessary steps to accommodate the funding from Government on both schemes in the capital programme in accordance with this principle and his delegated powers to accept funding. A further report will be brought back to Executive to set out the actions being taken by officers to implement these decisions.

Council Resolution

RECOMMENDED

That (v) the Council notes the action to be taken by the s151 officer to accommodate Government supported funding for the Victoria Square and Thamesway Regeneration projects and requires a further report to be presented to the Executive setting out the detail of actions taken and the impact on the Council's finances.

Consolidated Recommendations

Set out below are the recommendations of the Executive consolidated with the additional Officer recommendation.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the MTFS and embedded MTFP are an estimate of the Council's current financial position at Q2, noting that the figures will change as further updating takes place;
- (ii) it be noted that the Section 114 Deficit continues to be reviewed but is able to be used for conversations with Government to attain financial support and for other sundry purposes as referred in the report;
- (iii) the Council consults on a number of the proposed savings contained within the MTFS, as set out in Annex 6 to the report; and
- (iv) the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, has the delegated authority to now proceed with the full implementation of changes to Council staffing structures following consultation on those structures. These changes are contained in the MTFS Fit For The Future savings 3(A) Table of Annex 6 to the report.
- (v) the Council notes the action to be taken by the s151 officer to accommodate Government supported funding for the Victoria Square and Thamesway Regeneration projects and requires a further report to be presented to the Executive setting out the detail of actions taken and the impact on the Council's finances.