

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING

held on 28 March 2024

Present:

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

Cllr T Aziz	Cllr I Johnson
Cllr A-M Barker	Cllr A Kirby
Cllr J Brown	Cllr R Leach
Cllr G Cosnahan	Cllr L Lyons
Cllr K Davis	Cllr C Martin
Cllr S Dorsett	Cllr S Mukherjee
Cllr W Forster	Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr P Graves	Cllr S Oades
Cllr S Greentree	Cllr L Rice
Cllr S Hussain	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr A Javaid	Cllr M Sullivan

Absent: Councillors H Akberali, A Boote, D Jordan, J Morley and T Spenser.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Akberali, Councillor Boote, Councillor Jordan, Councillor Morley and Councillor Spenser.

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, Digital and Customer, 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 8 February and 4 March 2024 be approved and signed as true and correct records.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

Following the previous meeting of Council held on 4 March 2024, the Mayor had attended a variety of events. On 6 March 2024, the Mayor had attended the Rotary Club's annual Young Writer award ceremony at the Hoebridge Golf Club, Old Woking. The event had raised funds for the Mayor's chosen charity, Friends of Woking Community Hospital.

The Mayor had also attended the Surrey Armed Forces Covenant Conference held at the army training camp in Pirbright and the Surrey Muslim Association's AGM, which was attended by the members of different faiths. A charity quiz, held at Horsell Village Hall, had been organised by the Friends of Woking Community Hospital and had raised more than £2,000. Further events had included the AGM of the Woking Town Twinning Association and the installation of the High Sheriff of Surrey for 2024/25, held at Royal Holloway University of London.

The Mayor ended his communications by noting that this would be the last meeting of Council attended by the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor wished Julie all the very best for the future.

5. URGENT BUSINESS.

No items of Urgent Business were considered.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC.

A question had been received from James Gordon. The question, together with the reply from the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Graves, was presented as follows. The Mayor welcomed James to the meeting.

Question – James Gordon

“Following clarification of central government's financial support package, when can we expect WBC to reengage with the challenge presented by the climate emergency and plot a new course to net zero by 2050 as outlined by Climate Change Strategy 2050?”

Supporting Statement

“We write to you as a concerned residents of Woking and as members of Woking Environment Action (WEAct). We appreciate the difficult financial situation WBC is currently in, and the priority given to maintenance of statutory services, however, the challenge presented by climate change remains the most pressing issue of our time and WBC must play its part in meeting that challenge. Ultimately delaying climate action is a false economy that results in increased costs for reaching net-zero. We therefore urge the

council to reengage with climate change and identify positive actions that would incur no or minimal costs. We have previously shared with WBC a list of actions that could advance its climate response at no or little cost. These include but are not limited to-

1. Including carbon mitigation and climate adaptation in the risk register and embed carbon and resilience impact assessments in all Council decisions,
2. Implementing a programme of climate literacy amongst council employees and Councillors. This can be provided on a 'Train the Trainer' basis so as not to incur undue costs.
3. Promoting awareness of climate change to residents and local businesses and the actions that they can take to help reduce carbon emissions.
4. Using the Council restructuring opportunity to improve departmental collaboration on the cross-cutting issue of climate change.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how these and other measures could be incorporated into revised net-zero planning.”

Reply from Councillor Peter Graves

“Thank you for your question and for raising this matter, which remains a key priority for the Council. It is disappointing that, due to the financial position of the Council, we have needed to review the draft Woking Net Zero strategy, and in particular the deliverability of several of the actions proposed. However, that does not mean we will not be taking this work forward. It is proposed to bring an updated strategy to the Executive meeting in June. Ahead of that we will be meeting with key partners, including WEAct and officers at Surrey County Council, to consider how we can more effectively work together towards 2050. We also need remember we did adopt the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document in the Autumn which is now being used with developers to secure the best possible outcomes when new developments come forward.”

Supplementary Question

“Thank you for that very full answer, and I look forward to that engagement with WeAct and other interested parties. My question is a very general one, does the Council accept as a general principle that, when it comes to mitigating climate change, delayed action actually means more expensive action in the long term?”

Reply from Councillor Peter Graves

“I think we can all agree that that is true and I hope that you'll be able to stay until the end of the meeting. I don't suppose you will, but we will be considering the Climate and Ecology Bill this evening as item number 33, not quite that but certainly somewhere later on this evening and so you can see that we are as a Council dedicated to dealing with green matters and that we do appreciate that it is going to be very expensive if we don't do it, more expensive now, later than if we deal with it now, but we are under severe financial constraints, as I think I've explained.”

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

Copies of questions submitted under Standing Order 8.1 together with draft replies were laid upon the table. The replies were confirmed by Members of the Executive, supplementary questions were asked and replies given as set out below.

1. Question from Councillor Kevin Davis

“WBC has a policy that exempts vacant unfurnished properties from Council Tax for one month. In the Performance Monitoring Q3 report the KPI IM3 'Average number of days taken to re-let properties managed by the housing service' is 61.98 days. This figure is reducing according to the trend.

What is the total Council Tax bill for the previous four quarters regarding Council managed properties that are subject to KPI IM3?”

Reply from Councillor Dale Roberts

“The Council has spent £80,748.89 in the 2023/24 financial year to date on Council Tax related to its housing assets. Whilst the largest element of this will relate to void properties, there will be an element that is an ongoing liability – for example, shared accommodation used for temporary accommodation which cannot be split and properties used as guest flats or for other housing management purposes.”

Supplementary Question

No.

2. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether Woking Council will seek to maintain and manage the proposed 15 traveller pitches at West Hall?”

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

“A planning application for West Hall has not yet been received, so it is not possible to confirm who would manage the 15 traveller pitches. If and when a planning application is received and determined by the Planning Committee, the case officer’s report will set out details in relation to the 15 traveller pitches and will reflect engagement with the traveller community and Surrey County Council.”

Supplementary Question

No.

3. Question from Councillor Kevin Davis

“What is the executive pay ratio of the incoming Chief Executive (total package) to the lowest paid employee (FTE and total package) employed by the council?”

Reply from Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

“The pay ratio of the incoming Managing Director Commissioner to the lowest paid employee is 11.5:1. This is based on the ‘daily rate’ received with effect from 1 April 2024.

The ‘daily rate’ has been used because Commissioners’ are paid a **fee** and not a salary. The fees for Commissioners’ are set by the Secretary of State who appoints Commissioners. The fees are common to all Commissioners across different interventions and have been agreed with HM Treasury.”

Supplementary Question

No.

4. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Can the Leader of the Council confirm which current members of the Liberal Democrat Executive voted for the £460million Victoria Place Proposals in 2016?”

Reply from Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

“This information has been publicly available since 2016. You have shared a screen shot of the vote on social media on more than one occasion.”

Supplementary Question

“I am disappointed that the Leader of the Council hasn't actually answered my question so I'll be grateful if she could but if she won't can you confirm whether or not you're ashamed by the voting record of those Liberal Democrat Councillors that backed those proposals and including herself in the first place? Thank you very much.”

Reply from Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

“Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I am a little disappointed that Councillor Brown has such a short memory. As I've mentioned in my response, he has shared this information on several times on social media. He seems rather obsessed with it. I'm very happy to confirm just to help his memory along that myself, Councillor Forster and Councillor Johnson were members of the Council at the time of that vote and supported that vote.

“We've never denied that it is a fact. It is not the voting for that development at that time which caused the problems of this Council. I should note, in addition, that the votes of any of the Liberal Democrats at that time would have made no difference at all to the outcome. The votes of the Conservative Councillors cast at the time all but one of the Conservative Councillors then present would have been sufficient for the proposal to have been carried.”

5. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Can the Leader of the Council confirm what progress has been made on ensuring a height limit policy in the town centre?”

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

“The current Core Strategy was developed and implemented by the previous administration in 2012, which does not place a height limit on development in the town centre. This has enabled a number of sites in the town centre to achieve planning consent for buildings in excess of 20 storeys. Since 2022, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to develop a townscape strategy, as part of a draft Town Centre Masterplan, which reviewed character areas across the town centre in relation to appropriate heights, and involved a significant amount of public consultation to gain feedback from residents and other stakeholders. Following responses from that consultation, legal advice confirmed that it would not be possible to put forward proposals that would conflict with current policy, adopted in 2012. The feedback provided through this consultation will therefore support the development of a borough-wide design code which will then be brought forward as part of a new Local Plan in 2027, where a policy on tall buildings can be adopted.”

Supplementary Question

“Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether there will be a height limits policy in the next Local Plan, and can he confirm that no green belt will be removed and in the development of that local plan? Thank you very much.”

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

“Thank you very much Mr Mayor.

I can't confirm the first point, because the first point is up to the Council to agree, but I can say that it is our intention to put forward a draft that will include some form of height limit in the town centre but the nature of that will need to go through several lengthy formal consultation processes and ultimately be decided by Members of this Council.

Councillor Brown's second question, Green Belt, no, the previous administration released several patches of Green Belt, the current administration has no plans to do so.

Thank you, Councillor Lyons.”

6. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Who is the Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater named after?”

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

“The Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater was named in honour of former Woking Borough Council member, Ian Eastwood. Throughout his time on the Council, Ian championed every aspect of sport and served on every committee which had an influence in this area. Ian campaigned passionately for better sports facilities in Sheerwater and up until his retirement as a Councillor, Ian was very much involved in the planning and design of the new leisure centre.”

Supplementary Question

“Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor.

Which political party was Councillor Eastwood a member of whilst a Councillor?
Thank you.”

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

“Thank you. I'm disappointed with this question to be perfectly honest. It's all available on the Council website and minutes. Councillor Eastwood was a Liberal Democrat. The Eastwood leisure centre is named after him who was a councillor for 28 years. He was nominated under the former Conservative leader of the Council, David Bittleston, and indeed he was commended for his work on campaigning for better facilities for sporting in Sheerwater by the current MP of Woking.

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

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to look back over the past year and the work the Council had undertaken in response to the Government intervention. The efforts had seen savings of £8.4m being achieved which, together with Government support, had enabled that Council to set a budget for the forthcoming year.

Going forward, the Council would continue to work positively and collaboratively with the Commissioners to get the best outcomes for Woking and its residents. The Council would continue to ensure that it mitigated the service changes, limiting the impact where possible. The Authority would seek to sell assets through a strategic disposal programme in order to reduce its level of debt.

Over the year, the Council had achieved significant progress and it was hoped that further progress would be delivered over the coming year.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE.

The Council had before it a report on the recommendations from the Executive, setting out the extracts from the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21 March 2024. In accordance with the Constitution, the recommendations were deemed to have been moved and seconded.

9A. THE IMPROVEMENT AND RECOVERY PLAN PROGRESS - NOVEMBER 2023 TO MARCH 2024 EXE24-009

The recommendation of the Executive to approve the third Improvement and Recovery Plan progress report was introduced by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Barker. The Plan was key in the Council's response to the Government Intervention and the progress report was a formal update for the Commissioners.

The report outlined the progress achieved across the five themes of the Plan, namely Financial Recovery, Commercial, Governance and Assurance, Organisation and Service Redesign, and Housing Recovery and Improvement. The fifth theme – Housing Recovery

and Improvement – had been added at the end of 2023 in light of concerns over fire safety. The Leader summarised the updates on each of the five themes, including the passing of a budget for the coming year, the sale of assets including Victoria Gate, removing the Council from unaffordable projects, the work undertaken around governance and the planned release of Part II documents.

During the debate, the theme of Housing Recovery and Improvement was discussed further, with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Johnson, providing an update on a recent survey undertaken of tenants, to which nearly 500 responses had been received. The work being undertaken would see a number of improvements for tenants, those residents placed in temporary accommodation and those who were homeless.

Following the debate, the Leader thanked the Councillors for their positive comments and responded to the points made.

RESOLVED

That the third Improvement and Recovery Plan progress report to Commissioners be approved.

9B COMPANIES GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK - SHAREHOLDER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE EXE24-025

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Barker, introduced the recommendation of the Executive which sought to strengthen the Council's oversight and governance of its companies. The Executive had agreed to replace the Shareholder Advisory Group with the Shareholder Executive Committee, and the Council was now invited to agree the necessary changes to the Constitution. The new Committee would comprise of the Executive and an independent Co-Opted Member and would have scheduled public meetings.

The proposals were welcomed and Councillor Barker responded to the points raising during the debate.

RESOLVED

That Part 6 of the Council's Constitution be amended as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

10. REVIEW OF COUNCIL MEETING STRUCTURE WBC24-019

The Council received a report which proposed the most significant changes to the Council's Committee structure since the Authority moved away from the Committee structure to the Strong Leader model. Extensive work had been undertaken to ensure that the proposals were put forward in a logical format, with informal Member briefings, a workshop led by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) and discussions by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive having been undertaken. A comprehensive proposals paper had been drafted in support of the measures.

The proposals sought to achieve a number of objectives, including improved effectiveness and efficiency of meetings and decision making, greater openness and transparency, improved effectiveness of scrutiny and the rationalisation of 'closed' meetings such as

working groups. To achieve these objectives, a range of changes was proposed. The changes included reconstituting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as three distinct, directorate-based scrutiny committees, the renaming of the Standards and Audit Committee to the Audit and Governance Committee, the creation of an Employment Committee and the establishment of a Group of Chairs to help the Committees coordinate their workloads.

If the proposals paper was supported by the Council, a revised Constitution based on the agreed arrangements would be brought before the Council in May 2024. A review of the new arrangements would be undertaken at the end of the year to identify areas for further improvement and development.

The Council debated the proposals at length. A number of Councillors welcomed the objectives of the work, including the aim to increase transparency of decision making. However, a number of concerns were raised, including the possibility that the changes would result in less scrutiny being undertaken and that it appeared that the number of meetings would significantly increase under the proposals. Reservations were also expressed over the proposal to allow applications for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of less than £10,000 to be determined by the (Acting) Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, with no option to appeal the decisions. Finally, it was considered that the intention to bring the draft Constitution to the next meeting of Council would not allow for proper scrutiny.

The Leader of the Council responded to the points raised through the debate. In respect of the CIL application process, it would remain key that the Ward Councillors submitted comprehensive applications which demonstrated local community support. Whilst there was no appeals process, Ward Councillors were able to resubmit applications with additional details, addressing the reasons for the initial refusal. In respect of scrutiny, it was noted that additional meetings could be scheduled if deemed necessary to undertake scrutiny, and that the Finance Task Group would continue to meet regularly to scrutinise the finances of the Council. The Leader emphasised that the intention was not to limit activities but to create a framework to deliver key objectives.

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

In favour: Councillors A-M Barker, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, C Martin, L Morales, S Mukherjee, E Nicholson, L Rice, D Roberts, and M Sullivan.

Total in favour: 17

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

Total against: 3

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

Total present not voting: 3

The recommendations were therefore carried by 17 votes in favour and 3 votes against.

RESOLVED

- That (i) from 20 May 2024, the current Overview and Scrutiny Committee be disbanded and replaced by three, directorate specific Committees, each with responsibility for overview and scrutiny, namely the Resource and Finance Scrutiny Committee, the Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee and the Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee;
- (ii) Officers be instructed to draw up a Committee Responsibility Protocol for consideration at Council in the new Municipal Year;
- (iii) from 20 May 2024, the Standards and Audit Committee be renamed the Audit and Governance Committee;
- (iv) annual training on audit and governance be made mandatory for the Members of the Committee;
- (v) the Audit and Governance Committee completes a review of its function by the end of each Municipal Year;
- (vi) an Employment Committee be constituted, to come into effect from 20 May 2024;
- (vii) Officers be instructed to draw up a protocol for the Group of Chairs for consideration at Council in the New Municipal Year;
- (viii) Officers be instructed to draw up a policy framework for decision-making for submission to Council in the new Municipal Year;
- (ix) from 20 May 2024, the Appeals Committee be disbanded;
- (x) the revised calendar of meetings for 2024/25, as set out in Annex 2 of the report, be adopted;
- (xi) the Working Groups and Panels as set out in Section 28 of the Annex 1 be disbanded from 1 May 2024;
- (xii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to determine any applications for Community Infrastructure Levy funding below £10,000;
- (xiii) any outstanding pieces of work from the old Committee Structure, including Working Groups, be brought forward under the new arrangements;
- (xiv) a limit of four be placed on the total number of active task and finish groups operating at the Council at any one time unless exceptional circumstances exist as deemed by the Group of Chairs in consultation with Statutory Officers;

(xv) the Monitoring Officer be instructed to make consequential amendments to the Constitution, the revised Constitution to be presented to Council on 20 May 2024; and

(xvi) a joint Member-Officer review of the new structure be undertaken at the beginning of 2025, the outcomes to be reported to Council

11. ANNUAL REPORT BY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES WBC24-015

Each year, those Councillors appointed to outside bodies on behalf of Woking Borough Council were invited to submit a short paper on the activities of those bodies. This year, reports had been prepared on six of the bodies, namely The Maybury Centre, Fair Oaks Airport Consultative Committee, the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee, the Surrey Police and Crime Panel, the County Playing Fields Association and Ashford and St Peters NHS Foundation Trust.

The Leader welcomed the updates and thanked those Councillors who had completed a paper.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WBC24-016.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Brown, introduced the annual report of the Committee which provided an outline of the Committee's activities over the past year. Highlights included pre-decision scrutiny of a range of topics including the Town Centre Masterplan and the Improvement and Recovery Plan, and the scrutiny of the HS2 funding arrangements for Brookwood Cemetery. The Committee had also considered the funding needs of Citizens Advice Woking and Woking Community Transport, inviting representatives from both organisations to give a presentation on their activities.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair, Members of the Committee and Officers for their support over the year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION REVIEW PANEL WBC24-014.

The Leader of the Council introduced the annual report of the Elections Panel which set out the work carried out by Electoral Services over the past year to maintain the integrity of the Electoral Register and the security of the electoral process in the Borough. The report set out the details of the Borough elections held in May 2023, including the substantial work undertaken to improve the accessibility of polling stations with the support of the Woking Access Group.

As part of the introduction, the Leader encouraged young people to register, noting that those residents who were aged 16 or 17 (referred to as 'attainers') could apply to go on the register, though would not be eligible to vote until they reached the age of 18.

RESOLVED

That the annual report of the Elections Panel be received.

14. ANNUAL REPORT ON MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT WBC24-013.

Councillor Rob Leach, Lead Member for Elected Member training and development, introduced the annual report which reviewed the activities of the past year and the ambitions for the coming year. It was noted that, whilst the annual budget had been set aside as a saving for the Authority, every effort would be made to deliver a full and practical programme of events to support the Councillors in their roles. Councillor Leach emphasised the importance of building knowledge and skills through learning and development, and it was hoped that the new Member induction process in May and June would be more interactive, an approach which should run through all training events.

As part of the presentation, Councillor Leach highlighted three requests for the Group Leaders: that they gather Members' reactions to the past training the training and identify their needs for the ensuing year; that all new Councillors and any existing Councillors who would appreciate it were given a mentor from their group; and that the Committees included learning and development as an item on their agenda for the first meeting of the year.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Leach for his introduction and the Council welcomed his comments and the report before them.

RESOLVED

That (i) the Elected Member learning and development activities of 2023/24 be noted; and

(ii) the Policy for Elected Member Learning and Development, as set out in Appendix 2 to this report, be noted.

15. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024-25 WBC24-003.

The Leader of the Council introduced the annual report on the Council's Pay Policy Statement which covered a range of policies, including the remuneration of chief officers and the lowest paid staff. Under the Localism Act, Authorities were required the Statement each year.

It was noted that, in view of the Council's financial position, no cost of living or performance based pay would be awarded for the coming year, other than for those on the lowest point of W1 who would receive an increase in line with the Real Living Wage.

RESOLVED

That the Pay Policy Statement be approved for publication.

16. NOTICES OF MOTION.

16A COUNCILLOR P GRAVES - CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY BILL.

The following motion had been submitted by Councillor Graves.

“This motion proposes that Woking Borough Council notes that:

The Climate and Ecology Bill was last introduced in the House of Commons 10 May 2023.

The Bill is backed by 130 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local authorities.

The CE Bill requires the Government to:

1. Deliver an environmental plan for the climate and nature;
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1.5°C to ensure emissions are reduced in line with the best chance of meeting the UK’s Paris Agreement obligations;
3. Halt and reverse the decline in nature and set it measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
4. Take responsibility for our overseas carbon and industrial footprint
5. Prioritise nature in decision-making and end fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;
6. Provide re-training for those people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
7. Give the British people a say in finding a fair way forward via a temporary, independent and representative Climate & Nature Assembly, as part of creating consensus.

And that Woking Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;
2. Inform residents and inform local media of this decision.
3. Write to our MP to inform him that this motion has been passed, and urge him to sign up to support the CE Bill;
4. Write to Zero Hour, expressing WBC’s support.”

Councillor Graves moved and Councillor Nicholson seconded the motion, before Councillor Graves introduced the motion. However, it was reported that the Bill had lapsed and had been replaced by a similar Bill, entitled the Climate and Nature Bill, in the previous week. In view of this, Councillor Nicholson moved and Councillor Cosnahan seconded, an amendment to change references to the Bill in the motion to revised title of the Climate and Nature Bill.

The amendment was discussed and some concern was expressed over the potential support for a Bill which the Councillors had not had the opportunity to study. However, it

was felt that the intention was positive even if it included reference to the earlier Bill and that the Bill had cross party support by MPs.

The Mayor directed the Members to the amendment and advised that a named vote would be taken in accordance with Standing Order 10.8. The names of Members voting for and against the recommendations were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors T Aziz, A-M Barker, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, C Martin, L Morales, S Mukherjee, E Nicholson, S Oades, L Rice, D Roberts, and M Sullivan.

Total in favour: 19

Against: None.

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillors J Brown, K Davis and S Dorsett.

Total present not voting: 4

The amendment was therefore carried by 19 votes in favour and no votes against.

The Council now had before it the amended motion for consideration. Councillor Graves, as the Member who had submitted the motion, was provided the opportunity to respond to any points raised before a further vote was held to determine the amended motion.

The names of Members voting for and against the amended motion were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors T Aziz, A-M Barker, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, C Martin, L Morales, S Mukherjee, E Nicholson, S Oades, L Rice, D Roberts, and M Sullivan.

Total in favour: 19

Against: None.

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillors J Brown, K Davis and S Dorsett.

Total present not voting: 4

The amended motion was therefore approved by 19 votes in favour and no votes against.

RESOLVED

That the motion, as amended below, be approved.

“This motion proposes that Woking Borough Council notes that:

The Climate and Nature Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 21 March 2024.

The Bill is backed by cross-party MPs and Peers and local authorities.

The Climate and Nature Bill requires the Government to:

1. Deliver an environmental plan for the climate and nature;
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1.5°C to ensure emissions are reduced in line with the best chance of meeting the UK's Paris Agreement obligations;
3. Halt and reverse the decline in nature and set it measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
4. Take responsibility for our overseas carbon and industrial footprint
5. Prioritise nature in decision-making and end fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;
6. Provide re-training for those people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
7. Give the British people a say in finding a fair way forward via a temporary, independent and representative Climate & Nature Assembly, as part of creating consensus.

And that Woking Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support the Climate and Nature Bill;
2. Inform residents and inform local media of this decision.
3. Write to our MP to inform him that this motion has been passed, and urge him to sign up to support the Climate and Nature Bill;
4. Write to Zero Hour, expressing WBC's support."

17. VOTE OF THANKS.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Barker, acknowledged that it had been a challenging year and thanked Julie Fisher for her support as Chief Executive and the Mayor for his management of the Council meetings. Appreciation was also extended to Officers of the Council, the Members of the Executive and the Members of the Council.

The Mayor thanked the Councillors and Officers for their support over the past year.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 9.53 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____