



The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JZ
www.woodley.gov.uk

To: **Members of the Strategy & Resources Committee**
Councillors K. Baker (Chairman); J. Anderson; S. Brindley; A. Chadwick; K. Gilder;
T. McCann; M. Nagra; B. Rowland; P. Wicks

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a meeting of the Strategy & Resources Committee will be held at 8:00 pm on Tuesday 27 April 2021, at which your attendance is requested. This will be a virtual meeting, as authorised by the Coronavirus Act (2020), Section 78.

Deborah Mander
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to the business of the meeting.
3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2021**
To approve the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 19 January 2021 and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record. *(These minutes were provided in the Full Council agenda of 9 February 2021)*
4. **MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 2 MARCH 2021** Page 5
To approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Strategy and Resources Committee held on 2 March 2021 and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
5. **FINANCE**
 - a) **Budgetary Control**
To receive **Report No. SR 10/21.** Page 7

- b) **Payments**
To approve the following payments as set out in **Appendix 5b**: Page 9

	Current account	Imprest account
January 2021	£76,408.21	£48,622.14
February 2021	£75,728.11	£47,173.89
March 2021	£135,330.58	£51,905.66

- c) To receive the report of the Council's internal auditors for the period for September 2020 – February 2021. (**Appendix 5c**) Page 15
6. **OAKWOOD CENTRE UPDATE**
To receive **Report No. SR 11/21**. Page 19
7. **TOWN ELECTORS WORKING PARTY**
- a) To note **Report No. SR 12/21** of the Town Electors Task and Finish Working Party meeting held on 11 March 2021. Page 20
- b) To note **Report No. SR 13/21** of the Town Electors Task and Finish Working Party meeting held on 18 March 2021. Page 21
- c) To note **Report No. SR 14/21** of the Town Electors Task and Finish Working Party meeting held on 15 April 2021. Page 22
8. **WOODLEY TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE**
To receive the report of the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative meeting held on 20 January 2021 (**Appendix 8**) Page 23
9. **PROJECTS SCHEDULE 2020/21**
To note the update on Council projects, as given in **Appendix 9**. Page 25
10. **COMMUNITY GRANTS**
To consider **Report No. SR 15/21**. The guidelines for awarding Community Grants to groups and organisations and to individuals are attached to the report. Page 29
11. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)**
- a) To note that the February Neighbourhood CIL Proportion (Transfer to Parish/Town Councils) Report identifies potential CIL funds to the Town Council of £61,576.
- b) To note that CIL payment of £55,143 received by the Borough Council is due to be paid to the Town Council in April 2021, giving a total of £290,156 of CIL payments made.
12. **DEVELOPING A YOUTH STRATEGY AND SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE**
- a) To note provision of the notes of the meeting of 18 March 2021 between Members of the Town Council and the CYP, facilitated by Chris Moore (ACL Consultancy Solutions Ltd) (**Appendix 12a**). Page 32
- b) To consider the proposal set out in **Appendix 12b** to employ ACL Consultancy Solutions Ltd to work with the Council to develop a new youth strategy and revised SLA to shape future youth provision within Woodley. Page 35

13. **LOCAL AUTHORITY REMOTE MEETINGS: CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

To consider responding to the Government's call for evidence seeking views on the use of virtual meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic (**Appendix 13**). The deadline for responses is 17 June 2021.

14. **WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE ROOF - UPDATE**

At the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee on 2 March 2021, it was agreed to proceed with acceptance of a Part 36 settlement offer made by B&S roofing in full and final settlement of the matter.

The Part 36 offer consists of;

- settlement in the amount of £24,780 plus VAT - payable within 14 days of acceptance
- reimbursement of the cost of the independent inspection and survey (£449 inc VAT)
- payment in respect of the Council's legal costs up to the date of acceptance of the offer - £3,340* (part estimated)

The Part 36 offer was accepted and this was communicated to B&S Roofing's solicitors within the required timescale. A requirement under the Part 36 offer was that B&S Roofing was to pay the settlement amount to the Council within 14 days of acceptance of the offer (by 25 March 2021). No payment or response was received within this timeline.

The company's solicitors have subsequently responded with some questions for clarification in respect of the VAT elements of the offer. A response to these questions has been provided and the Council now awaits payment in accordance with the Part 36 offer.

15. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

To consider any future agenda items for the committee to consider.

16. **PUBLICITY AND WEBSITE**

To consider items to be publicised.

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Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the Strategy & Resources Committee held remotely on Tuesday 2 March 2021 at 8:00 pm

Present: *Councillors K. Baker (Chairman); J. Anderson; S. Brindley; A. Chadwick; K. Gilder; T. McCann; M. Nagra; B. Rowland; P. Wicks*

Officers present: *D. Mander, Town Clerk; K. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk; M. Filmore, Committee Officer*

Also present: *1 member of the public*

67. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

68. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

69. **TOWN ELECTORS TASK AND FINISH WORKING PARTY**

At the Full Council meeting held on 9 February 2021 it resolved to set up a small, cross-party, non-political working party to devise a new format for the Town Electors' meeting, with the aim of holding a Town Electors' meeting before 1 June 2021 (minute number 66).

Councillor Baker proposed, seconded by Councillor Wicks, and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To suspend Standing Order 4f.

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstention: 0

- ◆ To appoint members to the Town Electors' Working Party as follows:

2 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat, 1 Labour.

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstention: 0

Councillor Nagra declined a Labour group place on the cross party, non-political working group. Therefore the working party will be made up of 3 Councillors.

Councillor Nagra requested that the Chairman not seek to suspend Standing Order 4f in future in order to suspend proportionality rules. Councillor Baker confirmed he would not seek to suspend Standing Order 4f in future to allow Labour to form part of a cross-party, non-political working party.

70. Councillor Baker presented a proposal for the objectives of the Town Electors' Working Party, suggesting the aims should be:

1. To review the historical structure of the meeting
2. To explore alternative structures for any future meeting
3. To make a recommendation to its parent committee, the Strategy & Resources Committee

4. To complete the work in a timely fashion for the formal democratic process to be followed, i.e. for the Strategy & Resources Committee to make a recommendation to Full Council and then for Full Council to agree and the Town Clerk to implement

It was suggested the views of members of the public and local businesses should be sought, possibly by placing a request for comments on the Town Council website. In future, it was suggested opinion could be sought using the Residents' survey. The Chair recommended these points be taken forward for consideration by the working party.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To accept the four objectives presented by Councillor Baker, along with the addition of seeking views from members of the public, as the terms of reference for the Town Elector's Working Party.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstention: 0

- ◆ To appoint Councillors Anderson, Brindley, and Skegg to the Town Electors' Working Party.

71. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED:

- ◆ That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted in relation to legal matters, it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press were temporarily excluded and asked to withdraw for the following two agenda items.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 2 Abstention: 0

72. **WOODFORD PARK LEISURE CENTRE ROOF**

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Report No. SR 9/21.

RESOLVED:

- ◆ To note Report No. SR 9/21.
- ◆ To accept the Part 36 Offer as full and final settlement of the matter.

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstention: 0

The meeting closed at 8:53 pm

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**BUDGETARY CONTROL 2020/21****Report No. SR 10/21**

EXPENDITURE	Budget 2020/21	Revised Budget 2020/21	Actual Exp as at 31/03/20	Actual Exp as at 31/03/21	Actual Exp as % of Rev Budget	Information
Central Costs	273269	249718	232512	249578	99.9	Most costs under revised estimate figures apart from other expenses & equipment.
Democratic Costs	54560	53372	60719	54379	101.9	All costs at or under 100%, apart from staff costs where there was a handover to new Committee Officer
Corporate Management	368092	351850	342904	347112	98.7	All costs at or under 100% apart from legal /professional fees.
Capital Programme	45000	0	45000	0	0.0	No allocation transferred to Capital Programme fund in 2021.
Grants	17000	17000	17000	16000	94.1	WTCMI grant paid monthly. £3,000 community grants awarded.
Oakwood Centre	172224	153160	168795	145589	95.1	Water rates & stationery over 75%. All other costs under.
Maintenance HQ	4500	2595	3834	2362	91.0	All costs under Revised Estimate budget figures.
Woodley TCM	85700	65588	89774	43821	66.8	Expenditure lower than Revised Estimate.
Capital and Projects	266506	266602	361307	266602	100.0	Loan re lake/ workshop/ Woodford Park LC payable in April. Most other loan payments made in Sept & March. Sinking fund allocation of £80,000 in respect of the Oakwood Centre paid to Rathbones portfolio.
TOTAL	1286851	1159885	1321845	1125443	97.0	
Month 12 = 100%						

INCOME	Budget 2020/21	Revised Budget 2020/21	Actual Inc as at 31/03/20	Actual Inc as at 31/03/21	Actual Inc as % of Rev Budget	
Central Costs	8638	7850	8655	25540	325.4	Furlough income of £19,645 to end March received.
Democratic Costs	0	0	2094	0	0.0	
Corporate Management	0	0	9499	0	0.0	
Capital Programme	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Grants	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Oakwood Centre	170256	61660	161390	123368	200.1	Furlough income of £47,408 to end of March received plus Tier 4 LRSB Lockdown Grant of £13,357 also received. Police office rent received. Woodley Theatre have made a contribution towards costs. Letting income at 15.6% of budget figure. Figures include rent payment for Oakwood Centre offices.
Maintenance HQ	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Woodley TCM	85700	65588	66857	43821	66.8	WTCMI income includes funds from their reserves to give zero balance.
Capital and Projects	0	0	89400	0	0.0	
TOTAL	264594	135098	337895	192729	142.7	Total Furlough income 2020/21: £67,053
						Tier 4 LRSB Lockdown grant 2020/21: £13,357
NET	1022257	1024787	983950	932714	91.0	Income from bookings/WTCMI etc: £112,319

Month 12 = 100%

Woodley Town Council

Current Account

List of Payments made between 01/01/2021 and 31/01/2021

Date Paid	Payee Name	Amount Paid	
14-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	240.00	Town Centre Managers cost
14-Jan-21	ACL Consultancy Solutions Ltd	2160.00	Consultancy advice - Youth Services
07-Jan-21	Advanced Maintenance UK Ltd	171.60	Call out - boiler WPLC
28-Jan-21	Advanced Maintenance UK Ltd	3816.00	WPLC - Boiler repairs
07-Jan-21	ASAP Computer Services	1902.00	Annual IT support WPLC
07-Jan-21	AYS Cleaning Contractors Ltd	39.93	Contract cleaning
21-Jan-21	AYS Cleaning Contractors Ltd	1450.07	Contract cleaning
28-Jan-21	AYS Cleaning Contractors Ltd	1858.58	Contract cleaning
04-Jan-21	Be Fuelcards Ltd	29.86	BP Unleaded - Depot
29-Jan-21	Be Fuelcards Ltd	35.28	BP unleaded-Depot
21-Jan-21	Bowak Ltd	47.21	Cleaning supplies
14-Jan-21	Brewers Decorator Centres	31.02	Building supplies
28-Jan-21	Castle Water	82.08	Water rates
28-Jan-21	Churchill Contract Services Ltd	1415.87	Contract cleaning
04-Jan-21	Club Manager Ltd	80.40	Monthly software fee
07-Jan-21	DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd	650.16	Budget setting support 20/21
14-Jan-21	DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd	468.00	VAT Partial Exemption calculation 19/20
25-Jan-21	Ecotricity	1113.35	Gas supply - WPLC
25-Jan-21	Ecotricity	1429.68	Gas supply - OC
25-Jan-21	Ecotricity	571.10	Gas supply - Chapel Hall
25-Jan-21	Ecotricity	298.54	Gas supply- Coro Hall
21-Jan-21	EDF Energy 1 Ltd	16.15	Electric supply
12-Jan-21	Epos Now Ltd D/D	30.00	WPLC-till support license fee
07-Jan-21	Fraser Office Supplies Ltd	20.23	Stationery supplies
11-Jan-21	Global 4 Communications	691.38	Phone & Mobiles
21-Jan-21	HMRC Cumbernauld	15177.88	Tax & NI Employer/employee
14-Jan-21	JMVA Ltd	249.40	Web site design & set up
14-Jan-21	Just Around The Corner	6338.00	Grant - Youth Services
27-Jan-21	Les Mills Fitness UK Ltd	101.84	Bodybalance - Coach WPLC
15-Jan-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	118.49	Monthly cardnet charge fee
28-Jan-21	Lyreco UK Ltd	93.59	Stationery supplies
14-Jan-21	Mainstream Digital Ltd	61.16	Phone - OC + Qtrly rental
15-Jan-21	Merchant Rentals Ltd	15.44	Cardnet mthly rental fee
15-Jan-21	Merchant Rentals Ltd	18.40	Cardnet mthly rental fee
08-Jan-21	PHS Group	2097.12	Annual washroom fees
28-Jan-21	PHS Group	383.76	Qtrly dust mat charge
12-Jan-21	Plusnet Plc	52.20	Phone - Oakwood Centre
18-Jan-21	Plusnet Plc	52.20	Phone - Woodford Park Leisure Centre
21-Jan-21	Prudential	307.24	AVC deducted from pay
14-Jan-21	Reading Borough Council	3650.00	Allotment site rental lease
06-Jan-21	SGW Payroll Ltd	145.58	Payroll services - Dec 2020
15-Jan-21	Siemens Financial Services	1100.80	Gym monthly rental fee
08-Jan-21	SSE Southern Electric	1597.13	Electric supply
14-Jan-21	SSE Southern Electric	1007.20	Electric supply
29-Jan-21	SWALEC	88.67	Electric supply - Public toilet
14-Jan-21	Thames Valley Water Services Ltd	210.00	Monthly water checks
21-Jan-21	The Berkshire Pension Fund	17162.27	Employer/employee pension
21-Jan-21	Trade UK - Screwfix	650.28	Building supplies
08-Jan-21	Travis Perkins Trading Co	54.11	Building supplies
21-Jan-21	Unison Collection Ac	22.50	Union fee deducted from pay
28-Jan-21	Veolia ES - UK Ltd	459.86	Refuse collection

04-Jan-21	Wokingham BC - Rates	2283.00	Rates-WPLC
04-Jan-21	Wokingham BC - Rates	364.00	Rates-Coro Hall
04-Jan-21	Wokingham BC - Rates	165.00	Rates-Chapel Hall
04-Jan-21	Wokingham BC - Rates	898.00	Rates-Oakwood
04-Jan-21	Wokingham BC - Rates	245.00	Rates-Toilet
28-Jan-21	Wokingham Borough Council	2589.60	Legal fees - Malone Park & Airfield Centre

76408.21

CLERKS IMPREST A/C

List of Payments made between 01/01/2021 and 31/01/2021

Date Paid	Payee Name	Amount Paid	
07-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	29.99	Smith & Locke Post box - WPLC
08-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	21.33	Brita Max 6x cartridges
12-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	67.96	Gym fee refund
12-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	56.25	WPLC hire refund
12-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	111.60	WTC refund cancelled activity
12-Jan-21	(Personal Information)	81.90	WTC refund cancelled activity
20-Jan-21	Adobe PS Creative	364.03	Annual charge - Photoshop WTC
26-Jan-21	Chemogift bags	250.00	Grant - Jan 2021
04-Jan-21	Indeed.com	50.91	Staff advert - recruitment
27-Jan-21	Lloyds Bank	46995.97	Net Jan 2021 - Payroll
08-Jan-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	13.50	10 Nov - 9 Dec 20 Bank charges
11-Jan-21	The Right Training Co	273.00	WTC refund cancelled activity
20-Jan-21	TVlicensing.co.uk	157.50	TV License - Oakwood Centre
11-Jan-21	Umbrella Equality Services	43.20	WTC refund cancelled activity
11-Jan-21	Yeldall Christian Centres	105.00	3G booking cancelled

48622.14

Woodley Town Council**Current Account****List of Payments made between 01/02/2021 and 28/02/2021**

Date Paid	Payee Name	Amount Paid	
18-Feb-21	Advanced Maintenance UK Ltd	660.00	Repair - WPLC water calorifier
24-Feb-21	Advanced Maintenance UK Ltd	260.40	WP Flat-Call out & repair boiler
04-Feb-21	Alan Hadley Ltd	297.00	Refuse collection
24-Feb-21	AYS Cleaning Contractors Ltd	1463.03	Contract cleaning
12-Feb-21	Be Fuelcards Ltd	45.50	Unleaded fuel/Annual card fee
26-Feb-21	Be Fuelcards Ltd	32.94	BP Unleaded fuel-Depot
04-Feb-21	Blandy & Blandy LLP	900.00	Legal fees
24-Feb-21	BT Telephone Payment Centre	333.72	Broadband fees-Woodford Pk LC
04-Feb-21	Castle Water	1831.76	Water rates
11-Feb-21	CDK Casting Ltd	96.60	Bronze plaque
24-Feb-21	Churchill Contract Services Ltd	1415.87	Contract cleaning-Woodford PK LC
01-Feb-21	Club Manager Ltd	80.40	Monthly software fee
11-Feb-21	EDF Energy 1 Ltd	16.16	Electric supply-Clock Tower
11-Feb-21	Ellis Whittam Ltd	7282.80	Annual HR & H & S fees
11-Feb-21	Epos Now Ltd D/D	30.00	Monthly till support fee-WPLC
24-Feb-21	Fencing Products Ltd	81.12	Building supplies
08-Feb-21	Global 4 Communications	691.38	Phones & Mobiles
18-Feb-21	HMRC Cumbernauld	14625.81	Tax & NI Employer/employee
11-Feb-21	Lamps-Tubes Luminations Ltd	1011.00	Xmas 2020 lights installation
26-Feb-21	Les Mills Fitness UK Ltd	101.84	Coach-Body balance-WPLC
02-Feb-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	33.46	Bank charges-Current a/c
12-Feb-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	30.00	Cardnet service charges
05-Feb-21	Mailcoms Ltd D/D	83.94	Postage franking support
15-Feb-21	Mainstream Digital Ltd	0.80	Phone
15-Feb-21	Merchant Rentals Ltd	15.44	Monthly cardnet machine fees
15-Feb-21	Merchant Rentals Ltd	18.40	Monthly cardnet machine fees
11-Feb-21	(Personal Information)	400.00	Town Centre Managers cost
24-Feb-21	(Personal Information)	650.00	Leaflet delivery
12-Feb-21	Plusnet Plc	52.20	Phone-Woodley TC
18-Feb-21	Plusnet Plc	52.20	Phone-Woodford Pk LC
18-Feb-21	Prudential	307.24	AVC deducted from pay
11-Feb-21	R.E.S. Systems Ltd	1140.00	Fire alarm service fees
15-Feb-21	Rathbones Investment	2942.24	Rebate VAT 2020/2021
04-Feb-21	Reading Borough Council	170.03	Annual Wheble Park rent
04-Feb-21	Reading Community Energy Soc Ltd	281.32	Electric supply-Woodford PK LC
24-Feb-21	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	355.20	Annual Booking support fees
18-Feb-21	SGW Payroll Ltd	147.62	Monthly payroll-Jan21
26-Feb-21	SGW Payroll Ltd	149.66	Monthley payroll service fee
15-Feb-21	Siemens Financial Services	1100.80	Monthly Gym rental fees
16-Feb-21	Southern Electric Contracting Ltd	76.26	Repair lighting column-South Lake
16-Feb-21	Southern Electric Power Distribution	14518.14	Repair power supply to Depot
11-Feb-21	SSE Southern Electric	1475.85	Electric supply
16-Feb-21	SSE Southern Electric	147.29	Electric supply-Coro Hall
26-Feb-21	SWALEC	110.32	Electric supply- Public toilet
24-Feb-21	Technical Surfaces Ltd	360.00	3G Matchfit service
04-Feb-21	Thames Valley Water Services Ltd	204.00	Monthly water checks
18-Feb-21	The Berkshire Pension Fund	16889.67	Employer/employee pension
18-Feb-21	Trade UK - BandQ	485.64	Building supplies
18-Feb-21	Trade UK - Screwfix	580.03	Building supplies
18-Feb-21	Unison Collection Ac	22.50	Union fee deducted from pay
24-Feb-21	Veolia ES - UK Ltd	245.68	Refuse collection

11-Feb-21	West Berkshire Council	1370.00	WTCMI-Street trading permit
18-Feb-21	Wingfield Engineering Ltd	54.85	MOT KD51 WTW-Depot

75728.11

CLERKS IMPREST A/C

List of Payments made between 01/02/2021 and 28/02/2021

Date Paid	Payee Name	Amount Paid	
01-Feb-21	(Personal Information)	70.48	Allot keys cut/Ink cartridges
11-Feb-21	Amazon.co.uk	17.53	Wall calender-Depot
05-Feb-21	Czech School Berks	513.56	WTC refund cancelled activity
01-Feb-21	EE Top up	20.00	Top up WTC mobile phone
26-Feb-21	Fellowship Educational	520.00	WTC refund cancelled activity
24-Feb-21	Lloyds Bank	45922.96	Net February 21 payroll
12-Feb-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	13.50	Bank charges-Imprest a/c
03-Feb-21	PETTY CASH A/C	95.86	Top up petty cash
		47173.89	

Woodley Town Council**Current Account****List of Payments made between 01/03/2021 and 31/03/2021**

Date Paid	Payee Name	Amount Paid	
04-Mar-21	(Personal Information)	400.00	Town Centre Managers cost
18-Mar-21	Advanced Maintenance UK Ltd	825.41	WPLC-call out/repair thermostat
25-Mar-21	AYS Cleaning Contractors Ltd	1486.79	Contract cleaning
05-Mar-21	Be Fuelcards Ltd	20.82	BP Unleaded fuel-Depot
12-Mar-21	Be Fuelcards Ltd	20.17	BP unleaded-Depot
25-Mar-21	Brewers Decorator Centres	186.19	Building supplies
25-Mar-21	Came & Company	32393.17	Insurance 2021/22
18-Mar-21	Castle Water	145.93	Water rates-Pitts Lane
04-Mar-21	CDK Casting Ltd	96.60	Bronze plaque
18-Mar-21	CDK Casting Ltd	96.60	Bronze plaque
01-Mar-21	CF Corporate Finance Ltd	214.32	Photocopier lease/annual s/fee
25-Mar-21	Churchill Contract Services Ltd	1415.87	Contract cleaning
01-Mar-21	Club Manager Ltd	80.40	Monthly gym software fee
04-Mar-21	Dejac Associates Ltd	972.00	Annual mail server fees
18-Mar-21	Dejac Associates Ltd	924.00	iMac/keyboard/mouse/MS office
08-Mar-21	Ecotricity	165.84	Gas supply-Coronation Hall
08-Mar-21	Ecotricity	1650.23	Gas supply-Oakwood
08-Mar-21	Ecotricity	82.80	Gas supply-Chapel Hall
15-Mar-21	Ecotricity	34.38	Gas supply-Chapel Hall
15-Mar-21	Ecotricity	21.27	Gas supply-Coronation Hall
15-Mar-21	Ecotricity	129.13	Gas supply-Woodford Park LC
15-Mar-21	Ecotricity	1394.72	Gas supply-Oakwood
18-Mar-21	EDF Energy 1 Ltd	14.96	Electric supply-Clock Tower
11-Mar-21	Epos Now Ltd D/D	30.00	License support-WPLC till
25-Mar-21	Ethos Communications Solutions Ltd	108.00	Qtrly photocopier rental fee-Woodford Park LC
04-Mar-21	Fencing Products Ltd	66.60	Building supplies
04-Mar-21	Fraser Office Supplies Ltd	7.92	Stationery supplies
09-Mar-21	Global 4 Communications	691.38	Phone & Mobiles
18-Mar-21	HMRC Cumbernauld	15403.80	Tax & NI Employer/employee
18-Mar-21	IBS Office Solutions Ltd	575.54	Printing/copier/Qtrly rental fee
04-Mar-21	iRecruit Partners Ltd	5481.18	Staff recruitment fees
30-Mar-21	Les Mills Fitness UK Ltd	101.84	Coach - bodybalance gym
31-Mar-21	Les Mills Fitness UK Ltd	101.84	Coach payment taken in error credit in April
25-Mar-21	Lightatouch	1300.00	Internal Audit
02-Mar-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	20.72	Bank service fees-Current
12-Mar-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	3.04	Cardnet service fee-Feb 21
30-Mar-21	Lloyds Bank D/D	26.92	Current bank charges
18-Mar-21	Lyreco UK Ltd	55.44	Stationery supplies
08-Mar-21	Mailcoms Ltd D/D	328.34	Annual franking support/servic
15-Mar-21	Mainstream Digital Ltd	3.22	Phone - Oakwood Centre
15-Mar-21	Merchant Rentals Ltd	15.44	Monthly cardnet rental fee
15-Mar-21	Merchant Rentals Ltd	18.40	Monthly cardnet rental fee
12-Mar-21	Plusnet Plc	52.20	Phone-Oakwood Centre
18-Mar-21	Plusnet Plc	52.20	Phone-Woodford Park LC
18-Mar-21	Prudential	307.24	AVC deducted from pay
01-Mar-21	Public Works Loan Board	5874.06	Public Works Loan Board
30-Mar-21	Public Works Loan Board	29093.75	Public Works Loan Board
31-Mar-21	Public Works Loan Board	40204.33	Public Works Loan Board
04-Mar-21	R.E.S. Systems Ltd	180.00	6 monthly service fire alarm
04-Mar-21	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	206.40	Annual allotment software fee
18-Mar-21	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	807.60	Annual Omega service support fee

04-Mar-21	Rigby Taylor	2288.56	Seed/fertilizer supplies
15-Mar-21	Siemens Financial Services	1100.80	Monthly gym equip rental fee
04-Mar-21	Spaldings Ltd	222.00	Falco secateurs-Depot
18-Mar-21	SSE Southern Electric	1196.17	Electric supply
04-Mar-21	Thames Valley Water Services Ltd	204.00	Monthly water checks
18-Mar-21	The Berkshire Pension Fund	17614.29	Employer/employee pension
18-Mar-21	Trade UK - BandQ	45.00	Building supplies
18-Mar-21	Trade UK - Screwfix	592.98	Building supplies
18-Mar-21	Unison Collection Ac	22.50	Union fee deducted from pay
04-Mar-21	Vaughtons	79.63	Black mitred ribbons
25-Mar-21	Veolia ES - UK Ltd	245.68	Refuse collection
04-Mar-21	WEL Medical Ltd	223.14	Disposable battery
31-Mar-21	Woodley Town Council (Came & Co)	-32393.17	Insurance to be paid in April
		135330.58	

CLERKS IMPREST A/C

List of Payments made between 01/03/2021 and 31/03/2021

Date Paid	Payee Name	Amount Paid	
22/03/2021	(Personal Information)	64.50	Timpson/Asda-Keys cut/Cable/
31/03/2021	(Personal Information)	92.00	WTC refund cancelled activity
19/03/2021	(Personal Information)	50.00	Refund deposit
22/03/2021	(Personal Information)	102.00	WPLC course refund
08/03/2021	(Personal Information)	120.00	WPLC course refund
19/03/2021	(Personal Information)	18.99	Gym paid in error refund
22/03/2021	Amazonmktplace	34.99	Electric warning tape-Depot
03/03/2021	AO Retail Ltd	339.00	Beko white cooker-WPLC flat
22/03/2021	Emiter Limited	297.60	Large3 phase electric meter box
19/03/2021	H Neale Business	75.50	Refund deposit
30/03/2021	Lakeside Hire	2676.00	200x Temporary fencing hire
24/03/2021	Lloyds Bank	47598.01	Payroll - March 2021
12/03/2021	Lloyds Bank D/D	13.70	Imprest bank charges
22/03/2021	Royal Berks NHS Foundation	30.00	WTCMI refund
26/03/2021	SWALEC	88.03	Electric supply-Toilet
22/03/2021	United Civil Supplies	305.34	Depot power supplies
		51905.66	



7 Hodder Close, Chandlers Ford, Hants, SO53 4QD.
Tel: 07762 780605 Email: Tim.Light1@hotmail.co.uk

1 April, 2021

**The Town Clerk
Woodley Town Council
The Oakwood Centre,
Headley Road, Woodley,
Berkshire,
RG5 4JZ**

Dear Deborah

Second Interim Internal Audit Report

Woodley Town Council – September 2020 – February 2021

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended) require all Town and Parish Councils to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of their risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance. We confirm that we are independent of the Council.

The internal audit work to be carried out has been planned to enable us to give our opinion on the control objectives set out in the Annual Internal Auditor’s Report on the 2020-21 Annual Governance and Accountability Annual Return (AGAR).

We have complied with the legal requirements and proper practices set out in:

- ‘Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners’ Guide (England)’ 2020
- The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended).

Background

A first interim internal audit review was carried out on Monday 28 September 2020. An interim report from this review highlighted some good practice points and matters to be brought to the attention of the Council.

This second review has checked that the good practice points continue to be used by the Council. This audit will also check if the recommendations and matters brought to the attention of Council have been implemented, noted or actioned.

Consultations have continued with the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Finance Officer by video link and telephone conference calls who have provided back up information from the RBS Omega Software to 28 February 2021. This back-up information has been used to check the current governance and financial management position of the Council for the period September 2020 to February 2021.

.....

April 1, 2021

Page 2

Further confirmation has been obtained of good practice and compliance with the Transparency Code Regulation 2015 from the Council's website.

The Town Clerk and her staff should be congratulated that the Council continues to retain full functionality throughout the Covid19 pandemic although the Council Offices remain closed to the public following national lockdown Government guidelines.

This second interim audit review was agreed with the Town Clerk to be carried out remotely on Monday 08 March 2021.

We continue to note that the Town Clerk has obtained wet signatures from the Deputy Mayor of Minutes of Council meetings to confirm their accuracy and to provide the evidence of the approval of decisions taken by the Council.

Payment approval continues to be obtained and signed payment schedules which are held with the Invoices to provide evidence of payment approval by Councillors. This confirms the authorisation of payments made to creditors and suppliers during the pandemic period.

We have noted that the introduction of the Urgency Committee which met monthly up to November 2020. This Committee reviewed and assessed the Council's financial position for 2020/21. It is our opinion that their contribution was a valuable input to the considerations of Council through the continuing pandemic period.

It has been particularly important to ensure that the financial health of the Council is maintained as the loss of income has needed to be matched with the continuation of providing business as usual wherever possible.

It is further noted that the Council's loss of income has been offset by payments of Covid 19 grants from Wokingham Borough Council and the Job Retention Scheme. It is also noted that the Oakwood Centre has become a vaccination centre for the delivery Covid 19 vaccinations which will attract further funding for the Council.

It is our opinion that extensive due diligence has been carried out by the Town Clerk which has provided the Council with sufficient information for them to consider its budget and Precept setting for 2021/2022.

As financial decisions made by Council in February 2021 affect the financial health of the Council until March 2022 and changes to the Wokingham Borough Council tax base for 2021/2022 have an effect on the Council's ability to sustain its current level of service provision, it is pleasing to note that the Precept level was increased for 2021/2022.

The Council should assess its potential risks if the current Covid 19 pandemic continues into 2021/2022. ***(Audit Note: We recommend that the risk assessment is updated to show how it will continue to deliver its services in 2021/2022).***

Limited use of the Woodford Park Leisure Centre facilities was possible from September 2020, but this was only short term as the current lockdown Government Guidelines prohibited further use.

The Council continue to furlough Leisure Centre, and Oakwood Centre staff and it is noted that the Council have successfully used the Government's Job Retention Scheme which allowed staff to be furloughed where all services cannot be offered, particularly whilst the Leisure Centre remains closed. Some staff will return to work from May 2021 as the Leisure Centre is able to use outdoor facilities.

Longer term Investments continue to remain stable although the Town Clerk did approach the Public Work Loan Board to defer repayments on the Oakwood Centre, but this was withdrawn by the Council in January 2021 as the budget position and Precept setting for 2021/2022 became clearer.

We note that the Council staff who normally work out of the Oakwood Centre have been working remotely. There is some flexibility whereby staff will come into the Office for certain task and functions that cannot be delivered from home following the social distancing guidelines set out by the Government.

Internal audit checks

We have undertaken a series of audit tests on the Council's financial records, vouchers, documents, Minutes, policies, procedures, and insurance documentation to ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council's internal control framework. This internal audit report is based on the audit testing carried out at this review.

During this review we checked the following:

- Minutes of Council and Committee Meetings
- Policies and Procedures
- Bank and cash
- Investments
- Budgetary Management
- Income and expenditure
- VAT claims
- Covid 19 arrangements
- Budget 2020/2021 and 2021/2022
- Transparency of the Council website

Findings

Details of good practice noted, our recommendations and other matters to be brought to the Council's attention are set out below.

Good practice

- The Council continues to maintain its books and records on RBS Omega Software.
- Staff remain aware of the requirements of GDPR
- The Council is registered with the ICO.
- Details of total payments authorised at meetings are recorded in the Minutes.
- All income records including cash and cheque transactions are appropriate and recorded correctly.
- All expenditure items could be traced and are recorded correctly in the financial ledger.
- All records continue to be up to date and easy to follow.
- The Council take an active scrutiny role.
- The budgeting process is detailed, thorough and monitored throughout the year.
- Bank reconciliations are carried out promptly each month and were accurate.
- VAT claims continue to be submitted to HMRC on a regular basis.
- The Council is using Furlough payments from HMRC to offset Employee costs.
- Sales Invoices are raised when appropriate to record income due to the Council.
- The Council have considered and Minuted the risks associated with Covid 19
- The Council continue to comply with the Transparency Code Regulation 2015
- The Accessibility Statement is displayed on the Council website.

Recommendations

- There are no formal recommendations from this second interim internal audit review

Other matters of note brought to the Council's attention

- The Council have displayed evidence of the posting date for the Exercise of Public Rights in 2020 so we are able to answer "Yes" to Objective M on the Internal Audit Report (AGAR) for 2020/2021.
- All new equipment will be updated on the Asset Register as at 31 March 2021 to ensure that the Internal Control Objective H can be ticked "Yes" on the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/2021 to confirm that all items have been recorded and accounted for during the financial year.

Conclusion

Based on the tests we have carried out at this interim internal audit review, in our view, the internal control procedures in operation are appropriate to meet the needs of Woodley Town Council.

Next visit

The next internal audit visit has been arranged for **Wednesday 2 June 2021**.

At this visit detailed checks will be carried out on:

- Minutes of Council Meetings
- Bank and cash
- Investments
- Income and expenditure
- VAT claims
- Asset Register
- End of Year Procedures

Next Steps

This report should be noted and circulated to the next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Tim Light FMAAT and Paul Reynolds FMAAT
Internal auditors

Woodley Town Council

OAKWOOD CENTRE UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK

Purpose of Report

To advise Members of current operational matters relating to the Oakwood Centre.

Oakwood Centre Update

Re-opening

The Centre remains closed to the public at present, including the café. The café operator is intending to reopen when restrictions permit customers to site inside (expected to be 17 May). The Centre will open to the public from that date to provide toilets and we will reopen the office reception as restrictions are lifted and staff return to working from the offices.

At present office based staff continue to work from home where possible, in line with the current guidance. Numbers visiting and working from the offices are kept to an absolute minimum to ensure social distancing and minimise potential for virus transmission.

Vaccinations

Vaccination sessions have been taking place weekly in the centre and these have been running very smoothly. Sessions will continue for the foreseeable future on an ad-hoc basis as the practices receive vaccines.

Blood Donation

Blood donation sessions are continuing in the centre while observing the covid-safe rules.

Returning Bookings

Some bookings are now returning to the Centre as permitted under the revised guidance and restrictions. Czech School, Weight Watchers and the toddler groups in the halls have now resumed. Covid risk assessments are required from each hirer in order to establish that they have appropriate procedures in place for their specific activities - in accordance with the prevailing restrictions and guidance. We are now receiving enquiries for social functions and theatre bookings for July onwards.

Recommendations:

- ◆ **That Members note the information contained in the report.**

Woodley Town Council

Report of a meeting of the Town Electors Task and Finish Working Party on Thursday 11 March 2021 at 6pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Present: Councillors: S. Brindley, J. Anderson, R. Skegg

Officers present: Deborah Mander –Town Clerk, Kevin Murray - Deputy Town Clerk

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Brindley was appointed Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members agreed the proposed Terms of Reference and it was

RESOLVED:

- ◆ **that these would be presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.**

TOWN ELECTORS MEETING

After some discussion about the format of the Town Electors meeting in the past, which usually consisted of reports from the three main Council Committee Chairmen, it was agreed that the Town Electors meeting should focus on the work that groups and residents in Woodley had carried out to help people in need in our town over the past year of the pandemic. All agreed that there had been an exceptional response and this should be recognised at the meeting.

It was agreed that the volunteers and other organisations who had worked to support the community in Woodley be invited to speak at the TE meeting about their work over the past year. The meeting also agreed that there should be a focus on how the town can continue to support residents who may continue to need help as we hopefully come through the pandemic - and also what the Town's residents would like to see as we recover from the impact of the last year.

It was agreed that considerable work should be undertaken to involve the Town's residents with ideas and plans for going forwards and also, to attract more diverse groups of people who may never have heard of, or attended, a Town Electors' meeting. The meeting agreed that the Town Council should support the great community spirit in the Town.

The Working Party members believed that it would be important for the meeting to be non party political, with an emphasis on engaging residents to have a discussion with the Council about how we can build on the support that was provided over the last year - and also how we can celebrate this going forward.

The draft plan for a meeting of the Town Electors on 25 May 2021 was proposed:

- Welcome and introduction from the Mayor
- Reflection over the past year - contributions from Citizens Advice, Readibus, Link Visiting Scheme, Keep Mobile, Woodley Food Bank and Ronnie Goodberry's volunteer teams (managed by members of this working party)
- Short presentation from Council/Officer about Council's achievements over the past year
- Open forum - questions and suggestions from residents (managed by members of this working party)

The meeting closed at 7.05pm

Report of a meeting of the Town Electors Task and Finish Working Party on Thursday 18 March 2021 at 6pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Present: Councillors: S. Brindley (*Chairman*), J. Anderson, R. Skegg

Officers present: D. Mander –Town Clerk, K. Murray - Deputy Town Clerk,
A. Ransley - Communications Manager

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

TOWN ELECTORS MEETING

Members discussed the government's current stance to not extend the current regulations to allow virtual meetings to continue to take place over the coming months. It was agreed that the working party would propose to the Strategy and Resources Committee that the Town Electors' meeting take place virtually on 25 May 2021, as planned. Otherwise, the only way such a meeting could take place would be face to face and in that situation members of the public would not be permitted to attend in line with Covid guidelines.

Members thanked the Communications Manager for producing a publicity document about the Town Electors' meeting and it was agreed that this be publicised once plans were agreed for the holding of the Town Electors' meeting.

The format would be as set out in the minutes of the working party meeting held on 11 March 2021, with timings added for speakers and questions. Members agreed that the Town Clerk provide information about the Council's activities over the past year and provide information on its plans in 2021/22. The meeting would end with questions from members of the public on matters relating to the town.

Councillor Skegg agreed to contact members of the Labour Group to outline the plans and format for the Town Electors' meeting, given that no Labour councillors were represented on the working party. It was also agreed that the Town Centre Manager be asked to attend the meeting to respond to questions regarding the town centre.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

- ◆ that the Strategy and Resources Committee approve the holding of a virtual Town Electors' meeting on 25 May 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.00pm

Woodley Town Council

Report of a meeting of the Town Electors Task and Finish Working Party on Thursday 15 April 2021 at 6pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Present: Councillors: S. Brindley (*Chairman*), J. Anderson, R. Skegg

Officers present: D. Mander –Town Clerk, K. Murray - Deputy Town Clerk,
A. Ransley - Communications Manager

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MARCH 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

TOWN ELECTORS MEETING

The format of the meeting was confirmed:

Mayor to open the Town Electors' meeting - will welcome residents and explain the format of the meeting. The strapline for the event will be "Town Electors - Your Town - Your Say"

The order of presentations will be as follows:

1. Citizens Advice Wokingham - Jake Morrison, Chief Executive
2. ReadiBus - Peter Absolon, General Manager
3. The Link Visiting Scheme and the Friendship Alliance - Marjie Walker and Jayne Streak
4. Woodley Foodbank and the Covid-19 Facebook Group - Richard Davies

The Communications Manager will provide a briefing document for all the speakers, giving the timings for their presentations and letting them know they can use Powerpoint, if they wish to. Presentations and Powerpoint (if to be used) should be provided to the Communications Manager by 14 May. A member of the Town Electors T & F Working Party will manage the timings of the presentations.

The Town Clerk will then provide a brief account of the Council's work over the past year and the arrangements that were put in place to be able to operate remotely - as well as other matters and some information about plans and projects for 2021/22.

The meeting will then invite residents to pose questions relating to the Town Council and the Town of Woodley. This will be facilitated by Cllr Anderson.

It was agreed that in publicising the meeting the Communications Manager would invite questions by email before the meeting. During the discussion on this it was agreed that any questions relating to Wokingham BC services would be passed to the Wokingham Direct team to respond to. Questions by email received before the meeting that relate to Town Council services would be responded to at the meeting. Cllr Anderson will also invite questions from the residents attending the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

- ◆ **That Members approve the proposed arrangements for the Town Electors' meeting on 25 May 2021.**

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

**Minutes of the meeting of the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative Committee
held on 20 January 2021 at 6pm – remotely via Zoom**

PRESENT

B Fennelly	Town Centre Manager	S Boyt	WBC Councillor
M Holmes	Chairman & Woodley Resident	J Palterman	Saturday Market Manager
S Frasinski	Vice Chairman & Woodley Resident	C Lawley	Woodley Resident
CLlr K Baker	WTC & WBC Councillor	P Birt	Woodley Resident
CLlr B Rowland	WTC Councillor	M Millard	Woodley Resident
G Cranford	WBC Economic Development Officer	I Hills	Woodley Resident
CLlr B Soane	WBC & WTC Councillor	M Risby	Woodley Resident
CLlr J Cheng	WBC & WTC Councillor	H Beilby	WTC Admin Officer
CLlr A Croy	WBC & B & W Councillor / NAG		

1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

MH welcomed all.

Apologies were received from S. Flower

2 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7th October 2020

CL congratulated BF on the Christmas carol concert.

Questions through the Chair

BT 'phone box in the town centre – There has been no response from WBC with regards to the future status of this 'phone box.

BF to contact WBC to ascertain whether a decision has been made yet.

Defibrillator - BF to clarify the situation with the Woodley Lions Club and Kevin Murray (WTC) with regards to replacing its batteries if required.

Minutes were approved.

3 FINANCIAL UPDATE BUDGET MONITOR

BF presented his financial update and budget monitor.

MH – Financial report to be amended, second paragraph from the end, £3,000 should read £30,000.

KB advised that confirmation as to whether WTC would cover any losses would be subject to the full WTC council meeting on 9th February 2021, but pointed out that our reserves would need to be used first as standard practice. However, the WTC £13,000 grant would continue, despite WTC suffering significant losses during the pandemic.

BR felt the presentation of the budget report could be improved and offered to help him with this.

Money to be taken from reserves was agreed by the Committee.

BF – Going forward, hopes a Halloween event can take place in October, but not willing to commit at this time.

Guidance from the Committee, regarding the summer planting in the Town Centre was requested and it was agreed that although an important addition, to leave a decision until as late as possible, when perhaps there may be more clarity around the Covid-19 situation. KB suggested there may be an opportunity to work together with WTC and their grounds staff, which may not be free but likely to be a bit cheaper.

BF is to email Kevin Murray (WTC) concerning this matter.

BS had been asked by the Rotary Club to thank BF for his help and cooperation.

4 TOWN CENTRE MANAGER'S REPORT

BF presented his report.

With regards to the recent application for a 5G mast, in the Chequers Pub car park, it was confirmed that objections had been submitted by both WTC and WTCMI and although it would appear to be going through, we will continue to pursue it.

BF advised the meeting that Woodley's HSBC Bank will be closing on the 18th June 2021.

No decision has been made yet regarding installing seating around the outside of the community garden wall. Many folk are already sitting on the wall and enjoying their drinks!
WTCMI are hoping to promote a local shop scheme, being looked into with WBC, in which shop keepers and traders are able to sign up to and make sales on line.

5 SATURDAY MARKET MANAGERS REPORT

A virtual market for those unable to trade in November was held, and the December markets were good following on from the November lockdown. The January markets were limited once again as they were restricted to essential traders only during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There had been a few complaints, but most folk appreciated that the markets were still running where possible.

Contact is being maintained with the non-essential traders.

Regarding the proposed seating, JP suggested that these may not always be accessible if they are obscured on a Saturday due to the market, but he would work around them as best as possible.

We do have the advantage of plenty of space.

MH thanked Jonathan for all his hard work in these difficult times.

BF agreed that Jonathan has done a great job.

6 POLICE REPORT

No report received.

7 QUESTIONS THROUGH THE CHAIR

None.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MEETING FINISHED AT 19.10

Date of next Management Committee meetings for 2021 at 6pm (on Zoom until further notice).

Wednesday	21 st April 2021
Wednesday	14 th July 2021
Wednesday	20 th October 2021

PROJECTS SCHEDULE 2020/21

Project ID number is identifier only – not indication of priority.

ID	Project update	Approximate Delivery
1	<p>Woodford Park Green Flag Award application and works Green Flag awarded 2018 COMPLETE Green Flag awarded 2019 COMPLETE Green Flag awarded 2020 COMPLETE</p>	COMPLETE
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>Award criteria includes sections on inclusivity, audience development, access, and community involvement and diversity.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>Award criteria includes sections on sustainability, enhancing habitats, wildlife initiatives, tree management, waste management, pesticide use.</i></p>	
2	<p>Construction of new maintenance workshop and welfare building, concreting of yard / install drainage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised plans produced in order to achieve facilities with existing electrical supply to the site - COMPLETE • Planning consent granted - COMPLETE • Modular toilet/shower and storage containers COMPLETE • Surface drainage installation – COMPLETE • Buildings Maintenance workshop space - COMPLETE • Vehicle storage building construction – Almost complete – <i>doors to be installed.</i> • Concreting of yard area – 50% complete <p><i>Timing factors</i> <i>Weather issues for concreting</i> <i>In house works progressing well - to be completed as time allows</i> <i>Delays due to electrical supply issues and changes to working practices due to covid-safe working requirements.</i></p>	May 2021
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>Building will be accessible and compliant with DDA regulations.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>Energy consumption: Solar energy and air source heat pumps being investigated. Reduced energy requirements with new plan.</i> <i>Building to be insulated in accordance with current regulations.</i> <i>Electric vehicle charging point considered but not viable at this time due to limited electrical supply to the site.</i> <i>Contractors to have appropriate environmental policy and procedures.</i> <i>Rainwater harvesting tanks installed to provide stored water for washing down equipment and watering plants in the park.</i></p>	

<p>3</p>	<p>Install new electrical supply to maintenance yard Loss of power to site due to underground cable fault. Project involves installation of a new, separately metered supply cable from the sub-station near the tennis courts to the site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotes obtained for the installation COMPLETE • Funding request to Council. Report required to Full Council to allocate funding from available CIL funds COMPLETE • In-house work (trenching) COMPLETE • Contractor cable installation COMPLETE <p><i>Timing factors</i> <i>Contractor lead time for final connection</i></p>	<p>May 2021</p>
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>Building will be accessible and compliant with DDA regulations.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>All works will be carried out in accordance with relevant legislation and other requirements. SSE is licenced to carry out electrical installation works.</i></p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Woodford Park lake restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree works COMPLETE. • In house preparatory works COMPLETE. • Contracted dredging works and construction of boardwalk COMPLETE • In house works for access ramp COMPLETE. • Initial marginal planting COMPLETE. • Pathway resurfacing works to be carried out in August/September 2019 (avoiding bird nesting season) COMPLETE. • In house fencing work and hogging path to be completed over winter months. <p><i>Timing factors</i> <i>Bird nesting season</i> <i>Staff capacity</i> <i>Path works delayed due to Coronavirus situation</i></p>	<p>Mar 2021</p>
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>Boardwalk and paths DDA complaint.</i> <i>Trip hazards from tree roots in pathways addressed.</i> <i>Alternative routes available - avoiding steps.</i> <i>Open to the public at all times.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>Improvements to ecosystem & habitat.</i> <i>Some poor condition trees removed as part of project. This should be offset by tree planting elsewhere in the park.</i> <i>Potential for more visitors and related issues e.g. litter – this will be monitored and addressed as required.</i> <i>Contracted work carried out by appropriate contractor with detailed environmental policy and procedures.</i> <i>No works carried out during the bird-nesting season.</i></p>	

<p>5</p>	<p>Woodford Park destination play area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An application for £200,000 from Section 106 developers contributions has been approved. COMPLETE • Initial consultation carried out from April – August 2020. COMPLETE • Tender pack/invitations to be advertised in September 2020. COMPLETE • Tenders received Dec 2020 COMPLETE • Assessment of tenders COMPLETE • Consultation with public/children’s groups/disability groups - UNDERWAY <p><i>Timing factors</i> <i>Project development/consultation/contractor lead times</i> <i>Difficulty in carrying out consultation while under lockdown restrictions</i> <i>Delayed due to Coronavirus situation</i></p>	<p>August 2021</p>
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>All equipment selection, landscaping and design will be carried out with inclusivity and play value as a priority. The design brief will allow for access and use by children with as wide a range of mobility and ability as possible and include areas for natural play, planting and sensory areas. Landscape architect with proven experience in designing high quality, inclusive play spaces will be selected. Full assessment to be carried out in the design stage.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>Design brief will require the design to compliment the surrounding park environment, make use of sustainably sourced materials and have a positive impact on the park environment through planting, bug areas etc.</i></p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Woodford Park Leisure Centre Regeneration Works to convert storeroom into ladies toilets COMPLETE. Works to create new reception area and back office COMPLETE. Re-flooring of entrance area and corridors COMPLETE.</p> <p>Next stages; Improvements to the rear of the building and patio area Upgrade of electrical system / building rewire subject to available funding.</p> <p><i>Timing factors</i> <i>Staff capacity</i> <i>Minimising impact on activities and operation of the Centre</i> <i>Agreement on project elements and funding</i> <i>Delayed due to Coronavirus situation</i> <i>Availability of funding</i></p>	<p>TBC</p>
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>Building to be accessible and compliant with DDA regulations.</i> <i>Toilets also compliant with DDA and building regulations.</i> <i>Portable audio loop at reception.</i> <i>Signage to be high contrast for visually impaired.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>Energy efficient LED lighting installed in refurbished areas. Programme of replacement of old lighting stock with LED over coming months.</i> <i>All works to consider reduction in waste and energy consumption.</i></p>	

<p>7</p>	<p>Oakwood Centre roof repairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional surveys have been carried out and a number of issues identified as needing repair or further investigation. Costings for remedial works being developed with specialist building envelope contractor. Specialist contractor to be engaged to produce specification or works, carry out tendering and oversee implementation. In house repair works to address as many issues as possible and delay more significant and expensive works for 3 – 5 years. <p><i>Timing factors</i> <i>Discussions with contractor regarding extent and detail of works</i> <i>Potentially phased work</i> <i>Tendering process</i> <i>Contractor lead times</i> <i>Availability of funding. Current financial situation prohibits full remedial works.</i></p>	<p>April 2021</p>
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>No changes to access or building use.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>Design spec to consider energy saving opportunities.</i> <i>Contractors to have appropriate environmental policy and procedures.</i> <i>Include rainwater harvesting in design spec where possible.</i></p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Town Centre Garden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting options considered by Leisure Services Committee – Sept 2020 Consultation carried out on uses/planting options Offers of financial and volunteer support received. Full Council approval of Section 106 finding from available monies once scheme agreed. Seating to be considered and consultation carried out to ensure inclusivity and appropriateness for the site. Leisure Services Committee 17 Nov 2020 approved basic planting schedule <p><i>Timing Factors</i> <i>Tree works to be carried out by WBC prior to planting</i> <i>Planting / establishment of planting scheme</i></p>	<p>Sept 2021</p>
	<p>Equality Impacts <i>Seating will be DDA compliant – consultation with disability groups to be carried out as part of project.</i> <i>Works have addressed issues of uneven paving causing problems – particularly for older people and those with vision impairment.</i> <i>Opportunity for planting to provide sensory elements.</i> <i>Access to the garden for volunteers carrying out works to be considered and addressed as required going forwards – access at present over top of wall only.</i></p>	
	<p>Environmental Impacts <i>WBC Tree Officer will assess any works required to trees.</i> <i>Opportunities for planting to encourage pollinators.</i> <i>Planting selection to consider minimising watering requirement.</i></p>	

Woodley Town Council

Community Grants

The Council considers the award of Community Grants twice a year, in April and November. The guidelines to qualify for a grant are attached. The total budget available for awards in 2021/22 is £4,000. A second round of award applications will be considered in November 2021.

The committee is asked to consider the following grant applications:

Organisation	Usual source of funding	Amount requested	Members / Staff / Volunteers	Purpose grant required	Additional information
First Days Children's Charity (approximately 250 beneficiaries per month, 7% from Woodley – this specific project is directed at Woodley residents)	Fundraising (from individuals, grants and trusts)	£250	13 paid staff 40 volunteers	To fund the set up costs for a new school uniform 'hub' being set up in Woodley to help children across the local community access items they need for school. Funding will go towards items to ensure Covid compliance (hand gel / masks / social distancing signage), marketing materials (signage, leaflets and posts), storage boxes and hangers, and volunteer expenses.	First Days support children living in poverty across Berkshire and beyond. From 14 April, First Days will be running a school uniform 'hub' for 2 hours each Wednesday afternoon at Woodford Park Leisure Centre - the Town Council is providing this space free of charge. To launch the hub, First Days have held 4 summer uniform events across 4 Woodley Primary Schools over the Easter holidays, through which they supported over 80 children. The hub will particularly focus on providing uniform for those transitioning from Year 6 (Primary) to Year 7 (Secondary).
Friends of Woodford Park (20 members, 95% of park users from Woodley)	Sale of products (duck feed / greetings cards), donations.	£250	20 volunteers No paid staff	To purchase plants for the annual planting of the beds in the Memorial Ground.	The Friends of Woodford Park work with the Council to make Woodford Park and the Memorial Recreation Ground an area that the people of Woodley can be proud of. The group hear a tremendous amount of feedback from members of the public thanking them for providing an attractive feature in the park all year round.

<p>Me2 Club <i>(115 child members, 31 from Woodley)</i></p>	<p>Local and national Trusts / Foundations, community fundraising events, corporate partnerships, Town / Parish Councils.</p>	<p>£250</p>	<p>5 paid staff 121 volunteers</p>	<p>To recruit and screen 5 new volunteers within Woodley who can be matched with 5 Woodley children waiting for support from the charity. In order to recruit volunteers, staff give regular talks at local schools, advertise using social media, and attend local community events.</p>	<p>The charity works to address the challenges of isolation and exclusion of children and young people with wide ranging additional needs and disabilities, regardless of a diagnosis, by enabling them to attend a weekly mainstream leisure activity of their choosing. The charity recruits, trains and supports volunteers who are then carefully matched to a child requiring dedicated help. The work also provides family members with regular weekly respite.</p>
<p>Promise Inclusion Ltd (Formerly Mencap for Wokingham and Bracknell) <i>(1000 members from 280 families, 12% from Woodley – 31 families)</i></p>	<p>Local Authority grants, Trusts and Foundations, Fundraising Club fees and donations.</p>	<p>£250</p>	<p>23 paid staff 60 volunteers</p>	<p>To help towards the costs of running a Youth Group at Addington School for young people with learning disabilities / autism.</p>	<p>The group meets every Wednesday evening during term time, enjoying a range of activities from sports to meals out. Young people get an opportunity to meet with friends in a safe, supportive environment, trying out new things and refining hobbies and interests. Playworkers provide a unique supportive ear for the young people, offering emotional support and guidance in a way that a parent or teacher may not be able to. These sessions also provide family members with regular respite.</p>
<p>South Lake Primary School PTFA <i>(600 members, 100% resident in Woodley)</i></p>	<p>School events, grants and donations.</p>	<p>£250</p>	<p>30 volunteers No paid staff</p>	<p>To help towards the costs of purchasing new reading books for students which offer an improved level of diversity in terms of ethnic representation, need and gender, and are more representative of the student population within the school.</p>	<p>South Lake Primary School PTFA exists to support the school by raising funds to deliver projects that cannot be covered by the allocated government funding. Following an audit of the current range of reading books available to children in each classroom, South Lake Primary School identified that the books lack diversity, in terms of ethnic representation, need and gender. The PTFA have been unable to run normal school events due to the pandemic, and have only raised enough funds to refurbish the school playground, so are seeking funding from a variety of sources for this project.</p>

<p>Woodley Festival of Music & Arts (<i>approx. 20% of users from Woodley: approx. 400 users</i>)</p>	<p>Fees from entrants, grants / sponsorship, advertising revenue, on-the-door admissions and programmes.</p>	<p>£250</p>	<p>11 voluntary committee members 40 other volunteers</p>	<p>To help towards the costs of running a virtual, online music and arts festival, providing young people with the opportunity both to perform and to entertain. Professional adjudicators, experts in their respective fields, will provide constructive comments on each performance, and awards will be given based on merit.</p>	<p>The organisation runs an annual music and arts festival, including sections for pianists, instrumentalists, singers and choirs, and speech and drama. This is usually run over a series of 3 weekends, with classes taking place in the Oakwood Centre. This year, due to the pandemic, the festival is being run virtually and is limited to just the instrumental section. Due to Covid there will be no advertising, on-the-door admissions or programme sales revenue.</p>
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<p>Individuals:</p>					
<p>Holly Smith (<i>Ballet</i>)</p>		<p>£100</p>		<p>To buy pointe shoes and ballet shoes for an audition for a funded place at Tring Park School for the Performing Arts.</p>	<p>Holly has been offered a place at Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, and has an audition for a funded place during the summer term. Holly has spent lockdown preparing for her audition and has worn through every pair of dance shoe she owns. Without funding, Holly may not be able to perform to her full potential, and without a funded place Holly will not be able to accept the offer to train at the dance school.</p>

Notes of initial meeting to discuss a new Service Level Agreement to support young people - held on 18 March 2021

The following members of the Community Youth Partnership, Councillors and Officers attended the virtual meeting:

Community Youth Partnership: Paul Cassidy (ARC), Graham Sumbler (Woodley Baptist Church), Steve Outen (Woodford United FC), Trina Farrance (Bulmershe Gym Club), and Councillors Kay Gilder, Jenny Cheng and Martin Doyle (WTC) - apologies were received from Councillor Michael Forrer and Laurie Ann Price.

Councillors: Cllr Keith Baker, Cllr Beth Rowland and Cllr Nada Al-Sanjari
Officers: Deborah Mander - Town Clerk, Kevin Murray - Deputy Town Clerk
Other: Chris Moore, ALC Consultancy Solutions, facilitated the meeting and discussions.

Chris Moore welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the meeting was to explore how to adapt the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) supporting young people in Woodley to be more flexible and responsive to some of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

He informed the meeting that he had spoken with Sam Milligan from Just Around the Corner (JAC), who currently provide the SLA, and with other contacts of his who work in the youth sector.

After initial introductions Chris Moore asked all the attendees to give their views on the impacts of Covid-19 on young people in the areas they are working in:

Cllr Martin Doyle - was very concerned at the £1M taken out of youth provision by Wokingham BC. This has had a tremendous impact on services and young people and was reflected in the facilities available for them. He was keen to see a traditional form of youth facility - a hub staffed by professionals - and was concerned at the lack of facilities available to older young people.

Chris Moore commented that a physical space was pertinent for younger young people - but less attractive to those who were older.

Cllr Doyle said he'd seen no evidence that a central hub was more pertinent to younger rather than older young people and believed that teenagers in particular need protection to not be prayed upon - a controlled hub would achieve this.

Cllr Keith Baker said Cllr Doyle had made a good point in that we're not sure what older teenagers want - it could be a hub. Wokingham BC pulled out of youth centres and Woodley Town Council is the only Town/Parish Council supporting young people through the existing SLA. He said he didn't know of any research that had asked young people what they want.

Cllr Al-Sanjari - had discussed support for young people with her secondary school students – they felt that faith based youth provision has its purposes but doesn't meet everyone's needs. Older teenagers' needs are more complicated now and the challenges are greater, especially mental health which she felt should be a focus. Communal spaces for young people to use and access are key to making a community. Crime rates / county lines issues - Cllr Al-Sanjari is involved in a network looking at tackling this in ethnic minority groups. She wanted to get away from youth work being a reaction, rather than a response to a problem.

Cllr Kay Gilder – who, along with Cllr Rowland, is one of the longest serving members on the committee said that originally the town had 3 youth clubs and these were good for some young people. However, there are young people who don't want to go to clubs and this led to the

Council funding an outreach youth worker - which became JAC. When youth centres closed, the Churches joined forces and provided facilities for younger people to meet up. Cllr Gilder believed that the work that JAC and the churches had done filled a space and expressed her appreciation for their work with young people.

Chris Moore then invited comments on trends and observations:

Cllr Beth Rowland - who worked in secondary education, expressed concerns for young people - knife crime and drugs in Woodley in particular. There is a huge availability of drugs on the streets and young people know where to get these. General breakdown of family life is also a concern and has been affected by the pandemic. How we find out what is worrying young people is important. Schools do employ family workers to provide pastoral care and ARC is seeing more young people with new mental health issues returning to school.

Cllr Jenny Cheng - believed we couldn't cure all the ills and that the Council's role was to provide something after school - we need to find out what young people want, which seems to be different for younger and older teenagers.

Trina Farrance - outside the closures of the Gym Club she had encouraged their members to come to the club to meet up with other gym club members and to encourage them to have healthy life styles and good mental health.

Steve Outen - felt we shouldn't lose sight of all the voluntary activities and clubs in Woodley. Woodley Town FC have people allocated to support young people. He also felt that there needed to be a committee, but there needed to be someone to take ownership of the problem to steer the group through and give direction to what we are doing. He agreed that a hub would be a good idea if manned by the right people. He believed we should focus now on mental health problems - this could be advertised through the schools.

Chris Moore then asked the meeting to think about more specific ways of supporting young people; for example, an event in the park to encourage healthy choices, seasonal provision eg events after school, drop-in activities, pop-up in the Oakwood Centre foyer. He referred to the need to be a champion for young people - convincing others of the importance of this work and sustaining it going forward.

Cllr Martin Doyle was looking for the Council to provide accommodation and funding, and suggested that unused space at the Leisure centre could be made habitable - with a group of people providing services - a place of protection, with advice and help. He referred to charities who do this sort of thing - Berkshire Youth, for example, who involve young people in making music and cultural activities.

Paul Cassidy was concerned that when young people are asked what they want by the time it is commissioned young people want something else. Secondary schools have counsellors, and ARC are making sure they have the resources to respond to need. At the moment mental health needs are low but this will change when schools reopened. Activities put on should be fun.

Chris Moore asked if it was feasible and possible to deliver a framework for delivery.

Paul Cassidy believed that whatever is provided should be open to all. He thought that a framework could benefit from influence by young people and it wouldn't be too hard to go into secondary schools to identify what kids may want. He referred to the Parkour/Free running scheme which hadn't materialised and whether this is something that could be included going forward.

Cllr Martin Doyle - referred to professional youth workers who would work with the police and other authorities in the community. There was stuff going on that needed to be dealt with - this needed an active relationship with others, including the police - this was an important part of youth work.

Cllr Keith Baker - said he didn't believe the Town Council could solve all the problems - it couldn't employ 2 or 3 youth workers because there weren't the funds to do so. He wondered whether, rather than having an SLA with one organisation, we should look at providing annual grants for different youth work projects - eg mental health, sports etc. Grants could be allocated as dynamics change in terms of need.

Cllr Nada Al-Sanjari - would prefer to support a hub, rather than a SLA - a venue with qualified professionals - but also said she wouldn't, at this point, rule anything out.

Graham Sumbler - if the plan was to make allocations for one year only there would be an issue in terms of young people's reactions - young people don't really know what they want. It would be important for the CYP to find out what groups do and what needs they can see in the community - in order to join with and target young people and services. He explained that as a youth worker in a church he has the time and skills to go into other settings, eg schools - the kids know they are there to help and listen, and to get to know you.

Chris Moore raised the issue of the cost of a permanent hub and that these had largely been closed because of cost.

Cllr Martin Doyle - would not dismiss Cllr Baker's idea out of hand. He was sensitive about how councils like Woodley TC have been put in a position to fund things the government usually funded. Our council is trying to produce something robust and real. He didn't agree with grant funding for different groups and was concerned that £27K annually would not be enough, although it was before. He suggested that the tender be put to appropriate parties to see what they want to offer to provide to the Council.

Chris Moore suggested that some of these suggestions are mutually exclusive and that something tangible is easier to raise funds for.

Cllr Keith Baker - clarified that his suggestion regarding grants could work as there is already the structure there, and reasonable sums could allow organisations to expand and provide facilities.

Cllr Jenny Cheng - said she agreed with many of the comments made so far, however, one size didn't fit all and the CYP needed to find out what young people want.

Paul Cassidy - commented that he wouldn't be pleased if this reduced the existing grant funding to ARC.

There was an exchange of views about the lack of success on some matters relating to the work of the CYP.

Trina Farrance - said she liked the grants idea but she believed that Woodley should have a place for young people to go - not necessarily a youth club - could be a not for profit cafe.

Cllr Nada Al-Sanjari said she would like to see not for profit music workshops, a mobile studio, and that the money would go to a hub arrangement.

At this point it was acknowledged that there was not a clear strategy going forward on developing the terms of the SLA. Cllr Keith Baker suggested that a 5 year strategy should be considered.

It was noted that the current SLA ended on 31 March 2021 - and it was confirmed that JAC would still be conducting outreach work and would liaise with the Town Council on any matters of concern.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk, with the facilitator's help, frame a process so that all can engage and be involved in the strategy for the terms of the SLA 2021.

PROPOSAL: Developing a Youth Strategy and Service Level Agreement for Woodley Town Council

PREPARED FOR: Deborah Mander, Town Clerk, Woodley Town Council

BY: Chris Moore, ACL Consultancy Solutions Ltd

DATE: April 7 2021

1. Context

It became clear at a facilitated virtual meeting and discussion on March 18th this year that a youth strategy could support Council decision-making in the context of youth provision funded by Woodley Town Council ('WTC') through a Service Level Agreement. The current situation sees delivery by Just Around the Corner ('JAC') on behalf of WTC and the Community Youth Partnership ('CYP'). The purpose of the recent discussion was to explore how the existing Service Level Agreement for supporting young people in Woodley could be made more flexible and responsive to some of the challenges posed by youth service delivery, and in a time of Covid-19.

Principal Local Authorities have a statutory duty to improve young people's wellbeing and to provide specific additional and early help. Neither Parish nor Town Councils have a comparable statutory duty, but some (such as Woodley Town Council) choose to provide a level of support for their young people (£27k for 2021-2022) and the Council now wishes this to be continued, albeit with some change. Towards the end of the meeting, it was agreed that the creation of a new youth strategy was important to support decision-making. The Town Clerk and ACL said they would prepare a short proposal for consideration (this document).

2. Objectives

This work should aim to

- Agree with the Town Clerk the calendar for development and implementation of the strategy, beginning with a revised SLA
- Summarise recent suggestions on the shaping of WTC's future youth provision
- Assess each suggestion independently; summarise the assessments and make recommendations; present this to the CYP/ WTC
- Taking on board CYP and WTC views, incorporate the recommendations within a brief youth strategy document for 2021-2026
- Develop a new SLA as appropriate along with a process framework for its award

3. Proposal

Our outline proposal is therefore as follows

Month (2021)	Activity	ACL Days*
May	Project planning (regarding the strategy; the temporary arrangement; the calendar for, and description of planned outputs)	1
May	Assess each youth service proposal/idea independently; summarise the assessments and make recommendations in a brief document.	2

Month (2021)	Activity	ACL Days*
May/ June	Present recommendations to the CYP and WTC	1
June	Taking on board any further CYP/ WTC feedback, develop the recommendations into a coherent and cohesive (but brief) youth strategy document for 2021-2026; develop a draft SLA and process for award	3
June	Offer the draft strategy and SLA documentation for comment	0.25
June/ July	Finalise the strategy and SLA documents	0.75
July	Final presentation to the CYP and WTC	1
	TOTAL DAYS	9

* Some of these days will need to be worked directly with the Town Clerk

4. Costs and Delivery

We appreciate that the Town Council is under similar constraints to local authorities nationwide, and we are therefore happy to offer a daily rate for this work that has increased only modestly since 2007. Our estimate for this work will therefore be 9 days at £650 per day. VAT will be applicable and travel expenses are now included within our daily rates. The total cost we anticipate is therefore £5,850 plus VAT at the current rate.

We can confirm our current availability to undertake the work.

5. About ACL

ACL is often asked to undertake work of this nature. Youth provision regularly features in the strategies and plans we are asked to help develop. We are proud that ACL has been well-known to the Town Council for many years now, in a productive and positive relationship that has always attracted appreciative comment from Officers and Members alike. For this reason, we do not present full credentials here, but are very happy to do so if required.

6. Contact Details

If you would like to discuss this outline proposal further, or if you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Chris Moore MA, Managing Director and Lead Consultant
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1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
 2. Regional and local government (<https://www.gov.uk/regional-and-local-government>)
 3. Local government (<https://www.gov.uk/regional-and-local-government/local-government>)
 4. Local authority remote meetings: call for evidence (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence>)
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>)

Open consultation

Local authority remote meetings: call for evidence

Published 25 March 2021

Contents

Scope of the consultation

Purpose of this call for evidence

Terminology

Background

Questions

About this consultation

Personal data

Print this page



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Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation: This call for evidence seeks views on the use of the current arrangements which have provided express provision for local authorities to hold meetings remotely or in a hybrid format during the coronavirus pandemic.

Scope of this consultation: This call for evidence seeks to understand the experience of local authorities in the whole of the UK regarding remote meetings. This includes authorities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Scottish authorities had express provision to meet remotely prior to the pandemic, and this call for evidence seeks to understand their experience of remote meetings since their arrangements came into force.

For England, Wales and Northern Ireland, this call for evidence refers to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents>) (and the equivalent regulations for Wales and Northern Ireland) under powers granted by section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020. The regulations come into force on 4 April 2020 and apply to meetings taking place before 7 May 2021.

In respect of these regulations, 'local authority' means:

- a county council
- a district council
- a London borough council
- the Common Council of the City of London
- the Greater London Authority
- the Council of the Isles of Scilly
- a parish council
- a joint board continued in being by virtue of section 263(1) of the 1972 Act
- a port health authority constituted under section 2 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- an authority established under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985
- a joint authority established under Part 4 of the Local Government Act 1985
- a joint committee constituted to be a local planning authority under section 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- a fire and rescue authority constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies, or created by an order under section 4A of that Act
- a National Park authority established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995
- the Broads Authority established by section 1 of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988

- a conservation board established under section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- a Mayoral development corporation established under section 198 of the Localism Act 2011
- an urban development corporation established under section 135 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980
- a parish meeting constituted under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1972
- Transport for London
- Police and crime panels

Geographical scope: This call for evidence seeks to understand the experience of local authorities in the whole of the UK regarding remote meetings. This includes authorities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act applies to local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. After it came into force, each of these administrations used the powers within section 78 to introduce regulations to make express provision for their local authorities to meet remotely before 7 May.

The Welsh Government has since passed the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which comes into force on 1 May and makes express provision for Welsh local authorities to meet remotely.

Scottish local authorities had express provision to meet remotely prior to the pandemic.

If any changes to legislation are made as a result of this call for evidence, they would apply to England only.

Impact assessment: If any policy changes are made following this call for evidence they will be subject to appropriate assessment. No impact assessment has been conducted at this time.

Basic Information

Body/bodies responsible for the consultation: The Local Government Stewardship Division in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is responsible for conducting this call for evidence.

Duration: This call for evidence will last for 12 weeks from 25 March 2021.

Enquiries: For any enquiries about this call for evidence please contact:
Megan.McKibbin@communities.gov.uk.

How to respond: You can only respond to this call for evidence through our online consultation platform, Citizen Space (<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-stewardship/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence>).

Purpose of this call for evidence

The government would like to gather evidence about the use of the current arrangements for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid format, as set out in the Local Authorities and Police and

Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2020/392/contents>) (and the equivalent regulations for Wales and Northern Ireland) under powers granted by section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

These regulations came into force on 4 April 2020 and apply to meetings taking place before 7 May 2021. Local authorities in Scotland had express provision to meet remotely prior to the pandemic, and we are also interested to understand their experience of remote meetings since their arrangements came into force.

The powers in section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 were brought in specifically to make express provision for local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to deal with the challenges of holding physical meetings during the coronavirus pandemic. They have helped local authorities to redeploy resources to deal with the pandemic and ensure that essential business continues whilst protecting the health and safety of their members, officers and the public.

We are aware that experience of remote meetings has been varied, and that while the experience of managing and participating in remote meetings has grown considerably during the period since the remote meetings regulations came into force, there have been examples of the difficulties this format has posed for some authorities.

We have received representations from individual local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for permanent express provision for remote meetings. The government would like to hear from interested parties about the pros and cons of making such arrangements permanent in England and the use of the arrangements to date.

We are particularly interested to receive any quantitative data that can be included to substantiate the responses you make.

Terminology

Throughout this call for evidence the phrases ‘remote meetings’ and ‘remote meetings arrangements’ will be used interchangeably to refer to the express provisions for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid format, as set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2020/392/contents>) (and the equivalent regulations for Wales and Northern Ireland) under powers granted by section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

As Scottish authorities had express provision to meet remotely prior to the pandemic, ‘remote meetings’ and ‘remote meetings arrangements’ refers to the equivalent Scottish legislation.

The regulations make express provisions for local authorities to hold meetings remotely, for example through typical digital conference software (e.g. Zoom, Skype, Teams) or telephone conference calls. However, they do not require them to be held remotely or even in a single format. This means, for example, that local authorities can hold ‘hybrid’ meetings (where some members attend virtually and other members attend in person) and they are also still able to hold fully ‘in-person’ physical meetings.

You can therefore assume that any reference to ‘remote meetings’ or ‘remote meetings arrangements’ also refers to hybrid meetings.

The term ‘member’ will be used to refer to any elected local authority members covered by the regulations above (and the equivalent legislation for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland). This includes councillors, directly elected mayors, and police and crime commissioners, and any other relevant local authority members as defined by the legislation.

Background

While local authorities in Scotland had express provision to meet remotely prior to the coronavirus pandemic, there was no express provision for remote meetings for local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 2017, the government consulted on proposals to allow joint committees and combined authorities to hold meetings by video conference (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/allowing-joint-committees-and-combined-authorities-to-hold-meetings-by-video-conference>), given the long distances that individual councillors often need to travel in order to attend these meetings.

The government concluded that, with appropriate safeguards to maintain town hall transparency, there are clear benefits to giving local authorities operating joint committees and combined authorities the ability to hold formal meetings by video conference.

These safeguards included not extending the provisions to cover other types of councils, and that remote access should only be permissible from sites suitable for holding a meeting with public access (i.e. from a town hall, not from private dwellings), as there was a risk of undermining visible democratic scrutiny and public debate. However, the government also noted views that remote meetings would also benefit other councils, particularly large rural authorities, and committed to further engage with the sector to understand these views.

Since regulations came into force following the introduction of the Coronavirus Act 2020, express provision was made for local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to hold meetings before 7 May 2021 remotely (such as through digital conferencing software or telephone conference) so that they can protect their members and comply with public health guidance.

As local authorities have now had extensive experience of conducting remote meetings over the past year, this call for evidence is an opportunity to understand these experiences and inform a decision about whether to make these arrangements permanent. Any permanent change would require primary legislation, and such passage would depend on agreement of Parliament and the timetabling and pressures of Parliamentary business.

Questions

The government would like to gather evidence about the use of the arrangements that make express provision for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid format during the coronavirus pandemic, including the arrangements that existed for Scottish Authorities prior to the pandemic.

Q1. Generally speaking, how well do you feel the current remote meetings arrangements work?

- Very Well
- Well
- Neither well nor poorly

- Poorly
- Very Poorly
- Unsure

While the powers in section 78 of the Coronavirus Act were brought in specifically to help local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland deal with the challenges of holding meetings during the coronavirus pandemic, the government would also like to hear from interested parties about the pros and cons of making permanent express provision, in whole or in part, for local authorities in England.

Q2. Generally speaking, do you think local authorities in England should have the express ability to hold at least some meetings remotely on a permanent basis?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Beyond having express provision to avoid face-to-face meetings during the coronavirus pandemic, we are aware of feedback from local authorities about additional benefits of being able to hold remote meetings including, but not limited to, the environmental and cost benefits of reduced travel, increased participation from local residents, and the potential to attract more diverse local authority members. We are keen to obtain representative views on the benefits of remote meetings and would particularly welcome any quantitative evidence to support these views.

Q3. What do you think are some of the benefits of the remote meetings arrangements? Please select all that apply.

- More accessible for local authority members
- Reduction in travel time for councillors
- Meetings more easily accessed by local residents
- Greater transparency for local authority meetings
- Documents (e.g. minutes, agendas, supporting papers) are more accessible to local residents and others online
- Easier to chair meetings in an orderly fashion
- A virtual format promotes greater equality in speaking time during meetings
- I do not think there are any benefits to remote meetings
- Other (please specify)

In their representations to us, many local authorities have referenced the cost savings they have achieved through implementing remote meetings, particularly regarding a reduction in travel expenses and accommodation costs.

For example, one upper tier authority has reported that running meetings remotely has enabled them to save in the order of £6,000 per month through reduced travel expenses. We would be interested to receive more quantitative data about the cost savings that have been achieved, including any estimates of the comparative cost of running a remote meeting versus a face-to-face meeting.

Q4. (For local authorities only) Have you seen a reduction in costs since implementing remote meetings in your authority?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Some local authorities have also made reference to the difficulty that some members have had with the remote meeting format, particularly in relation to the difficulties in managing misconduct, the challenges of working with unfamiliar software, and technological issues caused by a poor internet connection. We are keen to obtain representative views on the disadvantages of remote meetings and would particularly welcome any quantitative evidence to support these views.

Q5. What do you think are some of the disadvantages of the remote meetings arrangements, and do you have any suggestions for how they could be mitigated/overcome? Please select all that apply.

- It is harder for members to talk to one another informally
- Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who have a poor-quality internet connection
- Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who are unfamiliar with video conferencing/technology
- There is less opportunity for local residents to speak or ask questions
- Some find it more difficult to read documents online than in a physical format
- Debate is restricted by the remote format
- It is more difficult to provide effective opposition or scrutiny in a remote format
- It is more difficult to chair meetings in an orderly fashion
- Virtual meetings can be more easily dominated by individual speakers
- It might enable democratically elected members to live and perform their duties outside their local area on a permanent basis, therefore detaching them from the communities they serve
- It may create too substantial a division between the way national democracy (e.g. in the House of Commons) and local democracy is conducted

- I do not think there are any disadvantages to remote meetings
- Other (please specify)

The government considers that there are also many advantages of holding meetings face-to-face. For example, physical meetings provide numerous opportunities for local authority members to speak with one another informally and build alliances, as well as to encounter local residents in the flesh and listen to their concerns in person.

Additionally, some members have referenced the vast improvement in the quality of debate when there is a lively atmosphere and they are able to make full use of their oratory skills to persuade and influence others. Some may consider remote meetings stifling and that physical meetings are essential to effective democracy and scrutiny.

Q6. What do you think are some of the main advantages of holding face-to-face meetings, as opposed to remote meetings?

If express provision for remote meetings were made permanent, it might be preferable for the government to constrain the meetings or circumstances in which remote meetings can be held to ensure that effective democracy and scrutiny can still take place.

There are some occasions, for example, where a remote meeting format may be seen as more appropriate, such as for smaller sub-committees, meetings convened at short notice, or for meetings where attendees are drawn from a large geographical area i.e. for some joint committees, combined authorities and large rural authorities. On the other hand, there are occasions where a remote meeting format may be viewed as less appropriate, for example larger meetings involving Full Council or an authority's Annual Meeting.

Q7. If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, for which meetings do you think they should have the option to hold remote meetings?

- For all meetings
- For most meetings with a few exceptions (please specify)
- Only for some meetings (please specify)
- I think local should be able to decide for themselves which meetings they should have the option to meet remotely
- I do not think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings for any meetings
- Unsure

Q8. If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, in which circumstances do you think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings?

- In any circumstances
- Only in extenuating circumstances where a meeting cannot be held face-to-face or some members would be unable to attend (e.g. severe weather events, coronavirus restrictions)
- I think local authorities should be able to decide for themselves which circumstances they should have the option to meet remotely
- I do not think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings under any circumstances
- Other (please specify)
- Unsure

While local authorities have risen magnificently to the challenge of ensuring vital council business continues by conducting meetings remotely during these unprecedented times, there may be concerns that, if the arrangements were to be made permanent, a situation could arise where remote meetings arrangements were used by a ruling party to avoid effective scrutiny or abuse the power in some other way.

Q9. Would you have any concerns if local authorities in England were given the power to decide for themselves which meetings, and in what circumstances, they have the option to hold remote meetings?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q10. If yes, do you have any suggestions for how your concerns could be mitigated/overcome?

In deciding whether and how remote meetings arrangements may be made permanent for local authorities in England, the government needs to ensure that it has due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. In particular, the government would need to avoid unlawfully discriminating (either directly or indirectly) against individuals with a protected characteristic, and also consider whether the arrangements advance equality of opportunity or help to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Many local authorities have spoken of the potential benefits that remote meetings could have for members or potential members with disabilities or young families. However, there are also those for whom remote meetings could pose additional difficulties, for example those with hearing or visual

impairments or those more likely to struggle with the technology.

We are keen to consider views on these aspects of remote meetings and would particularly welcome any quantitative evidence to support views provided.

Q11. In your view, would making express provision for English local authorities to meet remotely particularly benefit or disadvantage any individuals with protected characteristics e.g. those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

About this consultation

This call for evidence document and call for evidence process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the Department is bound by the Freedom of Information Act and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with the law and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. A full privacy notice is included below.

Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

Are you satisfied that this call for evidence has followed the Consultation Principles? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact us via the complaints procedure (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/complaints-procedure>).

Personal data

The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are be entitled to under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Note that this section only refers to your personal data (your name address and anything that could be used to identify you personally) not the content of your response to the call for evidence.

1. The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@communities.gov.uk.

2. Why we are collecting your personal data.

Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the call for evidence process, so that we can contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes. We may also use it to contact you about related matters.

3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data.

The Data Protection Act 2018 states that, as a government department, MHCLG may process personal data as necessary for the effective performance of a task carried out in the public interest. i.e. a call for evidence.

3. With whom we will be sharing your personal data.

We use a third-party platform, Citizen Space, to collect consultation responses. In the first instance, your personal data will be stored on their secure UK-based servers.

4. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.

Your personal data will be held for two years from the closure of the call for evidence.

5. Your rights, e.g. access, rectification, erasure.

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right:

- a. to see what data we have about you
- b. to ask us to stop using your data, but keep it on record
- c. to ask to have all or some of your data deleted or corrected
- d. to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/> (https://ico.org.uk), or telephone 0303 123 1113.

6. Your personal data will not be sent overseas.

7. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making.

8. Your personal data will be stored on a secure government IT system.

Your data will be transferred to our secure government IT system as soon as possible after the consultation has closed, and it will be stored there for the standard two years of retention before it is deleted.

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