

**Minutes of the Meeting of the LICENSING AND PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE
held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 22 November 2023**

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Councillor Peter O'Donovan (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Steve Bridger, Shanice Goldman, Julie Morris, Phil Neale, Kieran Persand
and Clive Woodbridge

In Attendance: Councillor James Lawrence

Officers present: Victoria Potts (Interim Director of Environment, Housing and
Regeneration), Justin Turvey (Interim Head of Place Development), Sue Emmons
(Chief Accountant), Ian Mawer (Planning Policy Manager) and Phoebe Batchelor
(Democratic Services Officer)

48 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Committee received one written statement from a member of the public
which was delivered verbally at the meeting.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in respect of any item of
business to be considered at the meeting were made by Members.

50 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee
held on 26 September 2023 and authorised the Chair to sign them, subject to the
following amendment italicised below;

“Minute 42,

- q) **Upcoming Work on the Local Plan.** A Member of the Committee asked if it
would be possible to get a list of criteria and priorities of the coming work on the
Local Plan over the next few months. The Planning Policy Manager responded to
say that they would question what those would be without unpausing the Local
Plan first. ***A Member of the Committee commented that once the Local Plan
was unpaused it should come back to the Committee where an outline
strategy for the development of the Local plan in the coming months
should be agreed and set.***”

51 DRAFT EPSOM TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

The Committee received a report seeking approval to publish the Draft Epsom Town Centre Masterplan for public consultation for a period of four weeks commencing on the 24 November 2023.

The then emerging Epsom Town Centre Masterplan informed draft allocations SA1 – SA4 detailed in the Draft Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040) that was consulted on between 1 February and 19 March 2023.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Mismatch between dates.** A Member of the Committee raised a concern regarding a mismatch between the consultation dates and the Council dates, and whether the consultation evidence would have the opportunity to feed into the discussions and decisions taking place by Members. The Member continued to ask if it can be ensured that the evidence collecting, and decision timelines can be aligned. The Chair responded to inform the Committee that this is a draft document which the Council are going out to get feedback on and further refine it, as a result of that feedback, as was seen in early 2023 when the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan went out for public consultation. The Chair continued to explain that the Draft Town Centre Masterplan has come about from further consultation with Members and input from the initial consultation and is primarily driven from a place making and planning point of view. The Chair informed the Committee that the Member briefings taking place on site selection and spatial strategy have been coordinated to align with the property side of the Council. The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that the Town Centre Masterplan is a key piece of evidence base that informed the draft Local Plan, that can be further discussed at upcoming Member briefings.
- b) **Spelling Mistakes.** A Member of the Committee raised the spelling mistakes and grammatical errors throughout the Draft Epsom Town Centre Masterplan document and stated that it reflects badly on the Council to have such an important document created that contains errors. Members of the Committee asked the Chair to ensure that all mistakes would be corrected before the document is open to the public consultation. The Chair confirmed that the mistakes would be corrected before the document is published as part of the public consultation.
- c) **Consultation Questions.** A Member of the Committee asked for confirmation that the consultation questions are clear, sensible, and unambiguous. The Chair responded to explain that significant lessons were learned from the last public consultation and Officers have taken into account feedback that was received in order to make improvements and ensure that questions are as unambiguous as possible.
- d) **Density and Height in the Town Centre.** A Member of the Committee raised a concern that the Draft Epsom Town Centre Masterplan document

does not reflect Councillor's comments regarding density and height in the Town Centre. The Chair agreed with the Member and confirmed to the Committee that all evidence will be coordinated. Another Member of the Committee raised that the height limitations included in the Town Centre Masterplan restrict and cut off options for the overall Local Plan. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that the steer David Lock Associates received from Councillors, highlighted the desire for mixed used development and regeneration of sites having regard for local character and sensitivities, such as heritage, coworking opportunities, affordable housing and family homes within the Town Centre and the design of which responds positively to the character and heritage assets. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that David Lock Associates took that feedback away and that is reflected in the proposed opportunity sites within the draft document. The Planning Policy Manager stated that if Member views have changed then there is an opportunity during the upcoming Member briefings to discuss it and respond and a further opportunity through the public consultation.

- e) **Consultation Questions.** A Member of the Committee asked Councillors to be sent the consultation questions before the public consultation goes live. The Chair confirmed that all Members would be provided with the consultation questions.
- f) **Summary Document.** A Member of the Committee asked if the Draft Epsom Town Centre Masterplan document could be shortened or summarised so as to try and ensure people are able to engage with it more effectively. The Member continued to highlight that the brief version of the draft Local Plan that was shared with residents as part of the public consultation in early 2023, allowed many more residents to engage with the subject matter more effectively, and will encourage those outside of Councillors and Lobby groups to respond. The Chair highlighted that a summary document for the draft Local Plan was created as the document in its entirety exceeded 400 pages. The Chair informed the Committee that following the unpause of the Local Plan and associated works, there has not been the time to create a summary document for the draft Town Centre Masterplan.
- g) **Delivery Bikes.** A Member of the Committee raised the issue of proliferation of small delivery bikes along the high street and asked if considerations have been made as to where they can go, since they currently take up large parts of the high street. The Member acknowledged that they are important for the business that they serve but the current situation is a problem. The Member asked if the Committee asked whether it is expected to come up and be dealt with through the consultation process or if not, the Committee could recommend some follow-up work to address this specific issue. The Interim Head of Place Development informed the Committee that the public consultation may draw out people's views on whether the bikes should be prevented or facilitated in certain parts of the Town Centre.

- h) **Majestic wine site.** A Member asked if it was appropriate to have Majestic Wine listed as the 'former tenants' of the site if they are still currently trading, therefore should the work 'former' be removed. The Chair has stated that the reference to the 'former Majestic Wine' is regarding the site that was used by Majestic Wine, not the tenancy or trading of the business.
- i) **Trees.** A Member of the Committee asked if the trees shown throughout the draft document, shown on East Street and the High Street, will be able to be planted, given the issues that have been faced by the Council when it comes to planting more trees in the Town Centre. The Planning Policy Manager responded to inform the Committee that the draft document sets out some high-level illustrative concepts of what could happen on key transport corridors. The Planning Policy Manager agreed that they are ambitious and radical, and Officers are seeking comments on those proposals. The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that some of the tree planting and wider public enhancements could be enabled by reconfiguring the A24, as set out in the draft document, to reduce highway capacity and provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists. The Chair informed the Committee that they are aware of the issues around trying to get street trees in the ground and assures the Committee that the Council will do as much as they can with what they have.
- j) **Summary Clarification.** A Member of the Committee raised a query about agenda item 4 summary, on page 21, and asked for clarification. The Chair clarified issues and informed the Committee that they would ensure the clarity and simplicity of report summaries at Callover Meetings.

Councillor Lawrence made verbal statement to the Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Approve the publication of the Draft Epsom Town Centre Masterplan for public consultation for a period of four weeks to commence on the Friday 24 November 2023 at noon and conclude on Friday 22 December at midnight.**

52 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a project plan that sets out the timetable to produce new or revised Development Plan Documents which will form the Council's Local Development Plan.

This LDS supersedes the version approved by the Committee on 21 November 2022 and sets out a planning work programme for the Council over a three-year period to 2026. The revised timetable will delay consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation by approximately eleven

months. This is a direct result of the pause on the Local Plan that applied between 22 March and 24 October 2023.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Timeline.** A Member of the Committee queried the process between the completion of the plan consultation (Reg 19) and submission to the secretary of state and asked if two months is a long enough in between these two stages. The Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration responded to inform the Committee that the Regulation 19 Local Plan is the proposed submission document, meaning that before the Council go out for consultation on the Regulation 19 Local Plan, it must come to the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee and then Full Council to seek approval at that stage to go out for consultation and subsequently submit. The Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration continued to explain that no substantial changes can be made to the Regulation 19 Local Plan once it has been agreed to go out to consultation, and following the consultation period, everything that went out for consultation on, and all the subsequent responses will be given to an Independent Planning Inspector for the examination. The Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration informed the Committee that major changes to the Local Plan can only be made following the Reg 19 Consultation if another Reg 19 consultation is carried out. The Member responded to raise that this order of events must mean that the resident responses received during the Reg 19 consultation, do not have a chance to impact the Local Plan submitted to the Secretary of State. The Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration explained to the Committee that the Reg 19 Consultation is hugely important, as the Independent Planning Inspector will be looking at and assessing all of the responses that come in, and judging whether that should mean any changes are needed to the Local Plan in terms of soundness and legal conformity.
- b) **Submission by June 2025.** A Member of the Committee raised the seriousness of the situation and the importance of submitting the Local Plan by June 2025. The Chair responded to state that if there is a delay or slip in submitting the Local Plan by June 2025, then the Council must re-evaluate how to proceed, due to the significant investment by the Council currently at stake. The Chair agreed that the seriousness of the situation cannot be communicated enough and raised hopes that Members are fully aware of the importance of sticking to the proposed timeline towards submission.
- c) **Surrey County Council Transport Modelling.** A Member of the Committee asked when the new time slot for the SCC Transport Modelling would be. The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that the Council must provide the spatial strategy and sites to SCC by mid-January 2024. The Chair informed the Committee that if an agreement on the site selection and spatial strategy could not be reached before the

deadline and feed into the Transport work, then the Council will need to look at and amend the Local Plan timeline again.

- d) **Member Briefing on Housing.** A Member of the Committee commented that a Member Briefing on Housing had been held on the 20th of November and asked whether feedback had been received and what the feedback included. The Chair responded to inform the Committee that the feedback that has been received was very positive. The Chair highlighted at the Member Briefing that from a housing point of view, the housing officers need to continue to talk to and work with the planning policy development team and confirmed that additional briefings on affordable housing are forthcoming and will feed into further discussions on Housing, in order to allow the necessary work to be carried out to try and resolve the Borough's housing situation.
- e) **Dates for meetings.** A Member of the Committee asked for the deadline's dates for the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee and Full Council Meetings, required to take place prior to the commencement of Regulation 19 Consultation, to be communicated to Members and included in the timetable. The Member continued to set out that this would be useful information for Members and the Public to have, and it helps to illustrate that key milestones are closer than currently believed to be. The Chair confirmed that they would work with Officers to ensure that these details are shared and highlighted that the necessary meetings are being lined up to take place and this will be communicated to all Members and made aware to residents.
- f) **11-month Delay.** Councillor Lawrence asked the Chair to explain why there is an 11-month Delay on the Local Plan despite only a 7-month pause. The Chair responded to inform the Committee that an explanation of the 11-month delay can be found in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 of the report. The Chair continued to explain that one of the main items around the work that the Council will be doing with SCC, is hugely dependent on the site allocations and spatial strategy being confirmed, and these areas were paused by the Council in March 2023. The Chair informed the Committee that no work on the site allocations, spatial strategy or policy development was able to happen whilst the Local Plan was paused between March and October 2023. The Chair continued to comment that due to those areas not being worked on during the pause, and then now needing agreement from all Members, this has caused a further delay than the original 7-month pause, in order to fit briefing sessions and workshops to gain agreement and collaboration from all Members to finalise the site selection and spatial strategy before handing over to SCC to do the transport assessment.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Consider and approve the revised Local Development Scheme (November 2023) at Appendix 1.**

53 LOCAL PLAN BUDGET REPORT UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided an updated financial position regarding progressing the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040) towards submission and subsequent adoption in accordance with the timescales defined in the Local Development Scheme (November 2023) that is being considered by this Committee.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Cost of the Local Plan.** A Member of the Committee commented that it would be useful to know how much money has been spent on the Local Plan process in its entirety. The Chair responded to inform the Committee that there will be some statistics available regarding other local authorities and the cost of delivering their Local Plan. The Chair noted that generating and having a Local Plan cost figure would be useful to have and agreed go back to an appropriate point in time to in order to come up with a figure which can then be shared formally with Members.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the financial update position with regards to the Local Plan and Planning Policy staff funding.**
- (2) **Report the estimated shortfall in funding for completing the Local Plan to the Strategy and Resources Committee with a request to secure funding for the £629,000 shortfall.**

54 PLANNING FEE INCOME/BUDGET REPORT

The Committee received a report that set out the estimated level of income from planning-related fees that the Council can expect to receive and the required level of resource to maintain an effective planning service to help inform 2024/25 budget setting and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-28.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **FastTrack Service.** A Member of the Committee asked for further explanation of the FastTrack Service and new Planning Office Post. The Interim Head of Place Development responded to inform the Committee that there is a clear demand for a FastTrack service, which could generate a reasonable amount of income and help to achieve targets of dealing with applications in two months. The Interim Head of Place Development explained to the Committee that in terms of paying for the service, there is the fee that will be brought in to use the service and funding from Central Government to go towards decreasing backlogs and improving the application service.

- b) **Autumn Statement.** A Member of the Committee asked if Officers had an opportunity to consider and reflect on any changes and comments relating to Planning Fees in the Autumn Statement. The Interim Head of Place Development informed the Committee that there is still no localised fee setting, fees are set nationally, so the 25/35% increase is not a decision of this Council but of Central Government. The Interim Head of Place Development informed the Committee that the Autumn Statement announcement has not affected anything in the report because the announcement was known about beforehand.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the current and predicted adverse variance in planning-related fees and the measures taken to address this, and the limited opportunities for mitigation for income that is market led.**
- (2) **Agree that the estimated budgeted income for planning related fees, which takes into account estimates from officers relating to market conditions, planning fees and the future pipeline of likely planning applications, provides a reasonable framework for budget setting.**
- (3) **Note the requirement for an additional planning officer post to enable the introduction of new income generating services.**

55 PROCUREMENT WAIVERS

A report was received informing the Committee of procurement waivers within their budgetary responsibility.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Waiver query.** A Member of the Committee asked what Waiver WVR043 was for. The Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration informed the Committee that Waiver WVR043 was for the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, which is a piece of evidenced based support in the Local Plan.
- b) **Threshold three.** Councillor Lawrence asked the Chair how the Threshold three figure, reference in paragraph 2.2.3, was determined, and if the Council set it or it was set by Central Government. The Chair responded to direct the Committee to the Council's Procurement Strategy and Standing Orders, which can both be found on the Council's website, and further explain the thresholds and procurement procedure. The Chair informed the Committee, that it is their understanding, that the thresholds are set by the Council, and if there is a change required, then it would be brought to Members of the relevant policy committee to get approval of that change. The Chair noted that there is legislation that exists that may inform the higher number items as well.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

(1) Note the waivers highlighted within this report.

56 URGENT DECISIONS

The Committee received a report that set out the decisions taken by the Chief Executive and Directors on the grounds of urgency, in compliance with Appendix 2 to the Constitution – The Scheme of Delegation paragraph 3.1.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

(1) Note the urgent decisions taken and the reasons for those decisions.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.44 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)