

**Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on
22 November 2016**

PRESENT -

Councillor Eber Kington (Chairman); Councillor Neil Dallen (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Richard Baker, Steve Bridger (as nominated substitute for Councillor Rekha Bansil), Kate Chinn, Omer Kokou-Tchri, Keith Partridge, Mike Teasdale, Clive Woodbridge and Tella Wormington

Absent: Councillor Rekha Bansil

Officers present: Frances Rutter (Chief Executive), Kathryn Beldon (Director of Finance and Resources), Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Mark Berry (Head of Place Development) (For items 116 to 125), Rod Brown (Head of Housing & Environmental Services) (For items 116 to 125), Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Andrew Lunt (Head of Venues & Facilities), Mark Lumley (Head of ICT) (For items 116 to 121) and Fiona Cotter (Democratic Services Manager)

116 QUESTION TIME

No questions were asked or had been submitted by members of the public.

117 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Neil Dallen declared non-pecuniary interest in Item 9 on the Agenda (Land at Ormonde Avenue, Epsom). Councillor Dallen was a member of the Board of Rosebery Housing Association.

118 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT FOR EPSOM - PROGRESS REPORT

Note: This item was moved up the running order with the agreement of the Committee, representatives of local business interests being in attendance.

The Committee received short verbal presentations in support of the proposals in the report from Ms. Kim Eden (Chair of the Epsom Town Business Partnership and manager of M&S in Epsom) and Mr. Tony Cave (partnership member and manager of Wetherspoons in Epsom).

The report set out progress made by the Epsom Town Business Partnership (ETBP) in creating a Business Improvement District (BID) for Epsom Town Centre and the likely timetable for future action. The report highlighted the statutory duties of a local authority in a BID process and the contribution the Council was making to plans for one in Epsom. The report also highlighted the

estimated annual levy for 2017/18 onwards that would be due on its hereditaments (property) should a BID be created in the Town Centre. It was stressed that any increases in business rates due to revaluation should not be conflated with the introduction of a BID levy should a BID be successfully established. However, in relation to the BID, this was a risk that needed to be managed as any increase in business rates would affect the amount of the levy. The report also highlighted that at present, there were no funds other than officer time allocated to support its creation or the potential payment of the levy by the Council.

The Committee:

- (1) Noted the progress of the Epsom Town Business Partnership (ETBP) in creating a Business Improvement District (BID) for the Town Centre;
- (2) Noted the statutory role of the local authority in the process of creating a BID;
- (3) Provided a commitment to the ETBP that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will continue to encourage the creation of a BID

119 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 27 September 2016 were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendments:

- On opening the meeting: on behalf of the Committee, the Chairman had thanked Michael Smith for his work in undertaking additional responsibilities during the previous few months of staff absence and had wished him well in his new job;
- Minute 105 (Audit Findings Report 2015/16), final paragraph: Add a final sentence: *“In response to a question in regard to the level of understanding and depth of enquiry required of Members when scrutinising the Audit Report, the Auditors had confirmed that the role of Members was to question the Auditors on their work and judgments rather than to engage in detail on the auditing process itself”*.

120 CORPORATE PLAN: PERFORMANCE REPORT ONE 2016 TO 2017

A report was presented to Committee which provided an update against its Key Performance Targets for 2016/17 under the Corporate Plan.

The report highlighted that the following targets were “off track/not achieved” and the actions identified to achieve them:

- To process new Housing Benefit claims within an average time of 22 days

- To submit at least three business cases which would generate long term income streams to the Capital Member Group for prioritisation as part of the 2017/18 Capital bid process;
- To procure at least to residential units generating no less than 6% return on investment
- To review and implement a performance pay and staff appraisal scheme.

In respect of processing Housing Benefit claims, The Director of Finance and Resources stated that the issue here was not necessarily financial resource but rather around the transfer to universal credit and the struggle to keep staff: the Council was looking at options around service delivery.

In respect of the purchase of the residential units, it was confirmed that offers had been accepted but completion was dependent on the conveyancing process which could take some time. The target was therefore off track in that it would not be possible to achieve the anticipated return of 6% on the investment in the current financial year.

It was queried whether the target of collecting £2.3 million of receivable rents ought to be recorded as “on track”. It was confirmed that this was correct: this element of the target related to rents in relation to commercial properties. Lettings income in relation to the Council’s venues was reported to the Community and Wellbeing Committee.

Accordingly, having considered the performance reported in Annexe 1 to the report, the Committee:

- (1) did not identify any areas of concern;
- (2) noted the actions that had been proposed or taken where performance was currently a concern as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

121 ICT DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Committee received and considered a report which sought approval of the ICT Digital Strategy for 2016-2020.

The report concluded that digital processes would continue to ensure that the Council was flexible and agile in providing services: the ability of staff to work in a more flexible and mobile manner and for customers to access services via mobile devices was becoming increasingly important. However, Officers recognised that it was about appropriate channels of communication and, with the support of partners, assisting and enabling access information.

Having a secure, resilient and reliable infrastructure was essential for the Council to ensure that it was able to provide services for residents. ICT would use externally hosted or “cloud” services where appropriate to enable this but members were assured that no confidential data would be stored on the “cloud”. Cyber security was at the core of everything and another key element of the

Strategy was to improve the Business Continuity and Disaster recovery arrangements whilst reducing day to day risks.

The Chairman commended the Head of ICT on the format of the new Strategy and the Committee congratulated him and the team on the implementation of upgraded website which went live on 22 November. Accordingly, subject to minor amendments, the Committee approved the ICT Digital Strategy 2016-20 set out in the Annexes to the report.

122 SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered a report which set out the issues around the Government's invitation to participate in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS).

Three options were presented to the Committee with a recommendation to support Option 3. The three options were:

- Option 1: Not to participate in the SVPRS
- Option 2: To participate in the SVPRS to assist up to 5 Syrian refugee households over five years
- Option 3: To participate in the SVPRS to assist up to 5 Syrian refugee households over five years, only using properties specifically identified for housing those under the scheme and to avoid the use of accommodation that would otherwise be available to local households looking to the Council to assist them with their housing needs.

It was noted that the Housing Needs Register was currently being reviewed as part of the new Housing Allocation Policy agreed by the former Social Committee. There were currently 2200 applicants on the register but this was anticipated to drop in the light of the tighter criteria and the fact that many applications were "cold cases" and could now be removed for the Register.

Given the intention by the Government to reimburse local authorities for the majority, if not all, of the costs associated with the scheme, the financial risk to the Council appeared to be low. Officers were seeking to minimise the financial risk by recommending that assistance be limited to one family a year for five years, and in Option 3, by using accommodation that would not negatively impact on temporary accommodation or bed and breakfast expenditure.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Chinn, seconded by Councillor Kokou-Tchri, that the Council participate in the SVPRS to assist up to 10 Syrian refugee households over five years. This amendment was lost.

Having discussed the pros and cons of Options 2 and 3 and the implications of increasing the number of households it was proposed to help, a further amendment was proposed by Councillor Clive Woodbridge, seconded by Councillor Neil Dallen that the Council participate in the SVPRS to assist up to 10 Syrian refugee households over five years, avoiding the use of

accommodation that would otherwise be available to local households looking to the Council to assist them with their housing needs. This amendment was carried.

Option 2 presented the risk of reputational damage by diverting accommodation away from those in local housing need members were conscious of the significant pressures on local housing stock. Assisting more households would attract more funding but the experience of other authorities had demonstrated that such households required a lot of support and assisting more than one household per year could increase the risks associated with expenses incurred not being recoverable from Home Office funding which the Council was less likely to be able to manage within existing resources.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Agreed that the Council should participate in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) to assist up to 10 Syrian refugee households over 5 years only using suitable properties provided for this specific purpose as set out in Option 3 in the report;
- (2) Noted, and in principle, supported the intention of Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network to apply and become a Community Sponsor and authorised the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee to endorse their application if she thinks it appropriate to do so.

123 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS - REPORT FROM JOINT INFRASTRUCTURE GROUP

The Committee received and considered a report which provided an overview of the Joint Infrastructure Group's inaugural meeting and which sought ratification of the Group's Terms of Reference.

The Council had introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in July 2014 and was responsible for its collection, distribution and spend. A Joint Infrastructure Group had been set up by the Council comprising Borough Council and Surrey County Council members, Borough Council Officers and representatives from the Council's infrastructure partners to help determine how funds collected through CIL should be distributed.

It was noted that a significant amount of money had already accumulated in the CIL fund but that equally a significant amount of it had been committed to the implementation of Plan E. The JIG was still considering how best to administer the community element of CIL. However, it was stressed that it was for the Borough Council to ultimately determine how the funds were to be spent. The inclusion of Surrey Local Committee members and Officers of Surrey County Council on the JIG was commended and it was hoped this reflected an appreciation that the County Council had a significant stake in the matter.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Noted the issues discussed during the Joint Infrastructure Group's (JIG) inaugural meeting; and
- (2) Ratified the JIG's Terms of Reference.

124 LAND AT ORMONDE AVENUE, EPSOM

A report was presented to the Committee which proposed that a small piece of land be transferred to Rosebery Housing Association to facilitate residential development of its adjacent site.

The Chairman highlighted that the Council's current Asset Management Plan was under review but that the report helpfully listed the disposal criteria which currently applied to property.

The report concluded that, whilst it would not normally be in the Council's best interests to dispose of land for nil consideration, it was considered that, when taken in the round, this was a disposal which could be recommended. The positive points included the provision of more much needed new affordable housing in the Borough, an increase in the number of properties to which the Council could nominate households and the strengthening of good relations between the Council and Rosebery Housing Association.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the Head of Property, following consultation with the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Head of Housing and Environmental Services and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to transfer the land shown hatched black on the plan attached to the report to Rosebery Housing Association, on such terms as he considered appropriate.

125 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee resolved to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended) and that pursuant to paragraph 10 of Part 2 of the said Schedule 12A the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Note: Members of the Committee were reminded of the need for confidentiality in respect of those items not considered in public

126 BOURNE HALL KITCHEN

The Committee agreed to the allocation of an additional sum from reserves to enable the refurbishment of the kitchen at Bourne Hall to be carried out.

Note: The details are considered officially sensitive at this time and the Minute for this item will be exempt from publication.

127 TRANSPORT FLEET CONTRACT AWARD

The Committee agreed a way forward as set out in the Minutes

Note: The details are considered officially sensitive at this time and the Minute for this item will be exempt from publication

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.16 pm

COUNCILLOR EBER KINGTON (CHAIRMAN)