

Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 17 January 2023

PRESENT -

Councillor Alex Coley (Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (Vice-Chair); Councillors Bernice Froud, Luke Giles, Debbie Monksfield, Julie Morris, Phil Neale, Peter Webb and Chris Frost (as nominated substitute for Councillor Christine Howells)

In Attendance: Councillor Bernie Muir

Absent: Councillor Christine Howells and Councillor Guy Robbins

Officers present: Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance), Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Richard Appiah-Ampofo (Senior Accountant), Rachel Kundasamy (Health and Wellbeing Officer) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

14 QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from members of the public.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Chris Frost, Other Interest: In the interest of openness and transparency, Councillor Chris Frost declared that he was married to a member of the Citizens Advice management board.

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2022 and the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 24 November 2022 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

17 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Committee received a report summarising the proposed 2023/24 capital programme and a provisional programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28. The Committee's approval was sought for the programme to be submitted to Council in February 2023.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Bourne Hall Patio Material:** A Member enquired as to what surfacing options might be available as an alternative to slabs for the Bourne Hall patio. The Head of Operational explained that tarmac was put forward for consideration but deemed incorrect by the Conservation Officer as it is a listed building and does not match the existing surface. The Member suggested that as materials are ever developing and changing, it may be prudent to revisit material options nearer the time.
- b) **Playhouse Solar PV and Payback Period:** A Member sought clarification regarding the payback period for the Playhouse Solar PV and enquired as to whether the increase in electricity fuel price had been factored in. The Head of Finance explained that the payback period for energy efficiency schemes used to be 7 years but was extended to 10 years for climate change action plan items. He confirmed that increases in energy costs make payback periods for energy efficiency investments more viable. The Chair confirmed that future installation of Solar PV on other Council owned buildings is an ongoing consideration.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Submit the capital programme for 2023/24 as identified in section 3 of the report to the Council for approval on 14 February 2023;**
- (2) **Note the provisional forecast of schemes for the capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28;**
- (3) **Note that schemes subject to external funding from Disabled Facilities Grants only proceed once funding has been received.**

18 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

The Committee received a report recommending fees and charges for which the Committee is responsible, with the new charges being effective from 1 April 2023.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Service Rates:** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services explained that, in the interest of staying competitive, certain areas within Community Services are not recommended for a rate increase, due to a likely adverse effect on customer volumes, with one such service being 'Community Alarm'.
- b) **Services Categorised by Demand:** A Member suggested that it would be helpful for services, as listed in the appendix of the report, to be categorised and sorted by a 'low, medium, high' system, in terms of

service demand. The Chair explained the recent challenge in accurately assessing service demand post-covid due to the pandemic's effect on service usage. He agreed that such a system would be helpful and suggested it could be something to investigate for the future.

- c) **Bourne Hall:** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services explained that the hire rate for the main hall at Bourne Hall has been kept unchanged and the daytime hours adjusted to attract an increased usage of the main hall. He stated that the Council is investigating the possibility of holding events, such as a monthly vintage clothes sale, as a source of income and as an opportunity to further develop Bourne Hall as a community hub.
- d) **Bathing Service:** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services explained that the bathing service, listed on page 22 of the agenda, had mostly ceased but was being restarted following the Council's taking-over of the venue. He explained the increase to the service charge was made in the interest of recovering costs, whilst being mindful of maintaining a reasonable price for service users.
- e) **Houses of Multiple Occupation Charges:** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Housing and Community explained that charges for HMOs are set out in guidance to local authorities. The Head of Property and Regeneration explained the charges differ between applications over 5 units and applications up to 5 units due to separate calculation bases.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree the fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out at Appendix 1 of the report.**

19 REVENUE BUDGET REPORT

The Committee received a report setting out estimates for income and expenditure on services in 2023/24.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Pay Award Provision:** A Member expressed concern regarding the 3% pay increase for Council employees when set against the rate of inflation and encouraged Councillors to be mindful of the potential impact on staff. The Head of Finance confirmed that the 3% is below the inflationary increase and stated that he recognises the pressure this can place on recruitment and staff – he explained that the pay increase is set against affordability and budget constraints faced by local government. He highlighted the current Pay Policy which will run until 2024, which caps pay at 3% increase – he stated that when the new Pay Policy for the subsequent 4-year period comes is agreed (should Councillors agree to a 4-year period), he would expect considerations, such as those raised by the Member, to be taken into account.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved (8 in favour and 1 abstaining) to:

- (1) Recommend the 2023/24 service estimates for approval at the budget meeting of full Council in February 2023.**

20 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 would involve 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 would outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information.

21 VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2023-24

The Committee received a report considering the previous year's support provided to voluntary organisations and asking the Committee whether the funding arrangements should continue for 2023-2024.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Funding and Economic Pressures:** A Member expressed their admiration for the work done by the voluntary organisations. The Committee considered that continuing the previous year's level of support for 2023-2024 was acceptable, taking into account current economic pressures on the Council.
- b) **Unique Clients Helped:** The Chair clarified that the number of 'unique clients helped', as listed on page 3 of appendix 2 of the report, refers to the number of unique individuals that were helped, and not the number of times help was provided to clients.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Confirm that the previous level of support given to the voluntary organisations should continue for 2023-2024.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.12 pm

COUNCILLOR ALEX COLEY (CHAIR)