

**Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on
26 January 2023**

PRESENT -

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chair); Councillor Liz Frost (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Phil Neale (as nominated substitute for Councillor Councillor Hannah Dalton); Councillors Kate Chinn, Monica Coleman, David Gulland, Graham Jones, Colin Keane, Eber Kington and Alan Williamson

Absent: Councillor Hannah Dalton

Officers present: Jackie King (Chief Executive) (Items 42-45 and 47-52 only), Andrew Bircher (Interim Director of Corporate Services), Victoria Potts (Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration), Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance), Debbie Childs (Head of HR and OD) (Items 42-46 only), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager)

42 ACTING VICE CHAIR

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Liz Frost as the Acting Vice Chair for the meeting, following receipt of apologies for absence from the Vice Chair.

43 QUESTION TIME

No questions were asked by members of the public.

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in relation to items of business to be discussed at the meeting.

45 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes and Restricted Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 15 November 2022 and were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

46 EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Committee received a report introducing the draft Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 and seeking approval of the Statement

prior to its presentation to Full Council and subsequent publication on the Council's website.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **External benchmarking.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of HR and OD informed the Committee that external benchmarking for the Chief Executive's pay was undertaken by Penna, the recruitment consultant for the appointment of the Chief Executive. The Committee noted that the advertisement for the position of Chief Executive made reference to a salary of c.£120,000 per annum, which was within the council's existing pay scales.
- b) **Gender pay gap.** The Committee noted that the council had a negative gender pay gap and expressed that this was a positive statistic for the local authority. The Committee considered that the negative gender pay gap suggested that women felt able to apply for employment and seek promotion within the council.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24.**
- (2) **Agree that the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 is referred to Full Council for approval.**

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 8 votes for, 1 vote against and 1 abstention to:

- (3) **Approve the proposed increase to the Chief Executive pay scale.**

47 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

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

The following matters were considered:

- a) **On street parking.** The Committee noted that Surrey County Council had made a unilateral decision to end its contract with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for on-street parking enforcement. The Borough Council had been undertaking on-street enforcement duties under contract for the County Council, resulting in a number of efficiencies of scale due to the Borough Council's off-street parking duties. Officers were looking at ways to reduce costs within service following this decision by the County Council.
- b) **External audit fees.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Finance informed the Committee that the appointment of the external auditor had been competitively tendered through a national process, but there had been an 150% increase to the external audit fees. The Local

Government Association had advised that local authorities were unlikely to be able to improve upon the nationally tendered price by pursuing their own separate arrangements. The Committee was informed that the previous external audit contract had run for a period of 5 years from 2017-18 to 2022-23 and that the new contract would run for 5 years from 2023-24 to 2028-29.

- c) **Town Hall room hire income.** A member of the Committee asked whether there was potential to generate further income from the hire of Town Hall rooms to external hirers. The Head of Finance informed the Committee that a number of factors affected the level of income generated by hiring out rooms, including their desirability to external users.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 9 votes for and 1 abstention to:

- (1) **Recommend the 2023/24 service estimates for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2023;**
- (2) **Recommend the 2023/24 fees and charges, as set-out in Appendix 1 to the report, for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2023;**
- (3) **Agree the Council Tax Discount bands for 2023/24, as set-out in section 7 of the report.**

48 COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES 2023/2024

The Committee received a report proposing increases to Member allowances and the Mayoral budget for 2023/24.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Cap on Increase to Member allowances.** The Committee noted that the report proposed a 3% increase to member allowances, which was below the 10.1% (September CPI) increase permitted by the Allowances Scheme. A 3% increase to Member allowances would mirror the 2023-24 pay award for staff.
- b) **Independent Remuneration Panel.** The Committee noted that an Independent Remuneration Panel would undertake a review of the Councillor allowances scheme during 2023, with a recommendation to Council for consideration.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 9 votes for and 1 against to:

- (1) **Recommend to Council, as part of the budget setting process, that Member allowances are increased by 3% for 2023/24**

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (2) Recommend to Council that the Mayoral budget is increased by 10.1% for 2023/24**

49 FUNDING AND RELEASE OF LAND

The Committee received a report recommending the change of use of a former commercial storage yard to residential to deliver 3 temporary accommodation family micro homes.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Access arrangements.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Property and Regeneration informed the Committee that the proposed scheme did not include any works to the access road to the site. Any such matters could be considered as a part of the planning approval process, which would follow the Committee's consideration of this report.
- b) **Nature of properties.** The Committee noted that the proposed properties would be owned by the Council and rented to tenants. The properties would also be movable if it was required to relocate them in the future.
- c) **Build time.** The Head of Property and Regeneration informed the Committee that the project needed to be completed by 2026 in order to receive the allocated grant funding. It was intended that the properties would be completed much in advance of that deadline.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree to the change of use of Fairview Road from commercial to residential to support the delivery of additional temporary accommodation;**
- (2) Agree to purchase 3 FamilyHaus micro homes at a total cost of up to £435,000 allocated from S106 developer funds;**
- (3) Authorise the Head of Property & Regeneration, Head of Housing and Community and Chief Finance Officer to progress the project to completion.**

50 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee unanimously 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.

51 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY UPDATE

The decision on this item is recorded in a separate (not for publication) restricted Minute.

52 COMMERCIAL TENANT UPDATE

The decision on this item is recorded in a separate (not for publication) restricted Minute.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.53 pm

COUNCILLOR NEIL DALLEN (CHAIR)