

**Minutes of the Meeting of the LICENSING AND PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE
held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 19 January 2023**

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Councillor Nigel Collin (as nominated substitute for Councillor Peter O'Donovan); Councillors Steve Bridger, Liz Frost, Rob Geleit, Julie Morris, Phil Neale, Peter Webb and Hannah Dalton (as nominated substitute for Councillor Neil Dallen)

Absent: Councillor Peter O'Donovan, Councillor Neil Dallen and Councillor Barry Nash

Officers present: Victoria Potts (Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration), Ian Mawer (Planning Policy Manager), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

23 ELECTION OF MEMBER TO PRESIDE AS VICE-CHAIR

In the absence from the meeting of Councillor Peter O'Donovan (Vice-Chair), the Committee elected to appoint Councillor Phil Neale to preside as Vice-Chair of the meeting.

24 QUESTION TIME

The Committee received eleven oral questions from members of the public. The Chair provided an oral response to each question.

Eight supplementary oral questions were asked. The Chair, the Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration, and the Planning Policy Manager provided oral responses to seven of the supplementary questions. The Chair confirmed a written reply would be provided for one of the supplementary questions.

25 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.

26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 27 October 2022 the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 21 November 2022 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

27 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.

Prior to debate, the Chair highlighted two amendments to be made to the report:

- a) That paragraph 3.2 of the report be amended to read, “...*completely overhauled to simplify them...*”, in order to correct a typing error.
- b) That paragraph 5.6 of the report be amended to remove reference to “*the budget report included on this agenda*”, on account of there being no such report on the agenda.

These amendments were noted and agreed by the Committee.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Statutory Fees:** Following a question from a Member, the Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration explained that the statutory fees don't fully cover the service costs and is a national issue affecting all Local Planning Authorities. She confirmed there is currently no commitment from the Government to increase the fees.
- b) **Discretionary Fees:** In response to a question from a Member, the Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration explained that the statutory fees are set externally and are outside the control of the Council. She explained that the discretionary fees however, as reflected in the appendices of the report, have been reviewed and set to a level to cover the costs involved in providing the service.
- c) **Pre-Application Charges:** Following a question from a Member, the Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration explained that the Council has started working in partnership with the Planning Advisory Service who have offered to review the Council's pre-application charges to make sure of their fitness and robustness going forward. The Chair explained that a Planning Advisory Service review is planned, with a view to bringing the outcome of the review to a future meeting of the Committee.
- d) **Inflationary Uplift:** In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Accountant explained that the Heads-of-Service, when reviewing service charges increases, are taking into account what the market will bear in terms of uplift in order to keep volume of service usage up, whilst being mindful of the current inflationary pressures affecting the Council and the current cost-of-living crisis affecting residents. She confirmed that the Committee is responsible for its fees and charges and is able to review them at any time.

- e) **Tracking Discretionary Service Usage:** Following a question from a Member, the Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration explained that purchases of discretionary services and transactions are logged and that monthly budget check-in reports will be produced in order to track and monitor service usage.
- f) **Dog-Walking Licensing:** The Committee considered as a possibility the Licensing of dog-walking, in particular the walking of large numbers of dogs, as a means of assuring that dog-walkers are capable of walking dogs safely and responsibly. The Chair suggested that the matter be taken away and referred to Licensing Officers.
- g) **Pre-Planning Advice:** Following a question from a Member, the Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration explained that not much Pre-planning advice has been sought so far, and the effectiveness of the service will be reviewed when there is more data.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree the fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out at Appendices 1 and 3 of the report.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.29 pm

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)