

Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 21 September 2023

PRESENT -

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chair); Councillor Hannah Dalton (Vice-Chair); Councillors Chris Ames, Shanice Goldman, Graham Jones, Alison Kelly, Robert Leach and Alan Williamson

In Attendance: Councillor Steven McCormick

Officers present: Andrew Bircher (Interim Director of Corporate Services), Chris Anderson (Head of IT), Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance), Piero Ionta (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Tony Foxwell (Senior Surveyor) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager)

10 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions or statements were received from members of the public.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 13 July 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

13 IT STRATEGY

The Committee received a report providing details of the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Information Technology Strategy for 2023 and beyond. The IT Strategy defined the principles, governance, standards and methodology by which the council will source, procure, implement, maintain and deliver IT services both internally (to staff and partners) and externally (to residents). The report also detailed the IT Roadmap for 2023-2027.

The following matters were considered:

- a) Contribution to carbon reduction target.** In response to a question from a councillor, the Head of IT informed the Committee that a number of

metrics could be included in a procurement activity to gauge its contribution to the council's carbon reduction target. This included the power usage effectiveness rating of cloud based services. Officers were considering which metrics would be appropriate to include and whether a weighting should be applied to them. The Committee noted that suppliers using green energy might have a higher cost as a result, and officers would need to consider how to equate this increased financial cost to the council's carbon reduction target.

- b) Re-use and disposal of equipment.** The Head of IT informed the Committee that he was happy to receive proposals from councillors for the reuse of redundant equipment.
- c) Training and support for officers.** The Head of IT informed the Committee that the Council had access to a training suite as a part of its Microsoft Enterprise agreement and that this would be used to support a learning plan for individual staff. There would also be a wider training programme for all staff to support the roll-out of SharePoint and Microsoft 365.
- d) Issues to be considered by channel shift.** A member of the Committee expressed the view that footnote 2 on page 27 of the agenda should be expanded to consider a wider set of issues, such as matters addressed by the Equalities Act. It was noted that the Head of IT would take this forward.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree the IT Strategy, and the associated plan to invest in a programme of works as set out in the IT Roadmap.**
- (2) Note that the works to include; a refresh of end user devices for officers, a programme of works to update infrastructure and move to a hosted data centre and transformational projects to improve and increase online services to residents.**
- (3) Approve the indicative funding implications for delivering the defined IT Roadmap in 2023-2027, as set out in section 5 of the report, which will feed into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be approved at Full Council in February 2024.**
- (4) Agree that a further report on the IT Roadmap will be submitted to committee in September 2024. This will provide an update on the implementation of the roadmap and details of funding actuals to date and forecast.**

14 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24

The Committee received a report setting out that central government had introduced a further tranche of the Household Support Fund (HSF4) for 2023/24.

Funding for the scheme had been provided to Surrey County Council (SCC), who has overall control and responsibility for administering HSF.

SCC had passed a proportion of the funding to Surrey districts for distribution on to residents.

To assist in delivering the funds to hard-to-reach local residents, EEBC had already entered into a partnership with the Good Company, a local charity who run the local food bank, Epsom Pantry and the Epsom Refugees Network.

The report proposed to continue the partnership with the Good Company, to enable these funds to continue to be disbursed to vulnerable residents, in a timely manner, whom the Council would otherwise be unable to reach.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 6 votes for, 1 abstention and the Chair not voting to:

- (1) Agree that a further £50,000 of the HSF4 allocation be passed to the Good Company, for distribution to residents in the period October 2023 to March 2024.**

15 POOLE ROAD PAVILION REROOFING PROJECT

The Committee received a report requesting additional capital funding to carry out the replacement of the roof covering to the pavilion and provide additional insulation.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Variance between manufacturer's estimate and tendered prices.** Members of the committee queried why the tendered prices for this work were significantly higher than that estimated by the manufacturer, and why they were within a small range of variance. In response the Senior Surveyor informed the Committee that the general market trait at present was that the price of tenders had increased due to high energy and transportation costs. The Senior Surveyor informed the Committee that in this specific case, the manufacturer's estimate provided to the Council had been too low, which had led to the tenders being above the anticipated cost. The Senior Surveyor also informed the Committee that for the majority of projects, tenders were received below the initial estimate.
- b) **Audit requirements.** In response to a question from a member of the Committee, the Head of Finance informed the Committee that he was confident that the auditor would not have issue with the regard to the works as long as it was properly approved by the Committee. The Head of Finance informed the Committee that this item had been presented to it for consideration due to the material change in the cost of the works, to enable the Committee to consider whether it wished to progress with the scheme, and to ensure that there was a solid audit trail in place.

- c) **Contingency.** In response to a question from a member of the Committee, the Senior Surveyor informed the Committee that the additional funding requested by the report included an amount for a contingency, legal fees and management of the contract.
- d) **Amendment to recommendation - Audit review.** The Vice Chair proposed and Councillor Alison Kelly seconded an amendment to the recommendations of the report to add an additional recommendation as follows:
- “Request that internal audit look at this particular procurement to allay any Members’ concerns around it.”

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve additional funding of £105,000 from the Capital Receipts Reserve, to enable the Poole Road Pavilion Re-Roofing project to proceed at an estimated cost of £255,000.**
- (2) **Request that internal audit look at this particular procurement to allay any Members’ concerns around it.**

Following the Committee’s decision, it noted the following information from officers:

The Interim Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that the Internal Auditor’s work programme was set a year in advance and that this matter would be included in the programme for 2024-25.

The Senior Surveyor informed the Committee that the procurement had been undertaken through the Council’s procurement portal and in accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders.

16 EWELL COURT HOUSE FLAT 1 REFURBISHMENT AND USE FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Committee received a report proposing that Flat 1 Ewell Court House be refurbished to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Restricted appendix to the report.** A Member of the Committee commented that they did not feel that the business case attached as Appendix 2 to the report included any information which required it to be restricted from publication. The Chair noted the councillor’s comments and informed the Committee that all items marked as restricted were considered carefully.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree to use Flat 1 Ewell Court House for temporary homeless accommodation.**
- (2) Agree to fund the refurbishment budget of up to £125,000 from S106 developer funds.**
- (3) Note that the Head of Property & Regeneration, Head of Housing & Community in consultation with the Head of Finance will progress the refurbishment to completion.**

17 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.

18 COMMERCIAL TENANT UPDATE

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

19 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY UPDATE

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree the draft lease terms set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report for a new commercial lease of Plot 8 Kiln Lane, Epsom.**
- (2) Note that the Head of Property & Regeneration, in consultation with the Head of Finance, will instruct external solicitors to prepare the draft lease documentation (based on the draft lease terms in 1) above) and progress the new lease to completion as outlined in this report.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 7.58 pm

COUNCILLOR NEIL DALLEN (CHAIR)