

Minutes of the Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 15 October 2024

PRESENT -

Councillor Liz Frost (Chair); Councillor Alan Williamson (Vice-Chair); Councillors Christine Cleveland, Tony Froud, Julie Morris (items 12 - 23 only), Kieran Persand and Kim Spickett (as nominated substitute for Councillor Arthur Abdulin)

In Attendance: Councillor Steven McCormick

Absent: Councillor Arthur Abdulin and Councillor Jan Mason

Officers present: Justin Turvey (Head of Place Development), Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Samantha Whitehead (Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager) (items 12 - 17 only), Richard Chevalier (Parking Manager), Mark Rachwal (Environment and Sustainability Officer) (items 12 - 20 only), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Vanessa Newton (Senior Accountant) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

12 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

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

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Allotment Working Group Update

Councillor Christine Cleveland, Other Interest: Councillor Christine Cleveland announced that she held an allotment. She stated she believed it to be a non-prejudicial interest.

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: Councillor Julie Morris announced that she held an allotment. She stated she believed it to be a non-prejudicial interest.

Tennis Coaching Contracts

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: Councillor Julie Morris declared that she had a personal and prejudicial interest with respect to agenda item 13 - Tennis Coaching Contracts - and confirmed that she would leave the Chamber at the time of the Committee's consideration of said item.

14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 July 2024 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

15 MOTION 3 REFERRED FROM FULL COUNCIL ON 30 JULY 2024

The Committee received a report providing a basis for debate of the motion submitted to the meeting of Full Council on 30 July 2024 in relation to the Pay-to-Play Tennis Scheme and tennis charges.

As the proposer of the original motion referred to the Environment Committee by Full Council, Councillor Kieran Persand opened the debate on the matter.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Error in the Report.** The Committee noted an error in the report at paragraph 3.3, where it was stated that the Committee decided to offer free bookable tennis sessions to residents during the summer holidays. It was noted that this decision was in fact made as an urgent decision under delegated authority.
- b) **Membership and Bookings.** In response to a Member, the Assistant Head of Service (Streetcare) explained that annual membership to use the pay-to-play Tennis courts was available to Borough residents only, with ad-hoc bookings being available to anybody.
- c) **Court Maintenance.** Following a question from a Member, the Assistant Head of Service (Streetcare) explained that residual funds leftover from the initial start-up funding from the LTA was being put towards court maintenance. She also explained that money received through the pay-to-play scheme was ringfenced for maintenance of the courts.
- d) **Tennis as a Health Benefit.** The Committee considered the health benefits of playing Tennis. A Member suggested exploring the possibility of having free or discounted Tennis sessions offered by General Practitioners as a social prescribing option. The Chair stated that social prescribing requires funding, and that the Committee would be looking at its fees and charges in the coming months.
- e) **Membership and Booking Statistics.** In response to a Member, the Assistant Head of Service (Streetcare) confirmed that, as of September 2024, since the inception of the pay-to-play scheme, the Council had sold 188 full-price memberships, 12 discounted memberships, 752 ad-hoc bookings for 1-hour slots, and 34 ad-hoc bookings for 2-hour slots.

Councillor Kieran Persand exercised his right of reply in response to the debate.

Subsequently, the Committee resolved (5 for, 1 against, and 1 abstaining) to:

- (1) Note the motion referred to the Committee by Full Council and take no further action after considering the contents of the report.**

16 ALLOTMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The Committee received a report on the work of the Allotments Working Group during 2023/24.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the report and the work of the Allotments Working Group during the 2023-24 year.**

17 FOOD SAFETY SERVICE AND HEALTH AND SAFETY INTERVENTION PLANS

The Committee received a report setting out how the Council, in compliance with national monitoring arrangements, proposed to discharge its statutory responsibilities in respect of food hygiene and health and safety interventions in the year 2024-2025, and reporting on activities in the 2023-2024 year.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Adopt the service plan for food safety (as at appendix 1 of the report).**
(2) Adopt the intervention plan for health and safety (as at appendix 2 of the report).
(3) Agree to receive revised food and health and safety plans for the year 2025-2026 at a date in 2025.

18 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (2025-2029)

The Committee received a report presenting the Council's second Climate Change Action Plan and seeking support for its adoption.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Approve and adopt the Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029 set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**

19 TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing an update on the progress of delivering the Council's Tree Management Plan.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **On-Street Tree Planting.** A Member enquired as to whether roads in the Borough lacking tree cover could be identified for tree planting where appropriate in order to provide shade for people in areas that experience intense heat. The matter was noted by the Environment and Sustainability Officer – he explained that in the case of on-street tree planting, Surrey Highways predominantly held the responsibility.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Consider and note the progress made on the delivery of the Council's Tree Management Plan over the past 18 months.**

20 TREE PLANTING FEES & CHARGES POLICY - 9 MONTH REVIEW

The Committee received a report providing a review of the delivery of the Council's Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Review of Charges.** In response to a Member, the Head of Place Development stated that if he believed in his professional opinion that the charges for the tree planting service were too high or too low, then the matter could be brought to Committee in future with a recommendation to vary the charges.
- b) **Donated Trees.** A Member enquired as to whether the Council could accept and plant trees donated by third parties. The Head of Place Development stated that, in such circumstances, the Council would not charge for the planting of such a tree if it was proposed to be planted on approved land as identified within the Tree Management Plan and was compliant with the terms and regulations set out in said plan.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Consider and note the 9-month review of Council's Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy.**

21 HOOK ROAD CAR PARK INTERIM OPTIONS FOLLOW UP PAPER

The Committee received a report seeking to identify funding for a pay and display interim option at Hook Road Car Park or for the Committee to opt for a RingGo solution only.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Costs Associated with Option 1 of the Report.** In response to a Member, the Parking Manager stated that, of the three options presented in the report, option 1 for Ringo only, would incur the least cost to the Council in terms of installation of the payment machines and administration of payments. He explained that, regardless of which option

was decided, the entry/exit barriers would need to be removed, with alternative speed restriction measures being put in place.

- b) **Income Implications of a Cashless Car Park.** The Committee noted that, excluding permit-holders, 81% of Hook Road car park users currently paid by card. The Committee considered the implications of the potential loss of income from the 19% who currently paid by cash, should the Committee opt for a Ringo only option. The Parking Manager stated that it was estimated that Hook Road car park would not see a substantial reduction in income, and predicted that many of the 19% would transition to the new payment method.
- c) **Alternative Car Parks for Cash Payers.** In response to a Member, the Parking Manager stated that, should the Committee opt for the Ringo only option, people who wish to pay cash would be able to use Depot Road and Upper High Street car parks, which were priced comparably with Hook Road car park. He stated that both car parks, although popular, would have ample capacity to accommodate additional users in the event that the 19% of Hook Road car park users who pay cash displace to those car parks.
- d) **Ringo Car Park Charges.** Following a question from a Member, the Parking Manager confirmed that, should the Committee opt for a Ringo only option, the charge for the car park would be agreed by the Committee as usual, with Ringo adding a 20p on top for use of their service. The Chair stated that the Car Park Working Group would be meeting next month to discuss car park charges.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Proceed with Option 1, as identified in Section 4 of the report.**

22 2025/26 BUDGET TARGETS

The Committee received a report informing the Committee of the Council's revenue budget targets presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee in July, and seeking guidance on the preparation of the Committee's service estimates for 2025/26.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved (5 for, 1 against, and 1 abstaining) to:

- (1) Note the implications of the budget targets presented to Strategy & Resources Committee on 23 July 2024.**
- (2) Support the changes to services and savings previously identified in Table 1 of the report and that these are included within the budget presented to this Committee in January 2025.**

- (3) Consider how additional income or savings can be generated to address the projected Council wide funding gap of £573,000 in 2025/26, rising to £720,000 per annum by 2028/29.
- (4) Note that owing to the Council's projected budget deficit, any additional new revenue growth items (i.e. service enhancements resulting in increased net expenditure) supported by Policy Committees will need to be fully funded from existing budgets.

23 URGENT DECISIONS

The Committee received a report on the decisions taken by the Chief Executive and Directors on the grounds of urgency, in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved (5 for, and 2 against) to:

- (1) **Note the urgent decisions taken and the reasons for those decisions, since the last meeting of the committee.**

24 TENNIS COACHING CONTRACTS

Prior to the Committee's consideration of the Tennis Coaching Contracts report, Councillor Julie Morris retired from the Chamber.

The Committee received a report seeking authorisation for officers to negotiate and sign Parks Tennis Coaching Contracts.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Barclays Free Parks Tennis Availability.** In response to a Member, the Assistant Head of Service (Streetcare) confirmed that the Barclays Free Parks Tennis scheme was available to everyone, not just to residents of the borough.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Nominate and authorise the Head of Operational Services, and the Interim Assistant Head of Service – Streetcare, to negotiate and enter into Tennis Coaching Contracts on behalf of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.48 pm

COUNCILLOR LIZ FROST (CHAIR)