

**Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 28 January 2025**

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**PRESENT -**

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chair); Councillor Phil Neale (Acting Vice-Chair); Councillors Kate Chinn, Alison Kelly, Robert Leach, Lucie McIntyre and Humphrey Reynolds (as nominated substitute for Councillor Hannah Dalton)

Absent: Councillor Hannah Dalton and Councillor Alex Coley

Officers present: Jackie King (Chief Executive), Victoria Potts (Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration), Peter Sebastian (Director of Corporate Services (S151)), Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Piero Ionta (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), Andrew McGuire (Head of IT) (Items 45-54 only), Stephanie Osborne (Head of People and Organisational Development) (Items 45-51 only), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager) (Items 45-52 only), Danielle Brown (Business Advisor) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager)

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**45 ACTING VICE-CHAIR**

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

**46 TRIBUTE TO NETWORK MANAGER, JASON FELL**

It was with sadness that the Chair informed the Committee that the Council's Network Manager, Jason Fell had recently passed away.

The Chair paid tribute to Mr Fell and his work on behalf of the Council. As a mark of respect the Committee stood in two minute's silence.

**47 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

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

**48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**49 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2024 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

**50 STAFF PAY AWARD**

The Committee received a report providing information and options for a staff pay award for 2025/26.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Rate of inflation.** In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that the rate of inflation for the Consumer Prices Index was currently around 2 – 2.5%
- b) **Annual leave and other staff benefits.** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of People and OD informed the Committee that the Council had benchmarked itself against the other Surrey Districts & Borough's in relation to annual and other leave entitlement for staff, and was broadly similar. Alternative suggestions put forward by staff in relation to leave and other benefits would continue to be looked into. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that annual leave was not linked to the staff pay award considered by this report.
- c) **Local Government Reorganisation.** In response to a question from the Chair the Head of People and OD informed the Committee that it was not yet known what impact there would be on staff salaries as a result of the merger into a unitary authority.
- d) **Living wage.** In response to a question from a Member, the Chair informed the Committee that adjustments were made to staff salaries close to the minimum wage to ensure that a differential was retained.
- e) **Pay award level.** Councillor Kate Chinn proposed and Councillor Alison Kelly seconded that the Committee agree Option 3 as set out in paragraph 4.2.3 of the report (3%). This proposal was not supported by the Committee, there being 2 votes in favour, 4 votes against and 1 abstention.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 4 votes for, 2 votes against and 1 abstention to:

- (1) **Recommend to full council a pay award for staff for 2025/26 based on Option 1 set out in paragraph 4.2.1 of the report (2%).**

**51 TEMPORARY AGENCY STAFF PROCUREMENT**

The Committee received a report outlining the proposed approach for the procurement of a Managed Service Provider for the provision of agency staff.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Break clause and arrangements used by other Surrey authorities.** In response to a question from a Member, The Head of People and OD informed the Committee that the Council would not be obliged to use the Managed Service Provider and that the fee for the provider was rolled-up with usage of agency staff. The Committee was informed that there was no exclusivity clause in the contract and that the Council could change to a different supplier without penalty in the future if necessary due to Local Government reorganisation. In response to a question about the arrangements for other local authorities, the Committee was informed that Elmbridge, Runneymede and Reigate & Banstead Councils all use the same provider, but that Surrey County Council has an in-house service.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve the proposed route to market for the temporary agency staff contract, as set out in paragraph 4.10 of the report.**

## 52 REVISED ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Committee received a report requesting it to consider a revised compliance and enforcement policy.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Consider the revised draft compliance and enforcement policy.**
- (2) **Nominate and Authorise the Head of Housing and Community in consultation with the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee to make any changes as appropriate following feedback from committee.**
- (3) **Nominate and Authorise the Head of Housing and Community to carry out a consultation based on the draft, make any consequential amendments and bring the matter back to the committee for final adoption.**

## 53 PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Committee received a report providing an update on the current financial year's approved 2024-25 planned maintenance programme and requesting approval for the planned maintenance programme for the next financial year (2025-26).

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved:

- (1) **To note the progress and anticipated spend at the end of the current year 2024-25 as shown in Appendix 1 to the report.**

- (2) To note the additional emergency works raised and carried out in the 2024-25 planned maintenance programme.
- (3) To approve the 2025-26 planned maintenance programme at an estimated cost of £535,000 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, to be funded from planned maintenance budgets and the Planned Maintenance Reserve.
- (4) To nominate and authorise the Head of Property and Regeneration to make changes within the 2025-26 planned maintenance programme to cover unforeseen matters (such as tender price variances) of up to, but not exceeding £20,000 per change, in accordance with Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders.
- (5) To agree to transfer the unspent budgets back to the Planned Maintenance Reserve at the end of the 2025-26 financial year.

#### 54 ICT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing a summary of the changes to the ICT Strategy.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Website refresh.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of ICT informed the Committee that the proposed £45,000 expenditure on a website refresh included all 4 of the Council's websites – its primary site and the individual sites for Epsom Playhouse, Bourne Hall and the Community and Wellbeing Centre. The refresh would include a move from Drupal 7 to Drupal 10 platform, with the intention to launch the new sites in 2025.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the changes to the ICT strategy outlined in appendix 1 to the report.**
- (2) **Agree up to £45,000 of funding from the Corporate Projects Reserve to provide the refresh of the corporate website.**
- (3) **Note the progress that has been made so far on the ICT roadmap, allowing for the understandable delays that came about as a result of personnel changes in ICT leadership.**
- (4) **Note that whilst the agreed budget for the ICT Programme of work is still largely on track that there are inflationary and other external pressures that are resulting in cost increases.**

**55 MICROSOFT LICENSING RENEWAL**

The Committee received a report seeking approval to renew the Council's existing Microsoft Licensing Agreement.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Approve the sum of up to £385,000 to be spent on the Microsoft Licence renewal to cover March 2025-2028.**

**56 POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW**

The Committee received a report setting out the outcome of the consultation on Polling Places and Districts and making recommendations for proposed changes.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to recommend that the Council:

- (1) Agrees the location of the polling places and districts as set out in Appendix 1 for a five-year period from 1st March 2025, or until it is superseded by any subsequent review of any polling place or district; and**
- (2) Delegates to the Chief Executive in their capacity as the Council's Returning Officer, the authority to make any relevant decisions further to any ongoing review or change of polling places during this period, to ensure that polling arrangements in the Borough remain fit for purpose for each election called.**

**57 REVENUE BUDGET AND FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26**

The Committee received a report setting out estimates for income and expenditure on services in 2025/26 and recommending fees and charges for which this Committee is responsible, with the new charges being effective from 1 April 2025.

- a) Council tax discount banding.** In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that Officers would look into the possibility of a banding scheme for Council Tax discounts for pensioners.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 6 votes for and 1 abstention to:

- (1) Recommend the 2025/26 service estimates for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2025;**
- (2) Recommend the 2025/26 fees and charges, as set-out in Appendix 1 to the report, for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2025;**

- (3) Agree the Council Tax Discount bands for 2025/26, as set-out in section 7.**

**58 URGENT DECISIONS**

The Committee received a report informing it of a decision taken by the Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration on the grounds of urgency, in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the urgent decision taken and the reasons for that decision.**

**59 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Committee resolved with 6 votes for and 1 abstention 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 paragraphs 3 and 5 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.

**60 INCOME GENERATING OPPORTUNITY**

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 6 votes for and 1 vote against to:

- (1) Note the update as set out in the report.**
- (2) Agree to pause further work until there is a greater clarity regarding the proposed local government reforms within Surrey.**

**61 UKSPF UPDATE**

The Committee received a report proposing to fund the continuation of the Epsom and Ewell Hub for a period of 12 months (2025-2026) from the Council's Corporate Projects Reserve.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved:

- (1) To agree £160,000 of funding from the Council's Corporate Project Reserve to fund Surrey Life Long Learning for a period of one year (April 2025-end of March 2026) to operate the Epsom and Ewell Hub as detailed in the report.**
- (2) To nominate and authorise the Head of Housing & Community, in consultation with the Chair of Strategy & Resources and Community and Wellbeing Committees to have express authority to take all necessary actions to implement this decision, within the agreed budget, as necessary and appropriate.**

*The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.20 pm*

COUNCILLOR NEIL DALLEN (CHAIR)