

Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 27 January 2026

PRESENT -

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chair); Councillor Hannah Dalton (Vice-Chair); Councillors Chris Ames (as nominated substitute for Councillor Kate Chinn), John Beckett, James Lawrence, Lucie McIntyre and Humphrey Reynolds

In Attendance: Councillor Alex Coley

Absent: Councillor Kate Chinn and Councillor Jan Mason

Officers present: Cagdas Canbolat (Director of Corporate Services (S151)), Piero Ionta (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), Stephanie Osborne (Head of People and Organisational Development), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Tony Foxwell (Senior Surveyor), Siobhan Gavigan (Revenues Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager)

43 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or statements from the public.

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made the following declarations in relation to items on the agenda:

Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub

Councillor Chris Ames, Other Interest: Councillor Chris Ames declared that his daughter meets Surrey Choices using the Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub premises.

Urgent Decisions

Councillor Chris Ames, Other Interest: Councillor Chris Ames declared that he was a member of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

45 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2026

The Committee received a report introducing the draft Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27 and seeking approval of the Statement prior to its presentation to Full Council and subsequent publication on the Council's website.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Staff pay award.** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of People and Organisational Development informed the Committee that the Chief Executive and Directors received the same percentage annual salary increase as all staff. The Full Council had agreed the percentage salary increase at its meeting in December 2025.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree that the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27 is referred to Full Council for approval.**
- (2) **Nominate and Authorise the Head of People and Organisational Development to include the returning officer fees, when received.**

46 PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2026-27

The Committee received a report providing a progress update on the current (previously approved) financial year 2025-26 planned maintenance programme and requesting approval for the planned maintenance programme for the financial year 2026-27.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Fire risk assessments.** In response to a question from a Member, the Building Services and Facilities Manager informed the Committee that the majority of actions relating to fire risk assessments were for the Town Hall, as these had not been undertaken due to the intention to sell the site. Following the decision not to sell the site, these works had commenced. The Committee was informed that actions identified within fire risk assessments were not always completed within 1 year, due to the complexity of the works involved.
- b) **Bourne Hall Garages.** In response to a question from a Member, the Building Services and Facilities Manager informed the Committee that works to the garages were not required at the current time as the roof of the garages was still in sufficiently good condition.
- c) **Auriol Pavillion intruder alarms.** In response to a question from a Member, the Building Services and Facilities Manager informed the Committee that works to the alarm had been undertaken within the past few years and that no further works were required at present.
- d) **Community & Wellbeing Centre External decorations.** In response to a question from a Member, the Building Services and Facilities Manager informed the Committee that external decoration works should be completed every 5 years and were not a high cost item.

- e) **CCTV replacement.** In response to a question from a Member, the Building Services and Facilities Manager informed the Committee that this related to systems in Council premises.
- f) **Scheduling of Playhouse works.** In response to a question from the Vice-Chair, the Building Services and Facilities Manager informed the Committee that works to Epsom Playhouse would be scheduled at a time to ensure that they did not impact upon shows to be held at the venue.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved:

- (1) **To note the progress and anticipated spend at the end of the current year 2025-26 as shown in Appendix 1 to the report.**
- (2) **To note the additional emergency works raised and carried out in the 2025-26 planned maintenance programme.**
- (3) **To approve the 2026-27 planned maintenance programme at an estimated cost of £757,000 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 2026-27 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 2026-27 financial year.**

47 COUNCIL TAX EMPTY PROPERTY AND SECOND HOME POLICY

The Committee received a report proposing the removal of the Council Tax one month empty and unfurnished exemption from 01 April 2026, the Introduction of the 100% Empty Home Premium on properties which have been empty and substantially unfurnished for longer than 1 year, from the 01 April 2026 and the introduction of a 100% premium for all second homes from 01 April 2027, in line with the governing legislation.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Reset for unfurnished / not in use properties.** In response to a question from a Member, the Revenues Manager informed the Committee that for properties that are empty and unfurnished there was a legal requirement that there be 6 weeks of occupation before a further empty exemption can be applied. With regard to second homes that remained furnished, the 6 week rule was not applicable as it would be applied the whole time that the property remains a second home.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved:

- (1) **Approve the recommended changes to how Council Tax is levied on Empty properties, as set out in Appendix 1, with effect from the 1 April, 2026.**
- (2) **Approve the recommended changes to how Council Tax is levied on Second Homes in the Borough, as set out in Appendix 1, with effect from 1 April, 2027.**

48 REVENUE BUDGET AND FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

The Committee received a report setting out estimates for income and expenditure on services in 2026/27 and recommending fees and charges for which this Committee is responsible, with the new charges being effective from 1 April 2026.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Percentage fee change.** In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Accountant informed the Committee that the Medium Term Financial Strategy set that fees should be increased by at least the rate of CPI plus 1%. The rate of CPI in September of the previous year was used for this calculation (3.8% in September 2025), with a total of 4.8% as the result.
- b) **Future savings and income generation.** In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer informed the Committee that any future sustainable savings or income generation opportunities identified could be taken forward by the new unitary East Surrey Council.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Recommend the 2026/27 service estimates for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council on 10 February 2026, amended since the publication of the draft budget book, as set out in table 4.6 of the report;**
- (2) **Recommend the 2026/27 fees and charges, as set-out in Appendix 1 to the report, for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council on 10 February 2026;**
- (3) **Agree the Council Tax Discount bands for 2026/27, as set-out in section 7 of the report.**

49 EPSOM AND EWELL EMPLOYMENT HUB

The Committee received a report presenting options for funding the Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub for 2026/27 for consideration.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Exempt information.** A Member requested to know why Appendix 2 to the report had been classified as exempt information and had not been published. The Chair and Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer informed the committee that the reasons were detailed in Item 10 of the agenda (Exclusion of press and public).

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

- (1) **Agree that Option A as set out in section 5 of the report for the financial support of the Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub in 2026/27 was preferred.**
- (2) **Agree that the Council continues the delivery arrangements with Surrey Life Long Learning to deliver this initiative.**
- (3) **Nominate and authorise the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Director of Environment Housing and Regeneration and the Chair of Community and Wellbeing Committee, to enter into a legal agreement with Surrey Life Long Learning to deliver this initiative.**

50 URGENT DECISIONS

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

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Status of negotiations.** In response to a question from a Member, the Chair informed the Committee that negotiations were ongoing.
- b) **Reason for urgency.** In response to a question from a Member, the Chair informed the Committee that the reason for the urgency of the decision was to allow negotiations with the venue operator regarding various matters including health and safety matters. Further negotiations were continuing with regard to who would repay the council for those works.
- c) **Wording of committee report.** In response to a query from a Member in relation to paragraph 2.2 of the report, the Head of Legal and Monitoring officer informed the Committee that in paragraph 2.2 of the report the word “concluded” should read “initiated”.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 5 votes for and 2 abstentions to:

- (1) **Note the urgent decision taken since the last meeting of the committee.**

51 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes and Restricted Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 December 2025 and the Chair signed them.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.39 pm

COUNCILLOR NEIL DALLEN (CHAIR)