



EPSOM AND EWELL

Minutes of the Meeting of the COUNCIL of the BOROUGH of EPSOM AND EWELL held at the Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom on 8 December 2015

PRESENT -

The Mayor (Councillor Chris Frost); The Deputy Mayor (Councillor George Crawford); Councillors Michael Arthur, Tony Axelrod, Richard Baker, Rekha Bansil, John Beckett, Steve Bridger, Kate Chinn, Alex Clarke, Lucie Dallen, Neil Dallen, Hannah Dalton, Graham Dudley, Robert Foote, Liz Frost, Rob Geleit, Eber Kington, Jan Mason, Tina Mountain, Barry Nash, Martin Olney, Jane Race, David Reeve, Humphrey Reynolds, Guy Robbins, Vince Romagnuolo, Clive Smitheram, Jean Steer, Alan Sursham, Mike Teasdale, Peter Webb, David Wood, Clive Woodbridge and Tella Wormington

Absent: Councillors Omer KoKou-Tchri, Peter O'Donovan and Keith Partridge

The Meeting was preceded by prayers led, in the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, by the Chief Executive

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Councillors in items on this agenda.

26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council held on 15 October 2015 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Mayor

27 MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS/BUSINESS

The Mayor referenced the terrible events in Paris and informed the Council that he had sent a message of condolence. The Mayor also reported with sadness the recent death of much respected former County Councillor Richard Rothwell.

Finally the Mayor invited Members to join him for carol singing in the Ashley Centre on 19 December 2015

28 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- a) *Meetings in relation to the provision of Christmas Lights: Councillor Alexander Clarke asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Neil Dallen*

Question:

Were there any meetings held as to the placement/design of Christmas Lights in the town? How much has been spent on Christmas Decorations each year for the last decade? And where did that money come from?

Reply:

- a) Yes there were meetings.
- b) Very little Council money has been spent over the last decade.
- c) Individual RA Councillors, Ward RA committees and local businesses have raised most of the required funding along with some contributions from County Councillor allowances.
- d) Thanks are due to Resident Association Councillors for taking the initiative with Christmas decorations and helping to support the local businesses.
- b) *Government Announcement in relation to Right to Buy: Councillor Guy Robbins asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Social Committee, Councillor Jean Steer:*

Question:

Can I ask the chairman of the Social committee how this Council is clarifying, and reacting to, the Government's decision that tenants of Housing Associations will now have to offer Right to Buy and how this might affect the provision of rented housing in Epsom and Ewell?

Reply:

I thank Councillor Robbins for his question. The extension of the Right To Buy to Housing Association properties will inevitably reduce the already scarce supply of social rented properties in the borough. The main provider of social housing in the Borough, Rosebery Housing Association, have assessed the potential impact and suggest that it may be less keenly felt in this Borough than elsewhere in the Country. However, over the last few years we have seen the number of housing association properties fall sharply as the pace of new developments has slowed. We also find that existing social homes become available for re-letting significantly less often than would be expected when looking at local and National re-let rates, which further exacerbates the pressures we face.

In 2012/13 we had 174 properties available for social rent by people in housing need whilst so far this year only 27 such properties have been made available: however we are expecting a further 79 new build homes by the end of this financial year, 69 of which will be rented. The buoyant private rented sector is also out of the reach of many people in housing need who cannot afford the high market rents in the borough, commentators tell us that private rents have risen by 38% in the past five years and are expected to increase by a further 40% in the coming five years. Officers in Housing Services are developing new initiatives to try to secure access to the private rented sector to off-set the lack of affordable housing for rent.

In response to this imbalance between supply and demand, we are working with local Housing Associations and the private rented sector to stimulate the supply of truly affordable homes but I nevertheless intend to write to our M.P to point out the effect this ill-timed policy is having on our ability to help the increasing number of homeless families in our Borough.

- c) *Horton Chapel: Councillor Alexander Clarke asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Neil Dallen:*

Question:

What are the current/proposed plans for Horton Chapel? And has any money been spent on it since the council took ownership?

Reply:

- a) Please see S&R report for the current and proposed plans
- b) A small amount of money has been spent for essential maintenance and to secure the building.

- d) *Bin Collection: Councillor Alexander Clarke asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Environment Committee, Councillor John Beckett:*

Question:

Has the policy of not returning for 'black' (plastic) bins saved any money? And has there been any upsurge in calls to the call centre over it?

Reply:

I thank Councillor Clarke for his question. The policy of not returning for missed black recycling bins was introduced along with that service in 2009. While the exact amount saved has not been calculated, it is certain that this has saved the Council money. Recycling vehicles typically average just 2-4 miles per gallon. Therefore, a trip of 2-3 miles off route to collect a missed bin may save up to a gallon of diesel, representing a saving of £4-5.

There has been very little concern with the policy amongst residents. The Council put great emphasis on communications when the service was launched in order to engage with residents and fully explain our policies.

Some individuals have called the Contact Centre to express their concern, but have generally understood and supported the policy when the financial benefit has been explained to them.

There has not been an upsurge in calls to the Councils call centre as a result of this policy as we get approximately an average of 100 calls a month relating to refuse issues. From these 100 or so calls we have around 7 residents a month who go on to make a formal complaint.

- e) *Parking Enforcement: Councillor Alexander Clarke asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Environment Committee, Councillor John Beckett:*

Question:

Can it please be confirmed that it is still the case that Epsom & Ewell Civil Enforcement Officers are not set quotas, and that their rate of appeals is low?

Reply:

I thank Councillor Clarke for his question. I can confirm that Epsom and Ewell Civil Enforcement Officers are not set quotas for issuing Penalty Charge Notices. In terms of appeals the City and Guilds Level 3 Notice Processing Guide says you can expect over 25% of all PCNs issued to result in correspondence. Since 1st April 2013 I can confirm that the amount of incoming correspondence logged on average is 27.2% of the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued, however this figure may include more than one appeal against the same penalty charge notice.

- f) *Constitutional Changes: Councillor Alexander Clarke asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Neil Dallen:*

Question:

Since the decision of 21/04/2015 has the Monitoring officer seen fit to make any constitutional changes?

Reply:

No further constitutional changes have been made.

- g) *Urgent Question tabled in accordance with FCR70: proposed changes to protection of Green Belt: Councillor Liz Frost asked the following question and received the following written answer from the Chairman of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Graham Dudley:*

Question:

I see that the Government is proposing changes to planning protection in the Green Belt. The consultation period is very short. Our residents have expressed great concern for the protection of our Green Belt land. Would the Chairman of the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee please respond to the consultation as a matter of urgency in support of the Borough Council maintaining control over planning applications in our Green Belt?

Reply:

I understand the government has published a consultation about changes to a wide range of planning policy issues. These are understood to include proposed changes to national planning policy that could allow for the allocation of sites located within the Green belt for starter homes. This consultation has not been widely publicized and (like you) Officers only became aware of it today (Tuesday 8 December 2015).

I also understand the consultation will run across the forthcoming public holiday period and is scheduled to conclude on 25 January 2016. In order to meet this deadline, I have asked Officers to prepare a verbal report to the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee this Thursday 10 December 2015. The report will provide an overview of the topics covered by the consultation and identify a suggested response from the Council based on our adopted planning policy strategy for the Borough. If necessary, I will also call a special meeting of the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee to consider our response further.

29 STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The recommendations arising from the Special meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held immediately preceding the Council meeting and the recommendation arising from the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 17 November 2015 were received.

Upon being put the **MOTION (adoption of Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17)** was **CARRIED** without a division.

RESOLVED

that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17 be approved and adopted

Upon being put the **MOTION (Calendar of Meetings 2016/17)** was **CARRIED** without a division.

RESOLVED

that the Calendar of Meetings for 2016/17 be approved and adopted

30 SOCIAL CENTRES REVIEW

The Council considered a report by the Head of Venues and Facilities arising from the recommendations of the Social Committee following the recent service review undertaken by the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee.

In moving the recommendations set out in the report, the Chairman of the Social Committee stated that she was committed to social activities for all ages – not just for the elderly or retired. She considered that it was important that the Council provided Social Centres which complemented services provided by the Leisure Developments Team and the voluntary sector even though it did not have a statutory obligation to do so. In fact, the Longmead Centre had recently won an award for its services. The Chairman went on to state that she was supportive of the amalgamation of the two Social Centres. The Longmead Centre was capable of accommodating an increase in members but would need refurbishment and rebranding. It was accessible by public transport and serviced by Routecall.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Tina Mountain and **SECONDED** by Councillor Alexander Clarke that:

“the decision regarding the future of the Wells social community Centre be deferred until a full consultation be carried out with the residents of the Wells Estate”

Upon the **MOTION** being put, it was **LOST**, there being 6 Members in favour and the majority against

It was thereupon **MOVED** by Councillor Neil Dallen and **SECONDED** by Councillor Clive Woodbridge that:

“This Council

- (1) Recognises that, faced with a funding shortfall of around £2.5 million by 2019/2020, due to central government cuts, the most efficient use of council funds is to amalgamate all Social Centre provision into one Centre in Sefton Road, which is to be known as the Epsom Centre;*
- (2) Further recognises that the current subsidy of £362 per member at the Wells Centre is not sustainable and agrees to review the cost of this provision as part of the move to one centre, with a view to increasing value for money while enhancing the range of services provided;*
- (3) As part of the move to one centre, commits to provide up to £70,000 from any capital sum derived from any disposal of the Wells Centre to support development of the Epsom Centre, in order to deliver improved service provision;*

- (4) *Noting that the Wells Centre currently has community use, based on current hiring levels, agrees that on-going provision for a community facility should form part of any disposal of the Wells Centre;*

And that should Members decide in favour of 1 to 4 above, this Council agrees to:

- (5) *Investigate disposal of the Wells Centre, which is to be carried out either by:*
- a) *Raising the required finance to develop the site into housing to be managed by a company set up there to do; or*
 - b) *Selling to a developer and thereby realising a capital receipt;*

and in both cases with a view towards making ongoing provision for a community facility, subject to officer evaluation and advice on these options, and any other such options as they consider appropriate.

- (6) *And approves the following:*
- a) *Social Centre provision at the Wells Centre will cease from close of business on Friday April 1st 2016;*
 - b) *Current hirers of the Wells Centre, including the Wells Preschool, be allowed to continue to use the venue until such time as a decision is taken as to the future of the building, providing they provide caretaking services themselves and have appropriate insurance, enabling EEBC expenditure at the venue to be limited, to avoid breaking the 5% VAT partial exemption calculation.*
 - c) *Members agree to the creation of a task group of three members nominated by full council and supported by the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Resources and the Head of Venues to oversee the rationalisation to one site, any disposal of the Wells and any subsequent improvement works to the Sefton Road site, and to report back progress to the relevant committees.*
 - d) *Members agree to include options a) to f) in section 5.6 of this report as options to be considered as part of the report to Strategy and Resources committee regarding disposal of the Wells Centre site”.*

Upon being put, the **MOTION** was **CARRIED**, there being 29 Members in favour and 6 against.

It was thereupon **MOVED** by Councillor Vince Romagnuolo and **SECONDED** by Councillor Rob Geleit that:

“the number of members on the task group be increased to five and that two of the five members be Councillors from the relevant Wards of Stamford and Court”

Upon being put, the **MOTION** was **LOST**, there being 7 Members in favour, 26 against and 2 not voting.

It was thereupon **MOVED** by Councillor Tina Mountain and **SECONDED** by Councillor Alexander Clarke that:

“one of three members on the task group be Conservative”

Upon being put, the **MOTION** was **LOST**, there being 3 Members in favour, 2 members not voting and the majority against.

Upon being put, the substantive **MOTION** was **CARRIED** there being 27 members in favour, 6 members against and 2 not voting

RESOLVED

This Council

- (1) **Recognises that, faced with a funding shortfall of around £2.5 million by 2019/2020, due to central government cuts, the most efficient use of council funds is to amalgamate all Social Centre provision into one Centre in Sefton Road, which is to be known as the Epsom Centre;**
- (7) **Further recognises that the current subsidy of £362 per member at the Wells Centre is not sustainable and agrees to review the cost of this provision as part of the move to one centre, with a view to increasing value for money while enhancing the range of services provided;**
- (8) **As part of the move to one centre, commits to provide up to £70,000 from any capital sum derived from any disposal of the Wells Centre to support development of the Epsom Centre, in order to deliver improved service provision;**
- (9) **Noting that the Wells Centre currently has community use, based on current hiring levels, agrees that on-going provision for a community facility should form part of any disposal of the Wells Centre;**

And that should Members decide in favour of 1 to 4 above, this Council agrees to:

- (10) **Investigate disposal of the Wells Centre, which is to be carried out either by:**
 - a) **Raising the required finance to develop the site into housing to be managed by a company set up there to do; or**
 - b) **Selling to a developer and thereby realising a capital receipt;**

and in both cases with a view towards making ongoing provision for a community facility, subject to officer evaluation and advice on these options, and any other such options as they consider appropriate.

(11) And approves the following:

- a) Social Centre provision at the Wells Centre will cease from close of business on Friday April 1st 2016;
- b) Current hirers of the Wells Centre, including the Wells Preschool, be allowed to continue to use the venue until such time as a decision is taken as to the future of the building, providing they provide caretaking services themselves and have appropriate insurance, enabling EEBC expenditure at the venue to be limited, to avoid breaking the 5% VAT partial exemption calculation.
- c) Members agree to the creation of a task group of three members nominated by full council and supported by the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Resources and the Head of Venues to oversee the rationalisation to one site, any disposal of the Wells and any subsequent improvement works to the Sefton Road site, and to report back progress to the relevant committees.
- d) Members agree to include options a) to f) in section 5.6 of this report as options to be considered as part of the report to Strategy and Resources committee regarding disposal of the Wells Centre site.

31 AUDIT, CRIME & DISORDER AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 November 2015 were received and noted.

32 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 1 December 2015 were received and noted.

33 MOTION: SUPPORT FOR ARMED FORCES

Pursuant to FCR 79, Councillor Alexander Clarke **MOVED** and Councillor Neil Dallen **SECONDED**:

“That this Council offers its thanks to, and support for, all the members of the armed forces who will not be home with their families this Christmas be they near or far; and acknowledges that whilst it is hard at any time of year, at Christmas it will be especially so.”

In accordance with the advice given by the Chief Executive, the Council **RESOLVED** (unanimously) to debate the motion.

Upon being put, it was **RESOLVED** (unanimously)

That this Council offers its thanks to, and support for, all the members of the armed forces who will not be home with their families this Christmas be they near or far; and acknowledges that whilst it is hard at any time of year, at Christmas it will be especially so

The meeting began at 19.56 hours and ended at 21.17 hours

CHRISTOPHER FROST
MAYOR