

**Minutes of the Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held on  
10 October 2017**

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**PRESENT -**

Councillor John Beckett (Chairman); Councillor Peter O'Donovan (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Steve Bridger, Neil Dallen (as nominated substitute for Councillor Richard Baker), Rob Geleit, Keith Partridge, Jane Race, Mike Teasdale and Tella Wormington

Absent: Councillor Richard Baker and Councillor Lucie Dallen

Officers present: Lee Duffy (Acting Director of Finance and Resources), Mark Berry (Head of Place Development) (For items 10 to 15), Joy Stevens (Head of Customer Services and Business Support), Richard Appiah-Ampofo (Accountant), Richard Chevalier (Parking Manager), Michael Hill (For items 10 to 13), Jeremy Young (Tree Officer Place Development) (For items 10 to 15) and Fiona Cotter (Democratic Services Manager)

**10 QUESTION TIME**

No questions were asked or had been submitted by members of the public.

**11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by councillors regarding items on the Agenda.

**12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 12 June 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of the start and end time of the meeting.

**13 BUILDING CONTROL FEES AND CHARGES**

The Committee received and noted a report which summarised activity on the Building Control chargeable account

The report highlighted that the overriding objective when setting building control charges was that the income from performing chargeable functions and providing chargeable advice ought as nearly as possible equate to the costs incurred by the authority in performing those functions over a rolling three year period. The level of work was variable and not directly within the control of the Council. A

reasonable approach therefore had to be taken in estimating expenditure and income and the report stated that the Council's approach to doing this and setting charges conformed to standard practice.

The budget for 2017/18 on the chargeable account had been increased by £42,496 mainly due to the increase in revenue from this service over the previous period. Savings had been made by holding open a vacant post. The budget for 2017/18 assumed that the Council would generate £320,000 from building control charges compared to £316,663 in 2016/17.

The Building Control chargeable account had shown a surplus for the past three years but there was the was a risk that future revenue might not remain at previous levels. The data upon which the split between chargeable and non-chargeable activities were identified had not be reviewed for a number of years. Therefore, a review would be undertaken to ensure that the pattern of chargeable and non-chargeable time and costs had not significantly changed since the last assessment. This was important because it was a key factor in fee setting and determined the level of surplus or deficits upon the Building Control Account. It was important to ensure that the Council maximised revenue and achieved the requirement to breakeven over a three-year period in accordance with the relevant legislation.

#### 14 CORPORATE PLAN: PERFORMANCE REPORT ONE 2017 TO 2018

The Committee received a report that provided an update of performance against its Key Priority Performance Targets for 2017/18 as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The report highlighted that, of the committee's eleven targets, seven were "green" ("on track/achieved") and four were at "amber" ("slightly off track/not a major concern or slippage").

It was noted that street cleansing inspections would be targeted to 113 areas, randomly selected twice a year. Members were encouraged to report issues with street cleansing in order that the areas could be added to a schedule for future inspections.

Accordingly, having considered the performance reported in Annexe 1 to the report, the Committee:

- (1) Did not identify any areas of concern;
- (2) Noted that there were no targets against which performance was currently a concern to Officers.

#### 15 PROPOSED STREET TREE PLANTING SCHEME

The Committee received and considered a report setting out the proposed introduction of a scheme for tree planting on the public highway funded by public subscription.

The proposals were being put forward following the termination of the agency agreement with Surrey County Council, which, until March 2017, had allowed for the maintenance of street trees and the planting of new street trees by this Council on behalf of the County Council.

Under the proposed new scheme, this Council would continue to facilitate a cost-neutral programme of new tree planting on the highway, helping to ensure that the Borough remained green and tree cover maintained (a much-valued feature of the Borough). By procuring the work with the consent of the County Council, this Council would be able to control the replenishment, and enhancement, of the street tree stock in the Borough, something that was not of high priority to the County Council.

It was anticipated that there would be public support for the scheme and therefore a steady stream of work/income generated but this could not be guaranteed. In order for the scheme to remain cost neutral, the hours of the administrator would need to be flexible to meet demand. It was therefore proposed that the administrative resource necessary might initially be sought on a secondment basis. The Tree Advisory Board had been actively seeking donations towards the scheme and the willingness to donate or donations from other sources might well be enhanced by having an approved scheme in place.

It was noted that dead trees would no longer be completely removed and would be cut down to a metre in height – so as not to present a trip hazard – and left. Stump removal had not currently been factored into the costs of the scheme, which further supported the case for an initial uniform unit cost of £250 per tree which would be subject to review (it was not intended in the long term to do anything other than cover the costs of the scheme).

Accordingly, having requested that its appreciation of the work undertaken by the Tree Advisory Board be recorded, the Committee:

- (1) Agreed to establish a Street Tree Planting Scheme on the basis that this would be at nil cost to the Council;
- (2) Authorised the Head of Place Development to make the necessary arrangements including the procurement of the requisite administrative resource to support the scheme;
- (3) Noted that the scheme would commence as soon as reasonably practicable following the appointment of the administrative support but that no definitive start date could be given;
- (4) Noted that the unit cost of £250 per tree would be adopted for any planting carried out in the remainder of the financial year and for the 2018/19 financial year, the rate to be subject to review in subsequent years as part of the annual review of fees and charges.

**16 PARKING FEES & CHARGES 2018/19**

A report was presented to the Committee that sought agreement to off street parking fees and charges for 2018/19, considered by a cross party Working Group. The report also sought to regularise the practice of offering free parking in Epsom Town Centre car parks on the three Sundays in the lead up to Christmas and on Christmas Day and for two specific annual events held in Ewell Village.

In regard to parking fees and charges, the proposals discussed at the Working Group and put forward for consideration by this Committee were as follows:

- a) to realign the maximum evening charge in all Epsom car parks to £2.50. This would also ensure that the maximum charge on a Sunday evening in the Ashley Centre, Depot Road and Upper High Street car parks were harmonised with the charge on a Monday to Saturday;
- b) to amend five other car park tariffs by an additional 10 pence (Annexe 1 to the report referred);
- c) to increase car park permit charges (Annexe 2 to the report referred);
- d) for the charges for Parker Cards, lost parking tokens to remain unchanged. A release fee from Hook Road Car Park to be introduced to release vehicles if an Officer was available to do so.

In regard to regularising the practice of offering free parking in certain particular cases, the Working Group supported the proposal as a means of supporting traders in the Town Centre and Ewell Village and also resident's dislodged by the road closures in Ewell Village as a result of the particular events in question.

The report highlighted that the budget targets for car parking income in 2018/19 anticipated additional income totalling £112,896. The current proposed charges would generate additional income of £61,746. This was a shortfall of £51,150 against the target set by the Strategy and Resources Committee. Additional income would need to be identified either from car parks or elsewhere within the Council's budget to meet this shortfall to enable the Council to set a balanced budget at its meeting in February 2018.

The Committee:

- (1) Agreed in principle the changes to car park fees and charges identified by the cross party Parking Working Group set out in Annexe 1 to the report;
- (2) Agreed in principle the changes to business and residential permit fees as identified by the cross Parking Working Group set out in Annexe 2 to the report;
- (3) Agreed in principle the fees set out in Annexe 3 to the report;

- (4) Agreed to waive car parking charges for the following events or periods on an annual basis until further notice:
- a) In all car parks in Epsom Town Centre on Christmas Day and the three Sundays immediately preceding it;
  - b) In Dorset House and Ewell High Street car parks from 4pm on the day of Ewell Yule until 7am the following morning;
  - c) In Dorset House and Ewell High Street car parks from 6.30pm in the evening prior to the Ewell Village Summer Fair until 6.30pm on the day of the fair.

Note: Councillor Jane Race wished her objection to any increase in parking fees and charges to be recorded.

## 17 BUDGET TARGETS 2018/19

A report was presented to the Committee informing members of the Council's revenue budget targets approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The report sought support for changes to services and any further guidance on the preparation of the Committee's service estimates for 2018/19 and for the following next two years.

The report highlighted that the Council's current budget strategy involved continuing to deliver efficiency savings and generate additional service income whilst reviewing service levels in order that service costs could be reduced as needed to achieve a balanced budget year on year. The impact of this on this Committee's budget targets was that the Committee had offered up £146,000 of savings in 2018/19 towards the Council's overall savings target of £588,000. £52,000 of these savings related to the Committee's decision last year to cease sweeping up highway verge cuttings after cutting. Officers had further identified efficiency savings and income generation schemes totalling £94,000. However, the report indicated that, even with this contribution towards savings, the Council still faced a budget deficit of £90,000 in 2018/19 and further savings would be required by all committees to address this gap.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Noted the implications of the budget targets approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- (2) Noted the previously agreed savings identified in paragraph 3.3 of the report;
- (3) Supported in principle the future savings options as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report for further work and inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Strategy;

- (4) Noted that it might be requested to give further consideration as to how additional savings could be generated to address the Council-wide funding gap of £90,000 as identified in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

*The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.13 pm*

COUNCILLOR JOHN BECKETT (CHAIRMAN)