

Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on 26 November 2019

PRESENT -

Councillor Eber Kington (Chairman); Councillor Clive Smitheram (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Arthur Abdulin, Steve Bridger, Kate Chinn, Nigel Collin, Hannah Dalton, David Gulland, Colin Keane and Barry Nash

In Attendance: Amber Banister (Audit Manager) (Grant Thornton (External Auditor)) (Items 26 - 28 only)

Officers present: Kathryn Beldon (Chief Executive), Damian Roberts (Chief Operating Officer), Amardip Healy (Chief Legal Officer), Shona Mason (Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development), Brendan Bradley (Chief Accountant) and Tim Richardson (Committee Administrator)

26 QUESTION TIME

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

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made regarding items on this agenda.

28 EXTERNAL AUDIT - ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

The Committee received a report presenting the external auditor's Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31 March 2019 and the latest Progress Report.

The External Auditor was in attendance at the meeting and introduced the Annual Audit letter and Progress report.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Accounts Audit Plan.** Following a question from a Member, the External Auditor informed the Committee that a detailed Accounts Audit Plan would be presented to the Committee's meeting in March 2020 rather than January 2020, due to a clash of date.
- b) **Proposed fee variations.** The Committee noted that the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter proposed a fee variation of an additional £4,000 in relation to work undertaken on the Council's pension liability following the McCloud ruling, and on the Council's non-current assets portfolio. Members of the Committee queried why this work was not

covered by the External Audit fees for 2018/19 as set by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA). It was noted that proposed fee variations had been referred to PSAA for decision as to whether they were payable by the Council.

- c) **Materiality.** The Committee was informed that the External Auditor had determined the materiality for the audit of financial statements to be 2% of gross revenue. The External Auditor informed the Committee this was the largest percentage they were able to apply, and that a large percentage indicated a low risk.

Following consideration, it was resolved that:

The Committee:

- (1) **received the Annual Audit Letter for the year 2018/19 (Annex 1 to the report)**
- (2) **received the External Audit Progress Report for the year 2019/20 (Annex 2 to the report)**

29 EMPLOYEE PAY & REWARD - COST OF LIVING AWARD 2020-2024

The Committee received a report seeking approval of the draft Employee Pay & Reward procedure, and also for the Council's proposed pay award for 2020-2024.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Cap of 3% on cost of living award.** The Committee noted that the Employee Pay & Reward Procedure 2020-24 included a 3% cap on the pay award, should CPI exceed that level. The Committee was informed that this was to ensure the affordability of the award.
- b) **Staff turnover.** The Committee was informed that the Council's staff turnover of 20.7% for 2018-19 was within the normal spectrum for such an organisation.
- c) **Living wage.** The Committee noted that all of the Council's pay grades were above the National Living Wage.

Following consideration, it was resolved that:

The Committee:

- (1) **approved the draft Employee Pay & Reward procedure for 2020 – 2024, attached at Annex 1 to the report;**
- (2) **agreed an annual pay award based on CPI as outlined in the draft Employee Pay & Reward procedure for 2020 - 2024 and the costs required to fund the pay award;**
- (3) **noted the associated budget implication.**

30 EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL PENSION DISCRETIONS POLICY

The Committee received a report providing background information on the proposed draft Pension Discretions Policy.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Use of policy.** Following a question from a Member in regard to monitoring the policy, the Committee was informed that it was not intended to present a summary on the application of the Policy to a future meeting. The exercise of the Policy was a matter for the Chief Executive's decision.

Following consideration, it was resolved:

That the Committee:

- (1) agreed the draft Pension Discretions Policy at Annex 1; and**
- (2) referred the draft Pension Discretions Policy to Council for approval.**

31 APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMAN

The Committee received a report inviting it to consider conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Jean Steer in recognition of her eminent services to the Borough.

Following consideration, it was resolved:

That the Committee asked:

- (1) that the Council places on record its deep appreciation of the eminent services to the Council rendered by former Councillor Jean Steer, and**
- (2) that a Special Meeting of the Council be convened immediately following Full Council on the 10 December 2019*, at which members will be recommended to confer the title of Honorary Alderman.**

*Note of correction: the date of the Full Council meeting in December 2019 was rescheduled to 18 December 2019, and accordingly, the Special Meeting of the Council would also be held on that date.

32 POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2019

The Committee received a report setting out the outcome of the consultation process on Polling Places and Districts and recommendations from the Polling Station Review Working Group for proposed changes.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Legislative requirements.** The Committee noted that the Representation of the People Act 1983 sets out the requirements of polling station reviews, including the considerations which the Council was required to take into account. The Act dictates that the elector is the primary interest when determining the location of a polling place.
- b) **Ruxley Ward.** The Committee noted the proposal of the Polling Station Review Working Group that Epsom and Ewell High School remain a polling place.
- c) **West Ewell Ward.** The Committee noted the Working Group's proposal to change the Polling Station for EA District to the West Ewell Evangelical Church, Lansdowne Road.
- d) **Nonsuch Ward.** The Committee noted the Working Group's finding that no proposed changes to arrangements for Nonsuch Ward could be recommended for District IB at this time. It was noted that officers would continue to look for suitable alternative sites and at the possibility of temporary/mobile options.
- e) **Court Ward.** The Committee noted the Working Group's recommendation that a further polling District (FC) be created and located at a Polling Station in Court Recreation Ground Pavilion, to enable the polling stations at Southfields School to be reconfigured in such a manner as to enable the school to remain open for students on a polling day.

The Committee also noted that a site visit to investigate the suitability of the use of Horton Chapel as a Polling Station would be undertaken by Officers at the appropriate time.

Following consideration, it was resolved:

That the Committee recommended to Council:

- (1) **the location of the polling places and districts as set out in Annex 2 to the report for a five year period from 1st January 2020, or until it is superseded by any subsequent review of any polling place or district; and**
- (2) **that the Council delegates to the Chief Executive 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.**

33 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 24 September 2019 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.21 pm

COUNCILLOR EBER KINGTON (CHAIRMAN)