

Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on 27 July 2021

PRESENT -

Councillor Colin Keane (Chair); Councillor Hannah Dalton (Vice-Chair); Councillors Kate Chinn, Bernice Froud, David Gulland, Lucie McIntyre, Clive Smitheram and Clive Woodbridge

Absent: Councillor Robert Foote and Councillor Eber Kington

Officers present: Kathryn Beldon (Chief Executive), Clare Lawrence (Director of Environment, Housing & Regeneration), Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Amardip Healy (Chief Legal Officer), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Brendan Bradley (Chief Accountant), Rachel Kundasamy (Health and Wellbeing Officer) and Tim Richardson (Committee Administrator)

1 WITHDRAWAL OF ITEMS

The Chair informed the Committee that Items 04 (The Wells Development) and 05 (Allocation of S106 Affordable Housing and CIL Payments) of the published agenda had been withdrawn from the agenda and would not be considered at the meeting.

The Chair also informed the Committee that Item 08 (Review of Development Management Service) of the published agenda had been withdrawn and replaced by Item 18 (Planning Development Management – Resources). Item 18 had been published prior to the meeting as a supplement to the agenda.

2 QUESTION TIME

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

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations were made in relation to items of business to be discussed at the meeting:

Support for Leisure Services

Councillor Bernice Froud, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Bernice Froud declared that she is a paying member of GLL but that she came with an open mind to the meeting.

Support for Leisure Services

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Hannah Dalton declared that she was involved in previous discussions with GLL regarding support for Leisure Services in her previous role as the Vice-Chair of Community and Wellbeing Committee, but that she came with an open mind to the meeting.

Support for Leisure Services

Councillor Lucie McIntyre, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Lucie McIntyre declared that her children are paying members of GLL but that she came with an open mind to the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Special meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 12 July 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

5 THE EPSOM AND EWELL PANTRY

The Committee received a report proposing the use of the Council owned ground floor commercial unit at 24 South Street, Epsom for piloting the Epsom and Ewell Pantry, providing an overview of the 'Your Local Pantry' model, and setting out the business case for delivery in the borough.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Head of Housing and Environmental Services.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Lease of building:** Following a question from a Member, the Officer confirmed that despite the proposed 3-year lease, the tenant would have the option of terminating the contract after 12 months.
- b) **Location:** Members noted the town centre location of the premises and its proximity public to transport links. It was noted that the Pantry would mainly be visited for smaller, more frequent collections of essentials as opposed to larger weekly shops, omitting the need for trolley access.

Following consideration, it was resolved unanimously that the Committee:

- (1) Agreed to a 3 year commercial lease for the ground floor unit at 24 South Street to be utilised as a Food Pantry as set out in section 3 of the report.
- (2) Authorised the Head of Property and Chief Legal Officer to agree terms and complete the Pantry lease.

6 SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Committee received a report outlining the nature of safeguarding concerns and proposing an updated safeguarding policy and procedure which sets out how and when concerns can be escalated for both adult and children safeguarding concerns.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Head of Housing and Environmental Services.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Presentation to Committee:** This item was presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee rather than the Environment and Safe Communities Committee due to its strategic nature.
- b) **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks:** Following a question from a Member, the Committee was informed that the relevant legislative guidance did not identify local authority councillors as being a group who required DBS checks. Accordingly, the proposed Safeguarding Policy and Procedure did not require Councillors to have DBS checks. This was an approach shared by most District and Borough Councils.

Following consideration, it was resolved unanimously that the Committee:

- (1) **Agreed the adoption of an updated Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for Children and Adults as set out in Annex 1 to the report;**
- (2) **Agreed that minor updates to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure are delegated to the Head of Housing and Community in consultation with the Director of Housing, Environment and Regeneration and the Chair of Strategy and Resources.**

7 PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - RESOURCES

The Committee received a report seeking approval for additional resources to enable the Planning Development Management Service to procure consultancy support to clear the current backlog in planning and related applications. In addition, to employ an officer to train staff in compliance and to undertake an independent review of the service by the Planning Officer's Society.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Timing of review:** Following a question from a Member, the Committee was informed that Officers felt that undertaking the review in the Autumn would be the most appropriate timing, and would reduce the risk of a further back-log of activity developing.
- b) **Staff turnover:** Following questions from Members, the Committee was informed that there was a national shortage in Planning Officers and that this was particularly acute in Surrey Local Authorities. Officers were not

aware of any particular local factors at the Council which were leading to staff turnover.

- c) **Apprenticeships:** The Committee noted that Officers would consider the use of apprenticeships to assist in recruiting and retaining staff going forward.
- d) **Involvement of Chair and Vice Chair.** It was noted that the review would involve the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.
- e) **Task and Finish Group:** The Committee noted that the Member Task and Finish Group would be comprised of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee and other involved Members to give a Member oversight of the review. The purpose of the Group would be to ensure the effectiveness of the review and that the Action Plan was drawn up in accordance with the review's recommendations, with a clear plan for their implementation.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved unanimously:

- (1) **To agree to an independent Planning Officers Society review of the Development Management Service;**
- (2) **To agree to procure consultancy support to clear the backlog of planning applications;**
- (3) **To agree to retain existing senior agency staff pending permanent recruitment to roles;**
- (4) **To agree to appoint an enforcement trainer to work with and train planning officers in planning enforcement;**
- (5) **To approve the allocation of up to £190,000 to the Development Management Service budget to enable the additional resource and for the review to be undertaken;**
- (6) **A Member Task and Finish Group to oversee the review and progress against implementation of an action plan.**

8 FUTURE OF THE BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

The Committee received a report seeking approval to commence a public consultation, in line with best practice, on the future delivery of the Council's building control service.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Director of Environment, Housing & Regeneration.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Nature of consultation:** The Officer confirmed that extensive work was being undertaken to explore the different options available. The Committee was informed that although the Council was currently working with Elmbridge Mutual following the retirement of its Building Control Surveyors, this did not in any way influence the outcome of the consultation, and that the Council was open to other options.
- b) **Partnership arrangements:** Members spoke about the possible arrangements regarding partnerships with other Local Authorities. It was noted that should the option to go into a shared service be taken forward, the Council would become an equal partner of a mutual partnership.
- c) **Consultation:** Members spoke about the importance of the consultation being representative of the whole community, as well as being inclusive of residents who are not IT-literate or have access to the internet. These comments were noted.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved unanimously to:

- (1) **Agree that officers commence consultation with the public and other interested parties as soon as possible to obtain views on the future delivery of the building control service;**
- (2) **Delegate authority to the Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration to approve the final consultation document; and**
- (3) **Note that a further report will be brought to this Committee on the outcome of the public consultation and seek a decision on the future delivery of the service.**

9 2020-21 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN

The Committee received a report summarising the Council's provisional financial performance for 2020/21 and detailing the capital budgets to be carried forward for schemes where costs will be incurred in 2021/22.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Chief Accountant.

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Car parking:** Members noted that a high figure of income is generated from car park fees. Members spoke about the Climate Change Strategy which may impact the usage of car parks, and how the Council may reduce its dependency on car park income to promote greener transport.
- b) **Thanks to Finance Team.** Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to the Council's Finance Officers for their work over the past year.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved unanimously to:

- (1) **Receive the report on provisional financial outturn for 2020/21;**

- (2) **Note the carry forward £2.471m budget for capital schemes to be added to the 2021/22 capital programme.**
- (3) **Note that the external audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts is underway and is expected to complete in the Autumn. Should any material changes to outturn arise from the audit, these would be reported to this Committee in Autumn.**

10 2020-21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

The Committee received a report presenting the Council's treasury management performance in 2020/21.

The Committee received a verbal introduction from the Chief Accountant.

The following matter was raised by the Committee:

- a) **Risk Appetite:** Following a question from a Member, the Officer explained that the Council's risk appetite for treasury investments is defined by the parameters and limits contained within the Treasury Management Strategy. Members have the opportunity to review and challenge the Treasury Management Strategy when it is presented for approval annually.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved unanimously to:

- (1) **Receive the report on the Council's treasury management performance 2020/21;**
- (2) **Approve the 2020/21 prudential indicators.**

11 CAPITAL MEMBER GROUP

This report requests the Strategy and Resources Committee to consider appointments to the Capital Member Group, approve an increase in budget of the Disabled Facilities programme and to agree the capital bidding process for 2022/23 to 2024/25.

The following matter was raised by the Committee:

- a) **Ashley Centre Fire:** Following a question from a Member, the Committee was informed that the recent fire which took place at the Ashley Centre car park had affected the car park expansion joint project in localised places. This has been factored in to the works which were being put together, and costs would be recovered where possible.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved unanimously to:

- (1) **Appoint Members to the Capital Member Group. The following Members were appointed: Councillors Colin Keane (Chair), Neil**

Dallen, Alex Coley, John Beckett and 1 opposition party representative (it subsequently confirmed as Councillor Kate Chinn);

- (2) Approve the increase in budget of £185,282 for the Disabled Facilities programme, in line with the allocation of central government grant funding;
- (3) Approve the increase in budget of £8,525 and reduction in scope for the Ashley Centre Car Park Expansion Joints project;
- (4) Confirm the criteria for considering capital bids as set out in paragraph 9.1 of the report;
- (5) Confirm the criteria for assessing 'spend to save' capital bids as set out in paragraph 9.2 of the report.

12 STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received a report presenting a forward plan of items that it was anticipated will require consideration by the Committee at its future meetings.

The following matter was raised by the Committee:

- a) **Withdrawn Items:** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Property and Regeneration informed the Committee that it was intended to present the two Items which had been withdrawn from this agenda (Allocation of S106 Affordable Housing and CIL Payments and the Wells Development) to the next meeting of the Committee.

Following consideration, it was resolved unanimously to:

- (1) **Note and agree the Committee's current Forward Plan as attached at Appendix 1 of the report.**

13 AUDIO & VISUAL PROVISION FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Committee received a report considering options for the purchase of an audio and visual solution for Council and Committee Meetings.

The Committee was addressed by the Chief Legal Officer, who identified a typographical correction to Recommendation 1 of the report to read:

- (1) "To comment on the options set out at paras **2.39** to **2.44** of the report for meeting infrastructure;" (correction marked in bold)

The following matters were raised by the Committee:

- a) **Layout:** Members spoke about the different layout options within the Chamber, including the possibility of utilising dual microphone units and the return of the horseshoe seating layout.

- b) **Opportunity for improvements:** Members noted the opportunity for improvements, including disabled provision and visual quality.

Councillor Hannah Dalton proposed an amendment to recommendation 3 of the report, which was seconded by Councillor Lucie McIntyre. This was to read:

- (3) “To delegate to the Director of Corporate Services and the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee, the purchase of an audio visual solution for Council and Committee meetings and bring a solution back for approval at the meeting of the Strategy and resources Committee in September 2021.”**

This amendment to the recommendation was agreed by the Committee unanimously.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved unanimously:

- (1) To comment on the options set out at paras 2.39 to 2.44 of the report for meeting infrastructure;**
- (2) To agree for officers to investigate preferred options from Recommendation 1 for the purchase of audio & visual meeting equipment for the Council Chamber;**
- (3) To delegate to the Director of Corporate Services and the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee, the purchase of an audio visual solution for Council and Committee meetings and bring a solution back for approval at the meeting of the Strategy and resources Committee in September 2021.**

14 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Committee passed a resolution to exclude the public from the meeting for Part Two of the Agenda on the grounds that the business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 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.

15 EWELL COURT HOUSE COMMERCIAL LEASE

The decision for this item is recorded in a separate (not for publication) restricted Minute.

16 SUPPORT FOR LEISURE SERVICES

The decision for this item is recorded in a separate (not for publication) restricted Minute.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.23 pm

COUNCILLOR COLIN KEANE (CHAIR)

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