

Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on 26 July 2022

PRESENT -

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chair); Councillor Hannah Dalton (Vice-Chair); Councillors Kate Chinn, Alex Coley (Items 05-18 only) (as nominated substitute for Councillor Monica Coleman), Liz Frost, David Gulland, Graham Jones, Colin Keane, Eber Kington and Alan Williamson

In Attendance: Councillor Steven McCormick

Absent: Councillor Monica Coleman

Officers present: Jackie King (Interim Chief Executive), Clare Lawrence (Director of Environment, Housing & Regeneration), Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance), Victoria Potts (Head of Place Development), Gillian McTaggart (Head of Corporate Assurance), Mark Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Will Mace (Business Assurance Manager), Ian Mawer (Planning Policy Manager), Prue Timms (Procurement and Contracts Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager)

5 QUESTION TIME

No questions were asked by members of the public.

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made in relation to items of business to be discussed at the meeting.

7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes and Restricted Minutes of the previous meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 5 May 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair. It was noted that the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 4 July 2022 would be presented to the next meeting for approval.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received a report presenting an updated Risk Management Strategy for adoption to maintain and enhance the Council's corporate governance, and risk management in particular.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Risk response.** A Member of the Committee suggested that the Risk response section (page 23 of the agenda) should be split to separate controls and mitigation. This was noted by Officers.
- b) **Financial risks.** A Member of the Committee suggested that the Financial risk section (page 33 of the agenda) should be split to separate income and costs. This was noted by Officers.
- c) **Correction to typing error.** The Committee noted a correction to a typing error on page 31 of the agenda in the "insignificant" level of risk column in relation to staff. This typing error read "Declining staff dissatisfaction..." and was corrected to read "Increasing staff dissatisfaction...".
- d) **Record of training.** In response to a question from a Member, the Business Assurance Manager informed the Committee that a record of all training sessions would be maintained.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

(1) Approve the updated Risk Management Strategy.

9 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Committee received a report requesting approval to the submission of the Epsom and Ewell Shared Prosperity Fund Intervention Plan to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Recommendations for projects to be considered for future years.** Members were informed that due to the timescales set by the Government for the submission of bids, there was not opportunity to amend the proposed schemes for 2022-23 and 2023-24 following this meeting. It was noted that there was some flexibility with regard to schemes for 2024-25 and that the views of the Committee could be used to guide the submission for 2024-25 and onwards. Members of the Committee identified the following projects for consideration for future submissions of the Prosperity Fund Intervention Plan:
 - Working with arts and cultural businesses to provide courses to young people to increase their skills.
 - A business start-up hub or small business venue.

- Capital schemes providing a long term benefit to the Borough, such as electric waste and refuse collection vehicles.
- b) **Amendment to recommendation.** Cllr Eber Kington proposed, and Cllr David Gulland seconded an amendment to the wording of the recommendation contained within the report. Following the amendment being moved, the Vice Chair proposed an alternative wording for the amendment, and this was accepted by the Councillor Kington prior to the Committee's vote. The amendment was as follows:

“(1) Agree the interventions set out in Paragraph 2.16-2.19 of the report to be included in the submission of the Epsom and Ewell Shared Prosperity Fund Intervention Plan to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

(2) To consider the further recommendations made by the Strategy and Resources Committee for future submissions.”

Following consideration, the Committee agreed with 7 votes for, 1 vote against 1 abstention and the Chair not voting to:

- (1) **Agree the interventions set out in Paragraph 2.16-2.19 of the report to be included in the submission of the Epsom and Ewell Shared Prosperity Fund Intervention Plan to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).**
- (2) **To consider the further recommendations made by the Strategy and Resources Committee for future submissions.**

10 LAND CHARGES MIGRATION

The Committee received a report requesting authorisation to enter into a collaboration agreement to facilitate the migration of the Council's Local Land Charges service to HM Land Registry (HMLR).

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Project Management arrangements.** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Place Development informed the Committee that a Delivery Plan would be agreed with the HMLR, and an internal working Group would be formed to monitor delivery of the project.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Authorise the Head of Place Development, in Consultation with the Chief Legal Officer, to enter into a Collaboration Agreement and agree a Delivery Plan with HMLR and to enter into any other agreements necessary to facilitate the migration of the Council's Local Land Charges service to HMLR.**

- (2) **Agree to allocate up to £18,000 of the Part 1 HMLR Transitional Payment to fund additional staff resource to enable the migration process to be delivered within agreed timescales.**

11 2021-22 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN

The Committee received a report summarising the Council's provisional financial performance for 2021/22 and detailing the capital budgets to be carried forward for schemes where costs will be incurred in 2022/23.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Funding for Local Plan.** The Committee was informed that if allocated funding was not sufficient to meet the costs of Local Plan workstreams, a report would be presented to the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, and if required, to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved with 8 votes for, 1 abstention and the Chair not voting to:

- (1) **Receive the report on provisional financial outturn for 2021/22;**
- (2) **Approve the carry forward £2.564m budget for capital schemes to be added to the 2022/23 capital programme.**
- (3) **Note that the external audit of the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts is underway and expected to complete in the Autumn. Should any material changes to outturn arise from the audit, these will be reported back to members.**

12 2023/24 STRATEGIC FINANCIAL PLANNING

The Committee received a report providing an update on the Council's 2022/23 budget and recommending a financial planning approach for 2023/24 to 2025/26.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Homelessness service.** The Committee noted that the report proposed £243,000 savings from homelessness services for 2023/24, based on the scenario of 58 households in paid overnight accommodation. It was also noted that a number of initiatives were being introduced by the Community and Wellbeing Committee to reduce the cost of homelessness and temporary housing. A Member expressed the view that the proposed savings might not be achievable and requested that the target for housing be kept under review. The Committee noted that the Minutes would record that the budget target for housing and homelessness would be kept under review and would be reviewed prior to the agreement of the 2023/24 budget.
- b) **Re-basing exercise.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Finance informed the Committee that the re-basing exercise had been

identified in the Budget report agreed by Council in February 2022. The Head of Finance expressed the opinion that the re-basing exercise was in response to the once-in-a-generation event of the Covid-19 pandemic, and that he did not anticipate it being repeated in future years unless there was a further adverse event of similar scale.

- c) **Inflation.** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Finance informed the Committee that the current assumptions for inflation were that the existing pay deal for staff, with a cap of 3%, would be honoured in 2023/24. The assumption for energy was that costs would double under a neutral scenario. The Committee noted that Officers would keep these under review, given the uncertainty over inflation.
- d) **Government Covid-19 grant support.** The Committee was informed that Officers had produced the report on the assumption that there would be no further Covid-19 grant support from government in the current year.
- e) **Ewell Court House.** A Member requested further information regarding the budgeted £10,000 saving at Ewell Court House. It was noted that officers would circulate this information following the meeting.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved to agree:

- (1) **The proposed changes to 2022/23 budgets following the re-basing exercise, as set-out in section 5 of the report;**
- (2) **The proposed contingency funding for the homelessness service in 2022/23, as set-out in paragraph 5.5 of the report;**
- (3) **The proposed strategy for setting the 2023/24 budget in Section 6 of the report, including:**
 - i. **That the funding options identified in Table 5 should be progressed;**
 - ii. **That a service-specific savings target of £243k should be set for homelessness;**
 - iii. **That Directors and Heads of Service should work to produce specific income generation and savings options to meet the remaining budget deficit of £1.704m.**
- (4) **That owing to the Council's projected budget deficit, any additional new growth items supported by Policy Committees will need to be fully funded from existing budgets.**
- (5) **The budget setting timetable at Appendix 2 to the report.**

Recommendations 1, 2, and 5 above were agreed unanimously.

Recommendations 3 i, 3 iii and 4 were agreed with 8 votes for, 1 abstention and the Chair not voting.

Recommendation 3 ii was agreed by the Chair's casting vote following 2 votes for, 2 votes against and 5 abstentions.

13 CAPITAL MEMBER GROUP

The Committee received a report requesting it to consider appointments to the Capital Member Group, and to agree the capital bidding process for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Joint Infrastructure Group.** It was noted that the Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration would consider the governance arrangements for the Joint Infrastructure Group and provide a proposal to the Chair and Vice Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Appoint the following Members to the Capital Member Group: Cllrs Neil Dallen (Chair), John Beckett, Alex Coley, Nigel Collin and 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) Confirm the criteria for considering capital bids as set out in paragraph 9.1 of the report;**
- (4) Confirm the criteria for assessing 'spend to save' capital bids as set out in paragraph 9.2 of the report.**

14 EWELL COURT HOUSE TEA ROOMS

The Committee received a report updating it on the Ewell Court House Tea Rooms letting and the subsequent requirement to upgrade the building's electricity supply.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree a new electrical supply is taken from the public highway as described in this report at a cost of £60,000, to be funded from the Capital Receipts Reserve.**
- (2) Authorise the Head of Property & Regeneration, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Legal Officer, to include the works in the Agreement for Lease and progress the electrical supply upgrade at the appropriate time.**

15 COUNTY DEAL - MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP

The Committee received a report advocating the establishment of a cross party Member/Officer Working Group to explore how the Council's views should be

represented in any submission to government (by Surrey County Council) of a proposed 'County Deal for Surrey'.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Membership.** The Committee noted that the Surrey County Council (RA Group) representative on the Working Group was nominated to be Councillor Eber Kington.
- b) **Updates to Members.** It was noted that updates on the matters considered by the Working Group would be provided to all Councillors via email.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree to set-up of a County Deal Working Group;**
- (2) **Agree the membership and Terms of Reference of the Working Group (Appendix 1 to the report);**
- (3) **Delegate authority to the Interim Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Working Group, to make representations to Surrey County Council and/or other parties in connection with the process for developing a 'Surrey County Deal' proposal to government.**

16 REPLACEMENT OF MAYORS CAR

The Committee received a report highlighting options available when replacing the civic car used solely by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Hybrid solution.** The Committee was informed that the proposed vehicle (a Skoda Superb Hybrid) would enable the majority of journeys to be made using only electric charge, rather than petrol.
- b) **Use for other Council duties.** The Committee was informed that Officers would consider whether the mayoral car could also be used for other Council duties when not in use by the Mayor.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree to the recommendation of Option 2b, to lease a Skoda Superb Hybrid.**
- (2) **Agree to the installation of an electric charging point at a cost of £1,500.**
- (3) **Delegate to the Interim Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer, to proceed with the preferred option and agree terms.**

17 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee resolved to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 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.

18 FUTURE OF BUILDING CONTROL - AMENDED PROPOSAL

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

19 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY UPDATE

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

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 10.00 pm

COUNCILLOR NEIL DALLEN (CHAIR)