

Minutes of the Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND SAFE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 24 January 2023

PRESENT -

Councillor John Beckett (Chair); Councillor Arthur Abdulin (Vice-Chair); Councillors Steve Bridger, Chris Frost, Rob Geleit, Jan Mason (as nominated substitute for Councillor Monica Coleman), Steven McCormick, Julie Morris and Humphrey Reynolds

Absent: Councillor Monica Coleman and Councillor Lucie McIntyre

Officers present: Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Richard Chevalier (Parking Manager), Mark Rachwal (Environment and Sustainability Officer) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

15 QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from members of the public.

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18 October 2022 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Fees and Charges 2023/24

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: Councillor Julie Morris confirmed that she rents an allotment from the Council. She stated that she believed it to be a non-prejudicial interest.

18 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN: REVIEW & PROGRESS UPDATE

The Chair proposed that Councillor Arthur Abdulin (Vice-Chair) act as Chair of the meeting for the duration of the consideration of item 4 of the agenda. The proposal was for the following reasons:

- a) Councillor Arthur Abdulin (Vice-Chair) was the current Chair of the Climate Action working group.
- b) The Chair deemed it would be valuable Chairing experience for Councillor Arthur Abdulin.

The proposal was agreed by the Committee.

The Committee received a report providing a review and update on the progress of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved (5 in Favour, 1 Abstention, and the Chair and Vice-Chair (acting Chair) not voting) to:

- (1) Agree the proposed amendments to the Climate Change Action Plan.**
- (2) Consider the progress made on the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan over the year to date.**

Councillor Steven McCormick was not present at the meeting at this time and did not take part in the vote.

The Environment and Sustainability Officer left the meeting at the conclusion of the consideration of the item.

19 CAR PARK WORKING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a report setting out the Terms of Reference for the Car Park Working Group.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Approve the amended Terms of Reference, with the new working group starting in the new municipal year.**

Councillor Steven McCormick was not present at the meeting at this time and did not take part in the vote.

20 CAR PARK FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee received a report seeking the agreement of the Committee for the recommended off street parking fees and charges for 2023/24, as proposed by the Car Park Working Group.

Councillor Steven McCormick became present at the meeting at 19:45 during consideration of the item. He did not take part in the debate.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Car Park Charges:** A Member of the Committee (and Member of the Car Park Working Group) highlighted the importance of Car Parks as a source of income for the Council and explained that certain car parks' charges are set at higher rates in order to encourage greater use of car parks in areas of the borough that would benefit from increased footfall. The Chair offered his thanks to the Car Park Working Group for their work.

- b) **Publication of Car Park Charges:** The Parking Manager confirmed that notices of variation of car park charges are published in the local paper, Epsom Comet.
- c) **West Hill Car Park:** A Member of the Committee (and Member of the Car Park Working Group) explained that West Hill car park is very busy and used regularly for overnight parking, and was considered by the working group to be a significant opportunity to create income for the Council.
- d) **Upper High Street Annual Permits:** In relation to the '*Car Park Fees and Charges, Appendix 2 – Additional Information: Car Park Permit Proposal 2023/24*', the Parking Manager explained that the annual permit will not provide an absolute guarantee of a space for permit holders due to the limited spaces in the Upper High Street car park. He suggested that 40 permits as a maximum could be a reasonable amount to issue, but stated that he did not expect the number of applications to reach that high. The Chair suggested that marking out designated spaces for permit holders could cause a potential loss of income for the Council due to the resulting reduction in parking spaces available to daytime shoppers. The Chair stated that the scheme will remain open to review by the Car Park Working Group and the Committee, and that the Committee will be notified of the number of permits sold once the scheme goes live.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree the car park fees in appendix 1, as proposed by the Car Park Working Group;**
- (2) **Agree the car park permit fees in appendix 2, as proposed by the Car Park Working Group.**

Councillor Steven McCormick did not take part in the vote.

21 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

Prior to debate, the Chair proposed that an amendment be made to the recommendation on the report. The original recommendation included on the report at the time of the publication of the agenda was as follows:

- (1) *agree the fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out at Appendices 1, 2 and 3.*

The amended recommendation, as proposed by the Chair, was as follows:

- (1) *Agree the fees and charges for 2023/24, excluding car park fees and charges as already agreed in Item 6.*

The Chair explained that the reason for the amendment was the following:

- a) Appendix 2 of the Fees and Charges 2023/24 report (item 7) contained incorrect information that did not match the corresponding information as set out in appendix 1 of the Car Park Fees and Charges 2023/24 report (item 6).

The amendment was agreed by the Committee.

The Committee received the report recommending fees and charges for which the Committee is responsible, with the new charges being effective from 1 April 2023.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Allotments Charge Increase and Allotments Staff:** The Head of operational Services explained that increasing the allotment charge had been identified as a viable option for generating additional income. He stated that a need had been recognised for an allotment staffing resource and that the additional budget sourced from the increased allotment charge could go towards its funding.
- b) **Allotment Working Group:** It was considered by the Committee that an Allotments Working Group be established. It was considered that the working group discuss and monitor matters such as waste management and water usage and work towards raising awareness, providing transparency, and communicating the cost to the Council in providing allotment facilities.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree the fees and charges for 2023/24, excluding car park fees and charges as already agreed in Item 6.**

22 REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

The Committee received a report setting out budget estimates for income and expenditure for Environment & Safe Communities services in 2023/24.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Impounded Domestic Waste Vehicle:** In relation to paragraph 3.6 of the report, the Chair explained that the insurance policy does not cover the costs associated with the impoundment of the domestic waste vehicle in question, given the circumstances under which it was impounded. He confirmed it was unknown as to when the vehicle would be returned to the Council.

- b) **Staffing Budget:** The Chief Accountant explained a budget is set aside yearly to fund staff pay increments and inflationary increase to salaries and distributed amongst service areas at the end of the year.
- c) **Covid Rebasing Exercise:** The Chief Accountant explained that following changes to service usage as a result of the pandemic, an exercise was carried out at the start of 2022 to determine the new level of service usage in order to amend the base budget accordingly.
- d) **Increase in Tree Maintenance Contract:** In response to a question from a Member, the Chair explained that the increase was the result of a variation to the contract held with the supplier that maintains Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's trees.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Recommend the 2023/24 service estimates for approval at the budget meeting of full Council in February 2023.**

23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Committee received a report summarising the proposed 2023/24 capital programme and a provisional programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28. The Committee's approval was sought for the programme to be submitted to Council in February 2023.

The following matters were considered by the Committee:

- a) **Alexander Recreation Ground Dojo Lease Condition:** It was considered by the Committee that a condition be added to the Dojo's lease stipulating that the occupants adopt a responsibility to engage with park users in the interest of encouraging and promoting safe and orderly behaviour in the park and discouraging and preventing anti-social and disorderly behaviour.
- b) **Report to Committee Members from CMG:** It was considered by the Committee that, prior to meetings at which the Committee is asked to make decisions in relation to the Capital Programme, a report resulting from meetings of the Capital Member Group, a full list of the BID applications, and the asset management plan be made available to Members of the Committee in the interest of information and transparency. The Committee considered that clarity be provided with regard to the governance arrangements in place for meetings of the Capital Member Group.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Submit the capital programme for 2023/24, as identified in section 3 of this report, to the Council for approval on 14 February 2023.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.00 pm

COUNCILLOR JOHN BECKETT (CHAIR)