

Minutes of the Meeting of the LICENSING AND PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 17 October 2024

PRESENT -

Councillor Peter O'Donovan (Chair); Councillor Neil Dallen (Vice-Chair); Councillors Robert Leach, Rob Geleit, Julie Morris, Phil Neale, Humphrey Reynolds and Clive Woodbridge

Absent: Councillor Shanice Goldman and Councillor Kieran Persand

Officers present: Victoria Potts (Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration), Justin Turvey (Head of Place Development), Ian Mawer (Planning Policy Manager), Michelle Meskell (Developer Contributions Lead Officer), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Anna Clements (Senior Accountant) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

20 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Committee received one written question from a member of the public and noted that the Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee had provided a written response to the questioner prior to the meeting. This response had also been published on the Council's website.

One supplementary verbal question was asked during the meeting and the Chair confirmed a written response would be provided following the meeting.

Four Members of the public provided verbal statements to the Committee.

21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robert Leach declared an interest in Agenda Item 5, stating that they live in Auriol Ward, which is relevant to the Response to the Draft Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Report.

22 2025/26 BUDGET TARGETS

The report informed the Committee of the Council's revenue budget targets presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee in July. The report sought guidance on the preparation of the Committee's service estimates for 2025/26.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Budgetary Process.** A Member of the Committee raised that they do not feel involved in the Budgetary process and asked for more background information to be included in the report to show where the Committee Budget is presently at. The Member noted it is a standard item and it would come back to the Committee in the future. The Chair asked for clarification as to how the Member would like to be involved. The Member stated that recommendation two, is asking for consideration from Members as to how additional savings and income could be generated.
- b) **Increased Fees and Charges.** A Member of the Committee asked if the increased fees and charges to be implemented for 2025/26, would absorb the budget deficit. The Senior Accountant informed the Committee that the budget deficit position stated for 2025/26 is after the impact of the increase in budget for fees and charges has been taken into account.
- c) **Staff Costs.** A Member of the Committee suggested that Staff cost be looked at by the Strategy and Resources Committee, as it is currently a large cost to the Council. The Member queried if all staff positions are necessary, and why there is such high use of consultants. The Member acknowledge that there might not be savings there, but it was worth considering going forward. The Chair and Vice Chair noted the comments.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the implications of the budget targets presented to Strategy & Resources Committee on 23 July 2024.**
- (2) **Consider how additional income or savings can be generated to address the projected Council wide funding gap of £573,000 in 2025/26, rising to £720,000 per annum by 2028/29.**
- (3) **Note that owing to the Council's projected budget deficit, any additional new revenue growth items (i.e. service enhancements resulting in increased net expenditure) supported by Policy Committees will need to be fully funded from existing budgets.**

23 EPSOM AND EWELL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY - ANNUAL FUNDING AWARDS

The Council undertook its annual funding rounds for strategic and neighbourhood CIL between the 7 May and 18 June 2024. During this funding window 5 strategic CIL bids and 23 neighbourhood CIL bids were received.

In accordance with the Epsom and Ewell CIL Spending Protocol (January 2024), all bids received have been subject to an initial stage 1 assessment. Only the bids that passed the Stage 1 assessment were then subject to a stage 2 assessment by the CIL Member Working Group.

Following this process, three Strategic CIL bids (totalling £1,755,000 of strategic CIL funding) and six neighbourhood CIL bids (£331,966 of neighbourhood CIL funding) were presented to this committee for approval.

As the cumulative value of the CIL bids recommended for approval exceeds £50,000, in accordance with the Council's financial regulations, the recommendations of this committee will be subject to approval of the funding by the Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R).

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Report Correction.** The Developer Contributions Lead Officer informed the Committee that the Bid requester for the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve Footpath improvements project, found on page 19 of the agenda, should state Ewell Court Residents' Association and Local Councillors, instead of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.
- b) **CIL Working Group.** A Member of the Committee expressed their support for the contents of the report. The Member thanked the CIL Member Working Group and appreciated being a part of the Working Group and being consulted on the application bids.
- c) **CWG Recommendations.** A Member of the Committee raised that it had been a learning curve submitting bids under the new CIL spending protocol. The Member continued to explain that they did not agree with all recommendations of the CIL Member Working Group. The Member expressed disappointment that a year of potential bids and spending had been missed whilst the CIL spending protocol was rewritten and adopted by the Committee. The Member queried why more is not being spent of the Strategic and Neighbourhood CIL pots. The Member raised that all of the successful Strategic and Neighbourhood bids were for projects in Ewell, bar one small Neighbourhood bid in Epsom.
- d) **CIL Spending.** A Member of the Committee raised that they had Chaired the CIL Member Working Group and thanked the Members and supporting Officers involved, for their time and effort that went into the recommendations set out in the report. The Member informed the Committee that throughout the new process, areas of improvement have been identified and changes could be made to refine the process going forwards. The Member raised that it would be beneficial for a Member Briefing to be held so all Members could be informed on the successful Strategic CIL bids. The Member highlighted that if more of the CIL money had been recommended to be spent now, when there is not currently an immediate pipeline of projects to keep the CIL pots topped up, it would mean that less could be achieved and recommended in future years.
- e) **Homelessness Pods.** A Member of the Committee asked if CIL money could be used for projects like the modular pods, that are being considered by the Council at the moment, since nightly paid emergency accommodation is a huge expense for the Council. The Planning Policy

Manager informed the Committee that Strategic CIL cannot be used to provide any form of affordable housing.

- f) **Nam Yang Martial Arts Centre.** A Member of the Committee expressed their disappointment that the Nam Yang Martial Arts Centre was not successful in their bid.
- Councillor Julie Morris proposed that the Nam Yang Martial Arts application bid is included in the successful bids sent to Strategy and Resources Committee to consider and approve funding for.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Phil Neale.

The Committee agreed the proposed amendment (5 for, 2 against, and the Chair not voting).

- g) **Strategy and Resources Committee.** A Member of the Committee raised that the decision to agree the spending will be made by the Strategy and Resources Committee, therefore, there is an opportunity for more information to be provided to the Members of the Strategy and Resources Committee regarding the proposed successful bids.
- h) **Point of Clarification.** A Member of the Committee asked for clarification as to whether the agreed amendment, was something that the Committee is able to do. The Chair informed the Committee that the decision would be looked at and considered and if it turns out that it is something that cannot happen, this will be communicated, and further options explored. The Member suggested that all three unsuccessful Neighbourhood CIL bids were taken to S&R for consideration, in the interest of fairness. The Chair noted the comments.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved to;

(6 for, 1 abstaining, and the Chair not voting)

- (1) **Approve the recommendations of the CIL Member Working Group by provisionally allocating CIL funding to the projects detailed in Appendix 1, including the addition of the Nam Yang Martial Arts Project;**
- (2) **Support a request to Strategy and Resources Committee to approve the funding totalling £2,086,966 from CIL as set-out in this report, with the addition of £161,250 of funding for the Nam Yang Martial Arts Project.**

24 RESPONSE TO STONELEIGH AND AURIOL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (REGULATION 14)

The Committee received a report considering the Council's response to the Draft Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan that was published for consultation

between 9 September 2024 and 27 October 2024 under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum and the Council is a statutory consultee. Once formally 'made', a neighbourhood plan becomes part of the boroughs statutory development plan and will therefore be used in the determination planning applications in the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum Area.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Neighbourhood Forum.** A Member of the Committee expressed their admiration to all those involved with the creation of the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood plan, and recognised the time and effort that went into getting to the stage it is currently at. The Member also noted that this is the first Neighbourhood Plan in Epsom and Ewell and commended the endeavour to have a say in the local development of the area. The Member stated that the draft response is reasonable and constructive. The Planning Policy Manager extended their thanks to the members of the Neighbourhood Forum and informed the Committee that they have been great to work with. The Chair commended the residents involved in the Neighbourhood Plan and highlighted all the work that has gone into the document attached at Appendix 1. Another Member of the Committee echoed the comments made.
- b) **Referendum.** A Member of the Committee asked how the referendum is funded and what the percentage needs to be for the Plan to be adopted. The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that over 50% of those voting needs to agree to adopt the plan for it to be successful. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the question posed to residents of Stoneleigh and Auriol would be, Do you want Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Stoneleigh and Auriol to decide planning applications in the area, and then residents can vote yes or no. The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that the Council would cover the cost of the referendum but would be able to apply for Central Government Grants once that stage is reached.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve the Councils response to the Draft Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan set out in Appendix 3 that is currently subject to public consultation under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.**

25 URGENT DECISION

The Committee received a report detailing the decisions taken by the Chief Executive and Directors on the grounds of urgency, in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the urgent decision taken and the reason for that decision, since the last meeting of the committee.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.30 pm

COUNCILLOR PETER O'DONOVAN (CHAIR)