

**Extract From Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit And Scrutiny Committee
Held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 5 February 2026**

PRESENT -

Councillor Steven McCormick (Chair); Councillor Phil Neale (Vice-Chair); Councillors Chris Ames, Steve Bridger, Tony Froud, Alison Kelly and Chris Watson

In Attendance: Councillor Alex Coley (for agenda item 4), Councillor James Lawrence (for agenda items 4 and 13) and Councillor Clive Woodbridge (for agenda item 4 as Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee), Ade Oyerinde (External Auditor) (Grant Thornton) (in attendance remotely for agenda items 1-7) and Usman Rasheed (External Auditor) (Grant Thornton) (in attendance remotely for agenda items 1-7)

Absent: Councillor Jan Mason

Officers present: Cagdas Canbolat (Director of Corporate Services (S151)), Andrew Bircher (Assistant Director of Corporate Services), Alex Awoyomi (Principal Solicitor), Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services) (for agenda items 1-4), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Will Mace (Corporate Governance & Strategy Manager), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager) (for agenda items 1-5), Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer) and Angela Guest (Democratic Services Officer)

41 CALL-IN OF THE DECISION OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE MADE ON 13 JANUARY 2026 (ITEM 04) REGARDING THE OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF BOURNE HALL MUSEUM

The Committee considered a report that invited the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to consider the call-in of a decision made by the Community and Wellbeing Committee, under Agenda Item No 4 "Options for the Future of the Museum" at its meeting on 13th January 2026. The call-in had been made in accordance with the procedures set out in Annex 4.6 – Overview, Audit and Scrutiny (including Call-in Procedure and Councillor Calls for Action) of the Council's Operating Framework.

The following matters were considered:

- a) Councillor Alex Coley was given three minutes to address the committee as the main councillor requesting the call-in. He stated that there were missing reports from the Community and Wellbeing agenda which were pertinent to the decision and therefore the committee did not make their decision with all the relevant information. He had been told that the reports would be published with the agenda pack but instead there were highlights from them within the main report. He was also surprised that there was no mention of the two reports in the Audit & Scrutiny Committee report being discussed

tonight. He spoke about the confusion and mixed messaging about the closure or potential closure of the museum, the exclusion of stewardship and governance questions and recharge costs that might not reflect the true cost of running the museum. He therefore called upon the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to request that the decision be taken again and the missing reports be circulated to enable a fully informed decision. The missing reports were the Bourne Hall Museum Service Review (May 2025) and the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Culture Peer Challenge (August 2025).

- b) Councillor James Lawrence had requested to speak to this item and was also given three minutes to address the Committee. He claimed that this was part of a broader issue with failure to resource the committee system properly and cited an urgent decision as an example where decisions had been taken at committees without the full information. The report author was quoted as acknowledging, with hindsight, to the Community & Wellbeing Committee that they should have had the whole document rather than the executive summary. Councillor Lawrence went on to say that as the two reports were missing from the agenda today that Audit & Scrutiny Committee did not have adequate information to know whether the decision taken at Community & Wellbeing Committee was correct and therefore encouraged the decision of Audit & Scrutiny Committee to recommend withdrawal of the original decision and for Community & Wellbeing Committee to reconsider the entire item with the missing reports as part of the agenda pack.
- c) Councillor Clive Woodbridge, as Chair for the Community & Wellbeing Committee was given three minutes to address the Committee. He stated that the Community & Wellbeing Committee had had a good discussion on this item and was given all the relevant information from both missing reports. They were excluded from the agenda pack, and an executive decision format was used to help council members, so they didn't have to wade through volumes of information. The pertinent points from both reports were fully covered in the main report. He felt that all the relevant information was there and that the members had all the information that they needed to make the decision. It was also worth noting that there were three options before committee on that evening. One was to carry on as normal, one was to enhance the museum service with some investment, and the third option broadly was to close the museum. Both the reports said that the museum was of value and did not recommend closure. Both the reports said that at present it was lacking in certain areas and that certain changes needed to be made. Councillor Woodbridge believed that the decision the committee reached was fully in line with the reports and had the reports in their entirety been included that it would not have altered that outcome. The decision was unanimous and the recommendation to Strategy & Resources Committee was also a mechanism by which the council could review the decision. The committee members had also received a briefing in detail on the museum and requested that Audit & Scrutiny Committee leave the decision unamended as the report also needed to go to Strategy & Resources for the financing of the decision and any changes could be made there.

-
- d) In response to a Member question the Chair explained that a meeting had been arranged with committee members prior to committee just to ensure that members were fully briefed on several items on the agenda and their role/process with a call-in as the council had not dealt with one in over 10 years. Also, the link to the LGA cultural report could be included in the minutes for this meeting. The service review was an operational document and therefore restricted. Any member wishing to have a copy would need to speak with the Chief Executive.
- e) A Member requested legal advice as he believed if a committee was going to discuss background documents such as the LGA Peer Challenge Review in this case, that the document should be attached to the agenda and made public and not just send a link to members on where to find that document. The Chair reiterated that members were being asked to consider whether there was a lack of information for the decision to be taken and if so then this committee could make recommendations to the Community & Wellbeing Committee it was not a diktat and the Community & Wellbeing Committee could either accept the Audit & Scrutiny recommendations, or not. The Principal Solicitor was unable to respond to the specific question but would provide a response following the meeting. However, he did support the Chair's view that committee were to consider whether there was a lack of information for Community & Wellbeing Committee to make their decision.
- f) A previous member of the Community & Wellbeing Committee stated that she was not surprised this item had been on the agenda or the options for decision and was not sure whether she would have needed the other two documents to make a decision.
- g) A Member cited Councillor Coley in saying that the Committee were being asked to decide whether receipt of the service review would have caused a different decision to be made. He asked how, without the document available tonight how the committee were supposed to judge the relevance of that report. He also reiterated that the peer challenge report should have been made public and read from the public record of the report regarding financial information being skewed due to the apportionment of costs to Bourne Hall giving a false picture of the running cost of the museum. That was a major problem that the Community and Wellbeing Committee should have been informed of, and he could not see this reflected in the report the committee received. That was crucial information not given to the committee.
- h) The Head of Operational Service stated that he and his team were responsible for the report and presented operational evidence and what options were looked at. The reports received at committee contained all the operational information needed in the summary. Regarding the finances, the LGA report spoke of was the central service costs and rental of the building. Rental of the museum was about £130k and central services cost approximately £32k. Officer were asked to look at options and could only come up with the three that were offered. The Strategy & Resources Committee would look deeper at the finances.

- i) Councillor Woodbridge gave further clarification by pointing out paragraphs 4 and 4.1 of the main report which gave a budget breakdown including employee costs, accommodation, central services and insurance was a central recharge. He stated that the term skewing was relating to the headline figures which are skewed heavily by the central recharges rather than operational costs of running the museum. He reiterated that he believed Community & Wellbeing Committee had enough information to rely on to make their decision.

Councillor Ames proposed that recommendation c be put to the vote. Councillor Watson seconded the motion.

Following consideration the Committee resolved (three for, two against and the Chair not voting):

That the called-in decision should be referred to the relevant policy committee with a view to its being withdrawn / rescinded and the decision being re-taken.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Phil Neale, declared an interest in that he was present as a substitute at the Community & Wellbeing Committee where this decision was taken even though he did not vote he withdrew from the room whilst the Audit & Scrutiny Committee considered the call-in.

COUNCILLOR STEVEN MCCORMICK (CHAIR)