

## Minutes of the Meeting of the LICENSING AND PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 10 March 2026

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### PRESENT -

Councillor Peter O'Donovan (Chair); Councillor Neil Dallen (Vice-Chair); Councillors Steve Bridger, Alex Coley, Rob Geleit, Phil Neale, Humphrey Reynolds, Clive Woodbridge, James Lawrence (as nominated substitute for Councillor Julian Freeman) and Lucie McIntyre

In Attendance: Councillor Kieran Persand

Absent: Councillor Julian Freeman

Officers present: Ian Mawer (Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager), Kate Gillman (Solicitor), Susie Legg (Principal Planning Policy Officer) (for agenda items 8 to 11), Benjamin Rafferty (Planning Officer) and Phoebe Batchelor (Democratic Services Officer)

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### 26 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Committee received one written statement from a member of the public which was delivered verbally at the meeting.

### 27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or other registrable or non-registrable interests were made by Members with respect to any items to be considered at the meeting.

### 28 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on **22 January 2026** and authorised the Chair to sign them.

### 29 MINUTES OF LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committees held on the 7 January 2026.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Receive the Minutes of the Meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on the 7 January 2026 and authorise the Chairs of the Sub-Committee meetings to sign them as a true record of that meeting.**

### 30 HERITAGE CHAMPION ANNUAL STATEMENT

The Committee received the annual statement of the Heritage Councillor Champion.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Excellence.** A Member of the Committee expressed their thanks to Councillor Spickett for her hard work throughout the year as Heritage Champion and commended her for her brilliant report, which is full of enthusiasm and extensive research resulting in an interesting and informative read. These comments were echoed by several members.
- b) **Communications.** A Member of the Committee suggested that the report was shared more widely by the Council's Communications Team. The Member suggested that the report is posted on the Council's social media and could also be printed and distributed through the Bourne Hall Museum. The Chair noted the suggestions and agreed that they would be explored following the meeting.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Receive and note the annual statement of the Heritage Councillor Champion.**

### 31 APPROVAL OF STATEMENT OF POLICY UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

A public consultation has been completed on a draft revised Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Policy, and the Committee were asked to consider the responses and approve a revised policy which can be recommended for adoption by Full Council.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Consider the responses to the public consultation,**
- (2) **Agree the amendments to the draft Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Policy**
- (3) **Recommend Council adopt the updated Statement of Policy**

**32 APPROVAL OF STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005**

A public consultation has been completed on a draft revised Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles, and the Committee were asked to consider the responses and approve a revised policy which can be recommended for adoption by Full Council.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Public Health.** The Chair asked if Public Health normally respond to consultations on gambling and queried if it was due to mental health implications. The Public Protection Manager responded to explain that to the best of their knowledge, it is the first time Public Health have responded to a gambling consultation in Surrey. He explained that it is an area which Public Health are looking at increasingly with regards to gambling addiction. A Member of the Committee welcomed the response from Public Health and the incorporation of the comments by the Licensing Officer.
- b) **Thanks.** The Chair expressed thanks to the Principal Licensing Officer and team for their work on updating the Licensing Statement of Policy and Gambling Statement of Principles.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Consider the responses to the public consultation,**
- (2) Agree the amendments to the draft Gambling Act 2003 Statement of Principles**
- (3) Recommend Council adopt the updated Statement of Principles**

**33 SECTION 106 MONITORING FEES**

Legislation and planning practice guidance enables the Council to charge a monitoring fee for Section 106 Agreements.

The Committee received a report seeking to introduce new charges to cover some of the administration costs of monitoring future Section 106 agreements.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Mole Valley.** In response to a Member query the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development confirmed that Epsom and Ewell had aligned with Mole Valley as the most straightforward, transparent approach to Section 106 monitoring fees. Other East Surrey authorities all did slightly different things such as fixed cost per agreement.

- b) **Biodiversity Net Gain.** In response to a Member query the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development confirmed that the council did have an in-house qualified ecologist to monitor biodiversity net gain requirements. When the new unitary was in place there would be a bigger pool of ecologists. The Member also asked how a satisfactory monitoring service could be provided for 30 years for just £6k and thought this fee was far too low. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development explained in detail how this figure was reached and included standard approaches so estimated the number of statutory reporting years would be 8 of the 30. Certain documents must be submitted at certain times over that 30 years but not every year. There would be some years there would be no work to review and other years there would be monitoring submission years. He also confirmed that it would need to be reviewed in a year or two by the new authority. In the meantime, the current fees were considered reasonable to adopt.
- c) **Current charges.** In response to a Member query the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development confirmed that at present there was no S106 monitoring fees applied.
- d) **Terminology.** In response to a Member query the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development confirmed that in section 3 of the report the terminology of administration and monitoring fee, administration and compliance fees, and monitoring fee all meant fee for monitoring and administration. Therefore, compliance was the same as monitoring in this case, just using different words for the same thing.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve the introduction of new fees from the 1 April 2026 to help cover:**
  - a) **Administration and monitoring of Section 106 agreements as set in paragraph 3.4 table 1**
  - b) **Long term monitoring of legal agreements in relation to biodiversity net gain provision as set out in paragraph 4.6 table 2.**
- (2) **Publish the monitoring fee as set out in tables 1 and 2 on the Council's website.**

**34** STONELEIGH AND AURIOL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - TO 'MAKE' THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a right for communities to draw up neighbourhood development plans. Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum, with support and advice from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has produced a neighbourhood plan.

The neighbourhood plan has been subject to community and stakeholder engagement and was subject to an Independent Examination during September and October 2025, which concluded with a recommendation by this committee that Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to Referendum.

A Referendum was held on 12 February 2026 with a positive outcome, with the following results based on a turnout of 20.7%:

- Yes: 93.4%
- No: 6.6%

The following matters were considered:

- Legal Status of the Neighbourhood Plan.** A Member queried the report that stated the Neighbourhood Plan had equal status to the Local Plan. The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained the hierarchical approach where the top level would be the national planning policy, which the local plan had to conform with and equally, the neighbourhood plan had to be in general conformity with the borough's local plan. The terminology used in the report wasn't quite correct. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development went on to explain that it was complex, but the neighbourhood plan would have equal weight in decision making, but only in the areas where it applied. Therefore, the neighbourhood plan only applied to the designated neighbourhood forum area. The key thing to note was where there was a conflict between the plans, the most recently adopted plan takes precedence. Therefore, they have equal weight but depending on when they were adopted.
- Thanks.** The Committee recognised the work that had gone into the plan by the resident's association at Stoneleigh and Auriol. It had been a long haul for them and handled by themselves with no outside resources. A very good job had been done, and they were applauded for their resolute enthusiasm.
- Stoneleigh Broadway Height.** A Member questioned plans respecting building heights and asked if the neighbourhood plan would preclude an urban renewal on Stoneleigh Broadway. He was also concerned about potential impact a height policy might have on any other potential developments. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development undertook to provide a response after the meeting.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree that the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan be formally made (adopted) as part of the statutory Development Plan.**
- (2) Authorise the publication of the Decision Statement (Appendix 1 of this report).**

### 35 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK: PROPOSED REFORMS AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

The Government launched a consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on the 16 December 2026. The proposals are a substantive update to the NPPF which includes comprehensive changes to the document structure and format with most chapters being split between 'plan making policies' and 'decision making policies' and the inclusion of a series of new annexes providing detail on the standard method for housing and grey belt assessment.

Councillor Persand gave a verbal statement to the Committee.

There are a significant number of changes proposed, these include:

- Stating that, where local plan policies are inconsistent with national decision-making policies, they should be given limited weight.
- Providing national policy to guide the content of spatial development strategies (SDSs); a new tier of strategic planning.
- That housing and mixed-use development around train stations defined as 'well- connected' will not be considered inappropriate.
- Proposing that plots around train stations should be built out at a density of at least 40 dwellings per hectare, rising to 50 where the station is "well-connected".
- Introducing a medium-size site category into the planning system, which will cover developments of between 10-49 homes, with an area of up to 2.5ha in size.
- Proposing a revision of the weight given to the consideration of the potential effect of a development proposal on a designated heritage asset from "great" to "substantial".

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Amendments.** A Member requested the following amendments:-
- Revisit the grammar of the response to question 2 as it reads that the council needs it to be flawed.
  - To consider adding 'strongly' disagree to the response to question 52.
  - Question 94 should be question 194.

- It was a personal preference of one member that higher density was OK around train stations so did not necessarily agree with the 'strongly disagree' response to question 136. After further discussion the Committee did not agree to change the response to question 136.
- b) In response to a Member query about why Annex B viability standardised inputs in viability assessment had no suggested response, the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development explained that they were very technical questions on viability methodologies that officers felt they did not have the knowledge or expertise to respond to. There were some more generic questions on viability within the response that have been dealt with, but these were very specific. He undertook to ensure a 'no comment' would be put as the response.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the contents of the consultation.**
- ~~(2) **Approve the draft response (Appendix 1) or;**~~
- (3) **Agree amendments and authorise the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, to finalise and submit the response.**

## 36 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

In accordance with [Appendix 5 - 3.4 of the Constitution](#) a member requested that an item be placed on the agenda for the next scheduled Licensing & Planning Policy Committee on March 10<sup>th</sup> *"To update the committee on all submissions and modifications made to the Inspector for the Local Plan, following examination hearings last year."*

The Committee received a report responding to the above item request and reflecting the position as of 23 February 2026.

Councillor Persand gave a verbal statement to the Committee.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Refusal of Plan.** In response to a Member question it was reported that if the plan was not adopted by full Council, then the current local plan that was nearing 20 years old would continue to be the development plan for the borough. It was not known what the process would be following that as the council would not have the time to restart the whole new local plan process again before the unitary comes into force.
- b) **Councillor Coley statement.** Councillor Coley gave a verbal statement and spoke of advice from the monitoring officer regarding motions from

the committee on this agenda item. That advice relied on custom and practise reflected in the December 2000 model constitution commissioned by the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions. He suggested it was absurd that members were asked to rely on legal advice from a constitution which this Council chose to abandon in 2023.

- c) **Future Consultations.** A Member asked if there would be an opportunity to remove sites from the land supply during the next consultation. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development explained that there would be two consultations. The first would be specifically on the extra work that the inspectors recently asked us to undertake, one of which is for the council to suggest potential additional allocations for inclusion in the plan. The second consultation will be after an examination hearing, if the inspector considers that the plan can be found to be sound with main modifications. The Inspectors draft main modifications will be subject to consultation. He was unable to confirm dates for these, and it would depend on these timings whether the Committee would be involved again.
- d) **Priest Hill.** In response to a Member statement that some public wanted Priest Hill removed from the local plan the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development explained that the plan remained as it was when submitted to the inspector. No changes had yet been made. Priest Hill was not a site within the proposed submission local plan.
- e) **Greenbelt Suitability.** In response to Member questions the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development gave a detailed explanation of the Calverton Assessment method to judge whether a site was suitable to be included in the green belt. He explained what the Calverton method looked at but more importantly what Calverton didn't take into consideration and the work currently being undertaken by the council on those areas.
- f) **Plan Documents.** The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development clarified the various documents involved in the plan process. There were 13 core submission documents that were required by legislation and included the plan itself and the policies map. There were also 7 examination documents that included evidence-based topic papers which had been submitted to the inspector.
- g) **Delegation and responsibilities.** In response to a Member query it was confirmed that delegation came from Licensing Planning Policy Committee report of 20th November 2024, which was also part of the submission library under other documents (document OTO5). Then updated by urgent decision. The Member pointed out that the Chair had all the political responsibility and accountability for whatever was in the documents submitted and the Member wanted to share in that accountability along with the whole committee.

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- h) **Proposed Amendments.** A Member proposed two amendments. The first was to change delegation P7 from 'to proposed changes' to 'to proposed to licensing and planning policy committee changes'. The Chair stated he had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and had ruled that no amendment would be made and therefore the report recommendations were as provided. The Member followed up with a further proposal to request the Chair convene a special meeting of Licensing and Planning Policy Committee as soon as constitutionally possible to reassess and determine the future of the local plan, including delegated powers. The Chair refused as vote on this as he wished to seek legal advice from the Monitoring Officer.
- i) **Thanks.** A couple of Members expressed their thanks to Councillor Coley for bringing this item tonight and found it a useful conversation. Thanks were expressed for the hard work, determination, integrity and professionalism of officers over the last three years which had been difficult.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved (7 for, 2 abstaining and the Chair not voting) to:

**(1) Note the contents of this report.**

*The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.17 pm*

COUNCILLOR PETER O'DONOVAN (CHAIR)

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