

**Minutes of the Meeting of the STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
held on 15 November 2011**

PRESENT-

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chairman); Councillor Clive Woodbridge (Vice Chairman); Councillors Ben Cahill-Sawford, Darren Dale, Judith Glover, Alison Kelly, Christine Long (as nominated substitute for Councillor Eber Kington), Dan Stevens, Mike Teasdale and David Wood

In attendance: Councillor Jean Smith (for items 29 - 32)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Eber Kington

Officers present: Frances Rutter, Mark Berry, Fiona Cotter, John Turnbull and Simon Young

29 MINUTES. The Minutes of the Meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 27 September 2011 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. A declaration of Interest was made by a Councillor as set out below the relevant item.

31 HONORARY ALDERMEN. The Committee considered a report proposing that the Council approve conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillors Ruby Smith, Keith Mann and Jonathon Reed.

The Committee recognised that there was a cost attached to conferring such an honour but that it would wish Council to consider the possibility of honouring these three long serving Members who had stood down at the Borough elections in May 2011. Economies of scale would be achieved by holding a single ceremony.

The Committee agreed to **recommend** that the Council consider whether to confer the title of honorary alderman on former Councillors Ruby Smith, Keith Mann and Jonathon Reed in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

32 EPSOM AND EWELL CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN. The Committee received a report which updated Members on the progress to date made by the Council's Climate Change Officers Group in implementing Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's local Climate Change Action Plan. The Committee also received a forward-looking plan for 2012.

The Committee welcomed the report and commended the Officer Group, in particular Cristina Royo, on their excellent work.

The Committee noted progress made in implementing the plan and the proposed Action Plan for 2011/12, in particular it was noted:

- In line with the Council's decision made in July 2010 that it would not wish to see the employment of a part-time Climate Change Officer, the action plan continued to be ambitious given resource constraints;
- Whilst not part of this plan because it was already a well developed area of the Council's operation and was subject to its own Surrey-Wide Waste Strategy, the Committee was informed that the Council, subject to resource constraints, was currently in the process of developing a trade waste policy;
- It was intended to develop a communication plan and use would be made of the Council's website, in particular, to raise awareness and promote the adoption of more sustainable lifestyles;
- The Climate Change Officer Group would be the Group of individuals tasked with identifying priorities for use of the Climate Change Area-base Grant;
- Encouraging more sustainable travel habits amongst staff and residents was very desirable and resourcing this was a major consideration for the Climate Change Officer's Group in moving forward;
- Guidance on the installation of solar panels in Conservation Areas had been approved by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee, subject to minor amendments, and would be available shortly. An article on the issue would be included in the next edition of Borough Insight.

Accordingly, the Committee approved Year 2 of the Climate Change Action Plan which 2011/12 carried forward appropriate actions from the previous year and included a couple of new ones based on the following objectives:

Strategy:

1. To raise awareness amongst staff and Members about climate change and how this might be tackled
2. To ensure that Council Services were adapting to the impacts of climate change
3. To keep the issue of climate change "live" in peoples' minds
4. To reduce carbon emissions from the existing housing stock
5. To maintain a proactive programme by securing external funding and access to support services
6. To prepare state-of-the-art planning policies and advice regarding sustainable building and renewable energy

Community Leadership:

7. To lead the community to change their behaviour (e.g. through installing energy efficiency measures and/or microgeneration)

Own Estate:

8. To ensure that the Council's procurement policies support the priority to promote sustainability and to combat climate change

9. To ensure high energy standards for new council buildings or development on Council land
10. To continue reducing the use of energy in existing council buildings
11. To encourage more sustainable travel habits amongst staff and customers
12. To promote water efficiency measures.

Note: Consideration of this item was moved up the Agenda with the consent of the meeting.

33 MAYORAL TRANSPORT. The Committee received and considered a report which appraised various options regarding the re-provision of a car for the Mayor.

Officers had been asked to identify a suitable car with lower running costs, which was more environmentally friendly but suitable for purpose. The Committee noted that there had been a wide range of options available but analysis of vehicles had been made on cars selected that were capable of carrying at least four adults, including the Mayor in their regalia, but where CO2 emissions were relatively low and mileage per gallon relatively high.

Accordingly, the Committee was presented with an analysis of six cars: the Toyota Prius hatchback 1.8 VVT-I T3 5dr; the Skoda Superb hatchback 1.6 TDI CR105S Greenline II 5dr; the Audi A6 Saloon 2.0 TDI SE 4dr; the Mercedes Benz E Class Saloon E200 CDI BlueEFF SE 4dr; the BMW 5 Series Saloon 520d SE 4dr and the Volvo S80 Saloon 1.6 DRIVe ES 4dr.

The report recommended the Skoda Superb hatchback as the car of choice on the basis that it provided excellent mileage, low emissions, safety and security, scored highly on space and practicality and came in at the lowest estimated cost of the cars assessed (taking into account fuel and vehicle duty).

Having stated that consideration should be given to wider use of the car by council employees when not in use by the Mayor, the Committee agreed to the contract hire of a Skoda Superb for civic duties for a three or four year period, whichever was the most economical.

34 MINUTES OF THE FINANCIAL POLICY PANEL: 18 OCTOBER 2011. The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Financial Policy Panel held on 18 October 2011, noting that the Panel had received reports covering interim performance on treasury management, a revised timetable for service and financial planning, the updated Procurement Strategy and associated action plan for 2011-12 and mid-year progress on backlog maintenance.

The Panel had supported the proposal that work by service managers on the mandatory and discretionary analysis of service expenditure should be deferred and completed once the 2012/13 budgets had been finalised to help manage work pressures and accordingly requested Strategy and Resources Committee to approve to changes in service/financial planning milestones.

On the issue of procurement, the Panel has agreed that the Strategy and Resources Committee should be requested to approve the revised Strategy and associated Action Plan for 2011/12.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed the revisions to its Key Service Priority Milestones for budget and service planning and also agreed the updated Procurement Strategy and Action Plan for 2011-12.

- 35 BUDGET TARGETS AND SERVICE PLANS FOR 2012/13.** A report informing Members of the revenue and budget targets approved by the Council and seeking guidance on the preparation of this Committee's service estimates and annual targets was considered.

Members accordingly noted the budget targets set for this Committee for 2012/13, in particular:

- reduced expenditure on CCTV would not be detrimental to the Town Centre;
- A report was due to be considered by the Human Resources Panel on 17 November 2011 regarding the staffing implications of the budget targets set for next year, along with the pay benchmarking report;
- Encouraging greater community involvement across the Borough was possible within existing resource constraints by making use of social media and volunteers, for example, and communities were already being brought together in their work on the civic and national celebrations planned for next year as part of 2102, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Borough's 75th anniversary;
- Operational changes to achieve efficiency savings were likely to involve more partnership working. Examples of partnerships already in place included sharing a joint Head of I.C.T. with neighbouring Elmbridge Borough Council and the Internal Audit consortium which was being widened to include Surrey Police and an additional district council;
- Within existing resource constraints, the Council was working with the business community, in particular through the Business Partnership, to facilitate the economic vitality of the Borough;
- For next year, the financial planning assumption was that there would be a 2.5% increase in Council Tax. Following the Government's announcement that it would provide a one off grant to local authorities for extending a council tax freeze for a second year, a Council Tax freeze or a 2.5% increase would now be revenue neutral next year. However, this funding would only be available for one year and would affect the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council would need to carefully consider its ability to plan for future years' council tax and spending levels, as well as whether this served the long-term interests of residents, before deciding if it would take the offer up.

Having noted the budget targets, the Committee did not highlight any additional information or specific issues it would wish to see included in the service estimate report and the service target report to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

- 36 FUTURE CHANGES TO THE BENEFITS SCHEMES.** A report was presented to the Committee informing Members of the proposed changes in Benefits and their effects.

The Government was consulting on major changes to welfare benefits, notably:

- Localising support for Council Tax
- Replacing Housing Benefit with a Housing Credit as part of Universal Credit; and
- A single Fraud Investigation Service.

These changes would have a financial and service impact on the Council and a significant impact on Borough residents in receipt of housing and council tax benefits.

The Committee noted that the Council was responding to the consultation papers directly and in conjunction with other Surrey authorities through the Surrey Leaders Group. The Committee endorsed these responses, and shared Officers' concerns that the changes might not have the desired impact, that the timescales were unrealistic and that the proposals resulted in unreasonable risks to the Council.

Finally, the Committee requested further updates including implementation resource implications, once more details of the proposals were available.

- 37** LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME CONSULTATION. The Committee received a report which provided details of the consultation on the Local Government Pension Scheme and which sought guidance from the Committee as to how Members wished to respond.

The Committee was aware that the Hutton report had made a number of recommendations on the long-term sustainability of pension schemes, including the Local Government Pension Scheme. The main recommendations had been supported in principle by the Government. Proposals on different approaches to increases in employee contribution rates had now been issued.

The Committee was mindful of the sensitivity of the timing of these proposed changes in the current economic climate and the impact this might have on future pay pressures and considered that it was appropriate to contribute to a joint Surrey response on the issue bearing in mind that Surrey County Council administered the scheme on behalf of all Surrey authorities.

Note: In accordance with the Local Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members, Councillor David Wood declared a personal interest in the above item on the grounds that he was a member of Surrey County Council's Pension Fund Investment Advisors Group.

- 38** CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK. The Committee received and considered a report setting out the proposed areas of work on which the Corporate Governance Group would focus in 2011/12.

The Committee noted the arrangements in place to monitor and review the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and endorsed the following areas for inclusion in the Group's work programme:

- The implementation of the new Corporate Plan and embedding this in the organisation;
- Information Governance (i.e. the rules, policies and procedures which govern the use, integrity and security of information within an organisation in whatever format held);

- The continued development of training/development opportunities for Members;
- To review the practical and procedural elements of decision-making to ensure that they met good standards of corporate governance.

39 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES. A report presenting the findings of the statutory review of polling districts and polling places was presented to the Committee together with recommendations in respect of Polling District boundaries and the location of Polling Places.

The Committee noted that the Council regularly reviewed its polling stations and so it was not surprising that relatively few suggestions for change had been put forward. However, the Committee's attention was drawn to four issues affecting Court, Ruxley, Ewell and Town Wards, in particular:

Court Ward

An Electoral Review of the County Council was currently being undertaken. If the Local Government Boundary Commission accepted submissions made in relation to the County Division Boundaries in the Court Ward area, it would be necessary to redraw the polling district boundary between F(A) and F(B).

Ruxley Ward

Officers were aware of the possibilities offered by the Horton Chapel development and were open to the possibility of proposing that it be designated as a polling place, subject to its suitability for that purpose, at the appropriate time (assuming the status quo in current Borough Ward boundaries).

Ewell and Town Wards

The (Acting) Returning Officer had been satisfied with the proposal that polling district J(B1) in Ewell Ward should be merged back with the rest of J(B) for administrative reasons and that the designated polling place should no longer be the Linton's Centre but Glyn School. However, since publication of the review, the Council had received confirmation of the Local Government Boundary Commission's draft recommendations in respect of County Division boundaries in Surrey. If these draft recommendations were approved, it would be necessary to retain and expand J(B1) because it would be part of a different County Council Division to the rest of Ewell Ward for County Council election purposes. In this scenario, the polling district would be renamed J(C) and it was still suggested that the designated polling place should be Glyn School.

The Linton's Centre was also the designated polling place for polling district K(A) in Town Ward. At the time of the review consultation, it had been understood that the intention was to hold elections for Police Commissioners in May 2012 and the availability of alternative accommodation at St. John's ambulance Hall in Hook Road, Epsom for a May 2012 election had been confirmed. However, it had subsequently been announced that these elections would not take place until November 2012.

The Committee agreed to **recommend** to Council that:

- (1) the polling place for polling district E(A) be designated as West Ewell Evangelical Church;
- (2) the Chief Executive be authorised to redraw the polling district boundary between polling districts F(A) and F(B) if this was necessitated by the

outcome of the Electoral Review of Surrey by the Local Boundary Commission;

- (3) the Chief Executive be authorised to create a new polling district J(C) if this was necessitated by the outcome of the Electoral Review of Surrey by the Local Boundary Commission;
- (4) if created, the polling place for polling district J(C) be designated as Glyn School;
- (5) should the Local Boundary Commission's recommendations which affect polling district J(B1) not be adopted, the polling district J(B1) should be retained and the designated polling place should continue to be The Linton's Centre;
- (6) the polling place for K(A) should continue to be designated as The Linton's Centre until the future of the site is known.

- 40** REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000. The Committee received a report which summarised the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) over the previous year and the recent inspection by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner. The report also sought approval to changes to the Council's RIPA Policy and Guidance.

Having noted the sparing and appropriate use of these powers by the Council, that the proposals outlined in the report were common amongst many local authorities and that, despite the fact that the Monitoring Officer was not a de facto member of the corporate leadership team at this Council, there was no adverse comment in the Inspection Report regarding the suggestion that the Monitoring Officer should be designated that the Senior Responsible Officer, the Committee agreed that:

- (1) the Monitoring Officer be designated the Senior Responsible Officer for the purposes of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000;
- (2) the revised draft policy and guidance annexed to the report be approved;
- (3) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make such further changes to the policy and guidance as he considered necessary.

- 41** CALENDAR OF MEETINGS. The Committee considered a proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2012/13 and agreed to **recommend** the programme to Council as set out in the Annexe to the report.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.19 pm.

NEIL DALLEN
Chairman