

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE - 3 MARCH 2020

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 9 JUNE 2020

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr John Ward (Chairman)	Cllr Mark Merryweather
Cllr Paul Follows (Vice Chairman)	Cllr Nick Palmer
Cllr David Beaman	Cllr Anne-Marie Rosoman
Cllr Peter Clark	Cllr Liz Townsend
Cllr Andy MacLeod	Cllr Steve Williams

Also Present

Councillor Julia Potts, Councillor Christine Baker, Councillor Martin D'Arcy,
Councillor Jenny Else and Councillor Jerry Hyman

EXE 66/19 MINUTES (Agenda item 1)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 February 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

EXE 67/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

In relation to Item 8. Leisure Centre Investment, Farnham, Cllr David Beaman declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Member of the Farnham Leisure Centre.

EXE 68/19 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

The Executive received the following question in accordance with Procedure Rule 10:

From Fiona Scimone-Paterson of Frensham:

“What initiative or plans is Waverley Borough Council putting forward to encourage biodiversity in the borough? For example,

- Is Waverley adopting a pollination action plan in line with government guidelines?
- Will this be an integral part of a changing policy on pesticides and herbicides?
- How does Waverley plan to address the loss of hedgerows, to replace the many kilometres that have been lost to close board fencing?

We need joined up policy looking at the whole issue across all departments- planning, green spaces, school grounds etc.”

Response from the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Steve Williams:

“As part of our adopted service plans the Council will be preparing numerous documents and action plans to help encourage biodiversity in the borough and put it on the centre stage of our greenspaces service. We have already prepared a draft pesticide policy and action plan which will be scrutinised at the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March before being taken to the Executive for adoption. Our intention is that we shall eliminate pesticide use in all but exceptional and defined circumstances within a period of three years. We have already begun dialogue with our contractors in order to secure this aim and will enter a dialogue with Surrey County Council in order to try to ensure that the work that we do on behalf of Surrey County Council conforms with our stated intention.

In addition to the pesticide policy, over the coming months and years the Council has committed to the creation of further key documents such as a biodiversity policy and action plan; and a tree/vegetation policy and action plan. In addition there will be an overarching Greenspaces Strategy which aims to be a supplementary document in the planning process, the scope of which is currently being debated by a sub-group of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. We intend that it will cover all publicly accessible greenspace estate across the borough.

These policies and action plans and the strategy will be inter-related and interdependent.

With regard to the specific question on the loss of hedgerows, Waverley will do all in its power to increase the amount of hedges available through both planting policies and using the sometimes limited planning powers we have available as far as we are able.”

EXE 69/19 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions from Members of the Council.

EXE 70/19 LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES (Agenda item 6)

70.1 The Leader welcomed Cllrs Peter Clark and Liz Townsend to the Executive.

70.2 Cllr Mark Merryweather, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets and Commercial, provided a clarification on the scope of the Options Appraisal that the Executive had agreed to in January 2020:

The Options Appraisal would follow up on an outline evaluation of options undertaken in 2018 that had scored a broad range of concept possibilities. The Council was now advancing the highest scoring concepts identified within the context of the corporate strategy and funding landscape.

What was being considered was providing much needed new open market residential rental homes and apartments to deliver much needed revenue income to the Council. It was to better utilise the current Council HQ site including the car park and the Wharf car park, which would have the added benefits of providing more modern and more efficient office space for the Council's HQ. It was to retain the Crown Court car park as a car park, and potentially to increase the amount of town centre car parking, on top of accommodating car parking to support the new homes. And finally, it was to maintain or improve the accommodation of current tenants in the Council's office building.

The Burys Field was not in the scope of the project; nor was the library site, which belonged to Surrey County Council. Nor was there any intention to relocate: the Council was committed to Godalming and recognised the contribution of council staff to the footfall in the high street. The project was not primarily driven by business transformation or the state of the council offices, although the status quo was not an option. The office accommodation was already tired, out of date and inefficiently configured, which was why downsizing would release land for new homes. Paying to retain the current state of the building would not be good value for money and would not extend the life of the building beyond 10 years, at which point further capital expenditure would be inevitable. Refurbishment of the building would also not be good value for money. All property and capital investment decisions had to be considered in the context of the Council's climate emergency declaration.

The project would primarily be a Waverley Borough Council residential development, providing a good opportunity for the Council to make a contribution to meeting the area's housing target by delivering the homes needed, where they were needed, and to standards, environmental and otherwise, that a private sector commercial developer might not.

Whilst the initiative was driven by the corporate strategy and financial prospects, all within the Council's very tightly regulated powers, it was equally important to remember that it was strongly endorsed by residents in the budget priorities survey last year.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

There were no matters falling within this category.

PART II - MATTERS OF REPORT

The background papers relating to the following items are as specified in the reports included in the original agenda papers.

EXE 71/19 CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (Agenda item 7)

- 71.1 Cllr Steve Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainability presented the Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy and the Climate Emergency Action Plan to the Executive:
- 71.2 The Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy reaffirmed the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, and a commitment to building resilience to the impacts of climate change. But, unless others across the world took the climate emergency seriously, then the most robust resilience measures taken by Waverley would be ineffective. Currently, 287 out of 408 UK district, county, unitary and metropolitan authorities had declared a climate emergency, and most – like Waverley – had set 2030 as the target date to achieve net zero carbon emissions in recognition of the urgency of the task.
- 71.3 The Council had never before declared an emergency, and the commitment to becoming carbon neutral would affect everything that the Council would do. It was not just about the £300,000 that had been allocated for direct expenditure to deal with the climate emergency and the action plan; it was that in every action and decision going forward, the carbon footprint as well as the financial impact would have to be taken into account.
- 71.4 The Climate Emergency Action Plan was not just focussed on the Council getting its own house in order: it also looked at how the Council could encourage the wider community to consider how they might become more carbon conscious in their daily activities. The target was ambitious, and could be impossible without securing necessary support from Surrey County Council and central government. Surrey County Council had commissioned the University of Leeds to develop targets and strategies that would be shared with Surrey districts and would help refine the work that Waverley had done so far.
- 71.5 Whilst additional targeted financial support would be needed from central government to support climate emergency actions, the work of the University of Leeds indicated that the one-third of actions to be taken to reduce the carbon footprint could be achieved through cost effective efficiencies; one third of actions would require investment but the benefits would be wider than just carbon reduction, for example the public health benefits arising from increasing cycling over car use. The final third of actions would need significant investment but improvements in technology over time would make this more affordable and government policy would change as action on climate change was increasingly seen as urgent.
- 71.6 In concluding his presentation of the Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy and the Climate Emergency Action Plan, Cllr Williams highlighted how social inequality and climate change could be tackled by investing in the local green economy in a 'green new deal' for Waverley. He commended the Strategy and Action Plan to the Executive.

- 71.7 Cllr Jerry Hyman spoke to welcome the Strategy and Action Plan, and recognised the role of residents in demanding actions from local authorities. He was particularly concerned that the links to air quality and biodiversity were developed fully. He looked forward to the opportunity at Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Strategy and Action Plan in more detail.
- 71.8 Cllr Paul Follows thanked officers from across the Council for their immense hard work in bringing the Action Plan forward in such a short time, and responding to the challenge set by Council. All the political groups in the Executive had campaigned last May to a greater or lesser extent on action on climate change, and were in a good position to lobby government across political parties for action. The Action Plan was now in the public domain and he encouraged residents to take the opportunity to provide feedback to the Council on the proposals. It was a living document and would evolve and develop with the benefit of input from a wide range of interests.
- 71.9 Cllr Mark Merryweather echoed the support for the Action Plan, both as a councillor and also a resident. Whilst he appreciated the focus on encouraging more cycle use, this was not an option for everyone, and he was keen to promote more use of public transport and especially the introduction of electric buses.
- 71.10 In his closing comments Cllr Williams confirmed that following the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee there would be a formal public consultation, and more details of this would be provided in due course.
- 71.11 The Executive RESOLVED to
- a. Note the draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030 at Annexe 1 to the agenda report.
 - b. Welcome the work carried out so far on the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and note its content, attached at Annexe 2 to the agenda report.
 - c. Recognise the need for further work to define SMART targets that will be measurable and tangible and requested that officers present those in September 2020.
 - d. Invite the Environment O&S Committee to contribute to the further development of the draft Strategy and the draft Action Plan.

Reason: to note the progress made on the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency on 18 September 2019.

EXE 72/19 LEISURE CENTRE INVESTMENT, FARNHAM (Agenda item 8)

- 72.1 Cllr David Beaman introduced the report setting out the proposed changes to the specification of the improvements to be made to Farnham Leisure Centre within the scope of the £1.5m capital budget approved in July 2018. The original specification

had included a children's indoor climbing facility, but the specialist operator had now decided to open in Alton and Fleet and so this was no longer available for Farnham. Waverley's leisure centre contractor, Places Leisure, considered that it was now no longer financially viable to include a climbing facility within the proposed improvements due to the level of provision locally.

- 72.2 Opportunities for alternative improvements to the Leisure Centre had been explored with Places Leisure, and proposals now included extending the adventure play area and connected seating whilst still retaining the increased café area of the original proposals. Options were also being explored to make the leisure centre more energy efficient, with the aim of reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- 72.3 As part of the proposals Places Leisure had recommended closure of the crèche facility, which would enable the new facility mix to be provided. The crèche was typically operating at only 15% of capacity (average attendance of 4 children per day over the last quarter) and an Equality Impact Assessment had concluded that there would be minimal impact only on those parents or carers with no alternative childcare arrangements.
- 72.4 In conclusion, Cllr Beaman endorsed the recommendations to the Executive, in order to progress the investment in facilities at Farnham Leisure Centre whilst taking account of developments since the original approval of the facility mix and budget.
- 72.5 Cllr Jerry Hyman asked whether, now that the climbing facility was not an option, the Council was just looking for ways to spend the agreed budget of £1.5m. He pointed out that the skate park next to the Leisure Centre had potential for improvements including installation of lighting posts that would enable it to be used for longer in the winter, a larger landing area on the north-east side, and a new round grind bar. These improvements had been costed at around £15k in 206/17 but so far funding from the Countryside budget had not been available. He asked whether these might now be funded from the Leisure Centre improvement budget.
- 72.6 Cllr Beaman thanked Cllr Hyman for his constructive suggestion about improving the skate park, which he assured Cllr Hyman he would look into further. However, Cllr Beaman also assured Cllr Hyman that the proposed improvements to the Leisure Centre were not just for the sake of spending the agreed budget. They were linked to significant improvements in the management fee payable by the contractor to Waverley, and given the very competitive operating environment in Farnham, it was important to maximise revenue benefits of the facility.
- 72.7 The Executive RESOLVED to:
1. Agree the revised facility mix for Farnham Leisure Centre, including the closure of the crèche, reflecting the extremely low usage and the minimal impact identified in the Equality Impact Assessment;
 2. Give officers delegated authority to deliver the development project, including the procurement of the contractor;
 3. Agree that energy efficiency, carbon reduction opportunities are explored and, where possible and subject to being within budget, are embedded within the project, as part of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Reason: To progress the investment in facilities at Farnham Leisure Centre taking account of developments since the original approval of the facility mix and budget.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 7.10 pm

Chairman