

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE - 28 JULY 2020

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 11 AUGUST 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 Steve Williams
Cllr Andy MacLeod	

Apologies

Cllr Liz Townsend

Also Present

Councillor Julia Potts, Councillor Simon Dear, Councillor Jenny Else, Councillor Maxine Gale, Councillor Michael Goodridge MBE, Councillor John Gray, Councillor Joan Heagin, Councillor Jerry Hyman, Councillor Peter Isherwood, Councillor Robert Knowles, Councillor Peter Nicholson, Councillor Ruth Reed, Councillor John Robini and Councillor Richard Seaborne

EXE 11/20 MINUTES (Agenda item 1)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

EXE 12/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

Cllr Julia Potts declared an interest in relation to item 14, as she was a member of Nuffield Health.

EXE 13/20 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public.

EXE 14/20 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions from Members.

EXE 15/20 LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES (Agenda item 6)

The Leader and Executive Members reported on current issues within their respective Executive portfolios:

- 15.1 Cllr John Ward, Leader of the Council:
- A lot of time had been spent in recent days on the matter of local government in Surrey, and responding to Surrey County Council's letter to the Secretary of State.
- 15.2 Cllr Mark Merryweather, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets and Commercial:
- The second round of local authority discretionary business grants for small businesses was now open and criteria had been expanded to include businesses with a rateable value or fixed property-related costs of up to £55,000. Applications could be made through the Waverley website, until 9am on Monday 3 August.
- 15.3 Cllr Steve Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability:
- Work was progressing on the Climate Emergency Action Plan to provide a more coherent approach and move forward on key projects that would serve as a catalyst and leverage key activities, particularly around active transport, community energy, and invest to save projects that would provide financial as well as carbon savings.
 - Public consultation and engagement was a key part of the Strategy, and a process of public consultation and engagement would begin in August.
- 15.4 Cllr Anne-Marie Rosoman, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety:
- The Council's Housing Officers continued to support vulnerable and shielded residents, although it was unclear currently what would be required by the government when shielding came to an end at the beginning of August. Preparations were in place in the event of a second Covid-19 wave.
 - Redevelopment of Ockford Ridge was progressing well, and an average of four households per week would be moving back over the next four weeks.
 - Waverley had housed over thirty homeless households at the height of the pandemic, most of whom had now been moved out of temporary accommodation and into more suitable accommodation.
- 15.5 Cllr Andy MacLeod, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Brightwells
- Work on the Brightwells Yard development had resumed post-lockdown, and was now up to 80% capacity. However, the opening would be delayed, from spring 2021 to autumn 2021. There had been some changes in the Crest Nicholson management team, but they were confident that the development would open in autumn 2021.
 - The NMA planning application in relation to tree works on site had been withdrawn.
- 15.6 Cllr Nick Palmer, Portfolio Holder for Operational and Enforcement Services
- Car park usage continued to increase, but they were still well under capacity and there were no proposals to make any changes to parking charges for the time being in order to protect the interests of shops and car park users.

- 15.7 Cllr David Beaman, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Culture
- The Waverley HOPPA service had resumed, and every effort was being made to encourage people to use the service and get out and about again.
- 15.8 Cllr Peter Clark, Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation, IT and Customer Services:
- In contrast to the recent discussions around unitary authorities, and a potential Surrey-wide unitary authority, Waverley was focussed on transforming its approach to customer services, and replacing individual service-level customer service teams with one integrated customer service centre. This would include a master customer management database, enabling better understanding of customer needs and making the customer journey more efficient and easier.
- 15.9 Cllr Paul Follows, Deputy Leader
- Work on refreshing the Corporate Strategy was continuing over the summer.
 - The revised governance structure for Dunsfold Park Garden Village had now been circulated to all councillors; it now included the borough councillors local to the Dunsfold area, and also representatives from Alfold, Bramley, Cranleigh and Dunsfold parishes.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Background Papers

Unless specified under an individual item, there are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to the reports in Part I of these minutes.

EXE 16/20 CONTINGENCY REVISED BUDGET 2020/21 (Agenda item 7)

- 16.1 Cllr Mark Merryweather introduced the report that set out the severe financial impact on the Council of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures proposed to address the £6.6m shortfall in the 2020/21 General Fund budget that had arisen. The budget shortfall was largely due to loss of income from council car parks, and from closure of the leisure centres.
- 16.2 In addition to government grants received totalling £1.4m, the proposed mitigation comprised reduced in-year spending of £2.3m and drawdown from reserves of £2.9m. Further options for savings had been identified but these had not been developed sufficiently to 'bank' the savings at this time. The proposals to balance the 2020/21 GF budget had been presented to Members in a briefing, and then scrutinised by the Value for Money Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 13 July. The budget gap remained at £6.6m as presented at that time, and there were no changes in the underlying assumptions. There was still a lack of detail around how much further funding would be available from the government to compensate for lost income.

- 16.3 Cllr Merryweather concluded his presentation by commending officers in the Council's Finance Team for their work in developing the revised budget, as well as dealing with the additional work load of administering the government's business grant schemes; and also the constructive and helpful contributions of councillors and especially the Value for Money Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 16.4 Cllr Julia Potts spoke to emphasise the importance of reaching a swift resolution to the negotiations with Places Leisure, so that the leisure centres could re-open as soon as possible in order to stem the loss of income and for the health and well-being of Waverley residents.
- 16.5 The Executive RESOLVED to recommend to Council:**
- 1. That Council acknowledges the forecast variations from the 2020/21 general fund budget listed in Annexe 1 and approves the mitigation measures set out in Annexe 2 including revisions to approved budgets, the cancellation of approved contributions to reserves and the drawing down of earmarked reserves.**
 - 2. That in the event of additional government grant being secured and/or the overall projection set out in Annexe 1 being more favourable than forecast, the net budget surplus arising from this accrues to the business rate equalisation fund, property investment fund and working balance.**
 - 3. That a full revision of the approved Medium Term Financial Plan is undertaken which will assess the adequacy of the contingency budget, consider the other options identified but not included at value at this stage, and the wider economic factors – to be reported to Council no later than its December meeting.**
 - 4. That in relation to the Leisure Centre issues, the recommendations included in the Exempt Annexe be approved.**

PART II - MATTERS OF REPORT

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

EXE 17/20 RECOVERY CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION (RCT) PROGRAMME (Agenda item 8)

- 17.1 The Leader introduced that report setting out the details of the Recovery, Change and Transformation Programme, which aimed to identify and address the operational impacts on the council and the community of the COVID-19 pandemic, as they moved from emergency response to recovery and planning for the future. The programme sought to harness the learning from the new ways of working experienced during lockdown and the impact this would have on the longer term structure and priorities of the Council.

17.2 The Executive RESOLVED to approve the Recovery, Change and Transformation Programme and the medium and longer term Project Objectives of the 10 projects that form the RCT Programme.

EXE 18/20 RECOVERY AND DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SURREY (Agenda item 9)

- 18.1 The Leader introduced the item by proposing a revised recommendation, which was seconded by Cllr Follows and agreed by the Executive Members. The revision proposed that the Waverley Borough Council motion agreed on 22 July, and the letter of the Surrey district and borough council leaders to the Secretary of State of 23 July, which had been circulated as annexes to the agenda, be noted; and that a budget of £10,000 be established to support preparatory work for a unitary council proposal.
- 18.2 The Leader reminded Members of recent events that began with the Government announcement at the beginning of the month of the publication in the autumn of the long-awaited Recovery and Devolution White Paper. On 10 July, the Leader of Surrey County Council had written to the Minister asking that Surrey be allowed to present a proposal for a single unitary covering the whole of Surrey. At the Surrey Leaders' Group meeting on 17 July, the District and Borough Leaders had expressed their great disappointment at the lack of engagement or consultation prior to the letter being sent. The Surrey Leader's letter had been presented to his Cabinet on 21 July.
- 18.3 On 22 July, Waverley's Full Council met and passed a Motion opposing a single Surrey-wide unitary authority, recognising principles of localism, and instructing the Executive to urgently investigate alternative forms of unitary authority that might be more advantageous to Waverley and its residents, including opportunities with neighbouring councils. On 23 July, the Leaders of all eleven Districts and Boroughs had signed a letter to the Secretary of State asking that they also be invited to present a case for more unitary authorities. This was a firm expression of the dislike of the Surrey proposals from across the county.
- 18.4 Cllr Robert Knowles thanked the Leader for clarifying the timeline of events, and the fact that there had been no engagement with District and Borough Leaders prior to the Surrey Leader writing to the Secretary of State. Cllr Knowles noted that the report to the Surrey Cabinet referred to a single unitary covering an area that would provide a 'credible geography' for new structure, and highlighted that in Haslemere the natural geography and connections were to Midhurst, Alton and Aldershot, and to the south coast. He also drew attention to the examples in Cllr Oliver's letter that evidenced the divide in services between the north and the south of the county, and concluded that in his opinion a single Surrey unitary would be a disaster for Waverley residents.
- 18.5 Cllr John Robini thanked the Leader and the Leaders of the other Districts and Boroughs for their united and prompt response to the Surrey Leader's letter. He did not agree that Waverley would be best-served by a single Surrey unitary, and he encouraged Waverley and the towns and villages to

start thinking about the future. Cllr Robini commended the revised proposal before the Executive and echoed Cllr Knowles' view that options should include consideration of joining with rural areas to the south of Waverley to protect the rural voice of the borough.

18.6 Cllrs Follows, Palmer and Clark all spoke to highlight the feat of uniting the Districts and Boroughs in a joint response to the Secretary of State; the absence of any detail about what powers might be devolved to towns and parishes, which in itself seemed contrary to the government's trend to centralise control; the importance of proportional representation for a larger electoral area; and the hope that Waverley's allocation of a budget would prompt similar action from the other Districts and Boroughs, in order to develop an alternative business case to what the County Council was proposing.

18.7 In concluding, the Leader emphasised again the lack of consultation prior to Cllr Oliver's letter being sent, and the urgency of sending a clear message from the Districts and Boroughs of the lack of support for a Surrey-wide unitary.

18.8 The Executive RESOLVED

1) To note: the Surrey County Council Cabinet report; the letter from the Surrey County Council Leader, Cllr Tim Oliver, to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP; the Waverley Borough Council motion of 22 July 2020; and the letter of the Surrey district and borough council leaders to the Secretary of State of 23 July, attached as annexes to this report.

2) To allocate a budget of £10,000 to support preparatory work for a unitary council proposal.

3) To note that:

a) Officers have identified an existing budget where there is a high degree of certainty that an underspend will occur this financial year (mileage and subsistence costs during lockdown period), and

b) under paragraphs 4.23-4.26 and annexe 1 of the Financial Regulations, this amount can be vired with officer approval, so a supplementary estimate is not required.

EXE 19/20 LITTER ENFORCEMENT AT FRENHAM (Agenda item 10)

19.1 Cllr Nick Palmer, Portfolio Holder for Operational and Enforcement Services, introduced the proposal to procure additional enforcement resources for Frensham Great Pond. This was a very attractive site that had been in tremendous demand since the end of lockdown, and there had been many instances of social distancing being ignored, huge amounts of litter being left, and illegal parking on the main road. This had put huge strain on Waverley's staff, and spoiled the area for residents and visitors.

- 19.2 It was proposed to contract with East Hampshire District Council to provide additional enforcement officers at Frensham Great Pond and to help maintain the area in an enjoyable state for visitors. Cllr Palmer thanked Waverley Rangers and Enforcement Officers for their hard work under exceptionally difficult conditions, and encouraged residents to visit other attractive parts of Waverley to allow Frensham Pond some time to recover.
- 19.3 **The Executive RESOLVED to authorise the Head of Environmental and Regulatory Services to procure additional enforcement resources on a cost neutral basis, from external providers during periods of peak demand as and when required in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Operational and Enforcement Services.**

EXE 20/20 PAVEMENT LICENSING (Agenda item 11)

This matter was withdrawn from the Executive agenda and would be considered by the Licensing & Regulatory Committee on 30 July 2020.

EXE 21/20 PROPERTY MATTER - THE BURYS DEVELOPMENT - PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT (PID) (Agenda item 12)

- 21.1 Cllr Mark Merryweather, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets and Commercial Services, introduced the report in the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and Property Investment Strategy. The goals of the strategy pointed towards responsible development of residential open market homes on land owned by the council. The Burys site presented one such opportunity, and the Executive had already approved a budget to commission a detailed options appraisal. The PID set out the scope of the development project, and reflected the feedback received and clarification given following the report earlier in the year.
- 21.2 Cllr Follows thanked Cllr Merryweather for ensuring that the informal feedback from Godalming Members had been reflected in the project scope, and emphasised the importance to the sustainability of the town centre of the continued presence of Waverley Borough Council in Godalming.
- 21.3 The Executive RESOLVED to approve the PID for the Burys Development Project.**

EXE 22/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 13)

At 7.10pm, on the recommendation of the Leader, the Executive RESOLVED that, pursuant to Procedure Rule 20, and in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information (as defined by Section 100I of the Act) of the description specified at the meeting in the revised Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Executive 8
28.07.20

EXE 23/20 PROPERTY MATTER (Agenda item 14)

23.1 The Executive RESOLVED to approve the recommendation set out in the Exempt Report.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 7.15 pm

Chairman