

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE - 18 JANUARY 2022

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 22 FEBRUARY 2022

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

Present

Cllr Paul Follows (Chairman)	Cllr Kika Mirylees
Cllr Peter Clark (Vice Chairman)	Cllr Nick Palmer
Cllr Andy MacLeod	Cllr Liz Townsend
Cllr Penny Marriott	Cllr Steve Williams
Cllr Mark Merryweather	

Also Present

Councillor Peter Marriott

EXE 67/21 MINUTES (Agenda item 1)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 November and the Special Meeting held on 14 December 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

EXE 68/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest raised under this heading.

EXE 69/21 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

There were no questions submitted from members of the public.

EXE 70/21 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions submitted from members of the Council.

The Leader advised that he would be moving Leader and Portfolio Holder updates to the end of the agenda as there were a number of updates to be made. For ease of reference the items are listed below in the order in which they appeared in the agenda.

EXE 71/21 LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES (Agenda item 6)

The Leader and Portfolio Holders gave brief updates on current issues not reported elsewhere on the agenda:

- The Leader thanked all those involved in managing the aftermath of the tragic fire in the Charterhouse ward in Godalming the previous week. Councillor Williams, Charterhouse ward member echoed his thanks to the Waverley officers and emergency services involved.
- The Leader updated on the work on the Guildford collaboration, which was currently developing an Inter-Authority Agreement and risks being drafted for Executive and Council in due course.

- Following discussions with administration group leaders, the Leader had made a number of changes to the Executive following the resignation from the Executive by Councillor Rosoman on health grounds. Councillor Rosoman would remain a borough and town councillor. He thanked Councillor Rosoman for her contribution to the Executive and for her work on behalf of residents. In light of the significant workload involved in the housing portfolio, the decision had been taken to make the following changes and a press release would be issued shortly:
 - The Leader, Deputy Leader, Councillor Merryweather and Councillor Williams portfolios would remain largely unchanged, with an explicit responsibility for the Leader and Deputy Leader in respect of the Guildford collaboration.
 - Councillor MacLeod would become the Portfolio Holder for Enforcement, Operations and Brightwells. The Leader thanked Councillor MacLeod for his work in planning. The new enforcement role would encompass the business transformation elements.
 - Councillor Mirylees would become the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing, Parks and Leisure.
 - Councillor Townsend would become the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development, retaining responsibility for the Cranleigh Leisure Centre as it moved into its capital project and planning stages and retaining the leadership of the Dunsfold Park governance.
 - Councillor Palmer would become Co-Portfolio Holder for Housing (Delivery) which would encompass delivery of new social housing, joint responsibility for the housing strategy, homelessness and refugee management and retaining the chairmanship of the CIL Board.
 - Councillor Paul Rivers would be joining the Executive as Co-Portfolio Holder for Housing (Operations), which would encompass maintenance of existing housing stock, oversight of the housing maintenance contract and joint responsibility for the housing strategy. Councillors Palmer and Rivers would rotate the chairmanship of the Landlord Services Advisory Board.
- Councillor Clark paid tribute to Councillor Rosoman, thanking her and wishing her well for the future; and paid tribute to Councillor MacLeod for his work in planning and wishing him luck for his future role contributing to the modernisation of enforcement in the borough. He welcomed the way the Executive, which was made up of representatives from four political groups, had worked together over the last two years.
- Councillor MacLeod echoed the comments made about Councillor Rosoman. A Brightwells project meeting was due to take place the following week with Crest Nicholson. He thanked the officers in the planning team for their work, acknowledging that it was a difficult job and there were significant demands on the service. He addressed the problems caused by unrealistic housing targets imposed on the Council by the Government, the limited powers the Council had in this area and the deficit that the current Executive had inherited. Despite planning applications being granted, developers were then not building the houses resulting in targets being missed. The Leader echoed the comments about planning and advised that the planning team would be collating some factual information which could be communicated to residents.
- Councillor Townsend paid tribute to Councillor Rosoman who would be missed and thanked Councillor MacLeod for his work on the planning portfolio. She echoed the comments made about planning and the frustration of seeing applications which had been refused by the Council to then be overturned by the Planning Inspector. Government planning policy offered very little protection to countryside beyond the Green Belt. The Government's housing delivery test was flawed however it remained in place. The Council was not able to deliver housing, it could only grant planning permission and then if developers failed to deliver that housing, the

Council was penalised and it was misleading to blame the Council for Government policy.

- Councillor Merryweather echoed the comments made about planning. He highlighted the gap in the expectation between what residents thought the Council had the power to do and what the Council actually had the power to do, which was to follow Government policies which resulted in having to implement a system which was fundamentally unfair.
- Councillor Mirylees echoed the frustrations with the current planning system and thanked her Executive colleagues for their comments and their efforts.
- The Leader addressed some of the comments he had received from residents in respect of the Loxwood Road planning appeal. He understood that the appeal had taken place before the Government's Plan B restrictions were introduced and therefore the appeal took place entirely in the Council Chamber without being livestreamed and he would clarify with residents in writing. Another comment made by the Inspector was the Dunsfold Park would not be deliverable within a 5 year period. The Leader reiterated that the Council was not in a position to deliver the houses and it was felt that the Inspector's decision was disproportionate and the Executive was considering its options.
- Councillor Palmer thanked the Leader for his comments and stated his commitment to addressing the challenge of delivering more affordable housing in the borough. He also thanked Councillor Rosoman for her work. He provided an update on his current portfolio and advised that parking charges at Farnham Leisure centre were being reviewed in light of comments made by a number of residents who use the centre.
- Councillor Merryweather paid tribute to Councillor Rosoman's work and experience. He advised that the draft budget had been published ahead of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. Although the proposals included a £5 increase in Band D council tax charges, they also included additional funding to help those households most affected by the pandemic and the rising cost of living. There were no proposed cuts to services or funding to community organisations. The financial projections had been made in very uncertain conditions. In addition to the rising cost of inflation, there could still be significant financial pressures as a result of the pandemic and recovery and further cuts in Government grant.
- Councillor Townsend thanked her Executive colleagues for their work and wished Councillor Mirylees well for her new expanded role. The draft Biodiversity Policy was currently being finalised and the Dunsfold SPD was being prepared for presentation to the Executive following the consultation. She thanked the Dunsfold Advisory Group and Design South East for their input.
- Councillor Penny Marriott talked about the challenges in measuring whether diversity and inclusion policies have been successful. One way was to examine the Council's workforce and this had been done by the Corporate Equality Group. A voluntary staff survey had been carried out with 95% of respondents agreeing that Waverley was an equal opportunities employer and 93% agreeing that they were treated fairly at work. 94% of respondents agreed that they were free from bullying and harassment at work. The Equalities Action Plan would be presented to the Council in due course. She also paid tribute to Councillor Rosoman, from whom she had inherited the community safety part of her portfolio. She had attended a meeting on youth services hosted by Surrey County Council, which highlighted equalities issues with the traveller community and the community safety elements of youth work. She thanked all the officers for their work.
- Councillor Williams paid tribute to Councillor Rosoman and her work on the Executive; and to Councillor MacLeod for the work on the planning portfolio. He wished Councillor Townsend well for her new role. He welcomed the opportunity to work with Councillor Paul Rivers on housing. A third meeting of the Climate Emergency Board had been held and he was beginning to see a change in the culture in the Council in respect of climate change which was to be welcomed. He

also welcomed the proposals for the new Cranleigh Leisure Centre and the work being carried out to refit a small part of the housing stock to retrofit green technology and contribute to the climate agenda.

- Councillor Mirylees advised that 33 applications had been received for funding from the Thriving Communities Fund, the majority being of a high quality. Successful applicants had been advised of their indicative funding, which was subject to approval of the budget in February. The options analysis being carried out on Farnham Museum was expected shortly. She welcomed the new part of her role and paid tribute to Councillor Rosoman.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

There are no items under this heading.

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 72/21 AFFORDABLE HOMES DELIVERY STRATEGY - TO APPROVE STRATEGY FOR CONSULTATION (Agenda item 7)

The Leader presented the report which set out a draft Affordable Homes Delivery Strategy for consultation with stakeholders. The document was aligned to the Corporate Strategy, in respect of provision of quality affordable housing, reducing energy bills for tenants and mitigating the impact of the housing stock on the climate. He looked forward to receiving comments from stakeholders and thanked the officers involved in the production of the document.

Councillor Williams welcomed the report and its commitment to sustainability and building net zero homes. The recommendations would meet housing need and benefit residents whilst contributing to the sustainability agenda.

Councillor Palmer echoed the comments made and welcomed the report and thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their work. He highlighted the lack of genuine affordable housing and felt that the strategy provided a viable path forward.

RESOLVED that the draft Affordable Homes Delivery Strategy and supporting evidence studies be approved to be published for public consultation between 27 January and 24 February 2022.

Reason: To have an Affordable Homes Delivery Strategy which is fit for purpose and sets out our priorities for new affordable homes in the borough.

EXE 73/21 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT PROGRESS REPORT APRIL - NOVEMBER 2021 (Agenda item 8)

The Leader presented the report which set out an update to the Landlord Services Advisory Board in December 2021 and recommendations which sought to realign budgets with the current position.

RESOLVED that virements¹ of budgets within the HRA to realign the budget to need as detailed in Annexe 1 to the report be approved.

Reason: To update the HRA budgets according to needs and ensure services and works continue to be delivered during 2021/22. The original HRA budget for 2021/22 was agreed by Council in February 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic. In light of changes in needs from tenants, access to suppliers, contractors etc. this report seeks to provide an update to the Landlord Services Advisory Board and realign budgets in line with the current identified needs.

[Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee]

EXE 74/21 HOUSING MAINTENANCE PROCUREMENT OUTCOME REPORT (Agenda item 9)

The Leader presented the report which set out the outcome of the Housing Maintenance Contract procurement. It was noted that housing repairs generated a significant number of enquiries from tenants and there had been some issues with the current contract, exacerbated by the pandemic. The procurement process would bring forward a new contractor with whom a better relationship could be built and contractual obligations could be put in place to allow monitoring of performance which would ultimately result in a better service for tenants. It was likely that a performance report would come before the Landlord Services Advisory Board earlier than the nine month deadline.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The procurement process undertaken for the housing maintenance service be noted, and that following a comprehensive tender evaluation process, Ian Williams Ltd achieved the highest combined scores for price and quality and has been confirmed as the preferred bidder and subject to contract and final due diligence, will be awarded the contract.**
- 2. Officers be requested to report to the Landlord Services Advisory Board within nine months on the outcome of the mobilisation of the new contract and the performance of the contractor.**

Reason: To share the outcome of the procurement exercise and demonstrate the adherence to procurement rules

EXE 75/21 WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL DRAFT TREE & WOODLAND POLICY (Agenda item 10)

Councillor Townsend presented the report which set out the draft Tree and Woodland Policy, with a commitment to improving biodiversity and the climate change agenda. She thanked the officers involved in developing the policy, which would form a suite of environmental policies including a Pesticides Policy and a Biodiversity Policy being developed with assistance from the Surrey Wildlife Trust. The Policy would ensure more trees were built and that existing trees and hedgerows were maintained to ensure that they captured the maximum amount of

¹ To move funds from one budget to another

carbon. The three policies would form part of the overarching Greenspaces Strategy.

The Leader welcomed the report and the importance of maintaining existing tree stock. Councillor Williams welcomed the report which linked into a range of other policies and strategies, all of which were crucial to responding to the climate emergency. He thanked the Portfolio Holder and the officer team for their work.

RESOLVED that the Tree and Woodland Policy attached at annexe 1 to the report be approved

Reason: Public, Government and industry awareness of climate change and the fragile state of our environments, locally, nationally and internationally has never been higher or the importance of action so urgent. Tree planting and appropriate management of existing trees and woodlands owned by the Council are even more important as part of these concerns. There is therefore a need for a consistent and comprehensive approach to the Council's tree and woodland management, beyond considering trees solely from a liability perspective.

EXE 76/21 CAPITAL PROJECTS (Agenda item 11)

Councillor Merryweather presented the report which set out proposals for allocation of £76,080 of the remaining £161,341 from the fund agreed at the Council meeting in February 2021 for discretionary capital projects. The Projects Co-ordinating Group was formed to consider the discretionary projects and bring back recommended projects and expenditure to the Executive. The current proposals focussed on the borough's pavilions, where a status report had been commissioned which showed that many of the pavilions had fallen behind in their programme of maintenance and repair. The funding proposed would enable the Council to address some of the most severe cases. There were other projects in the pipeline which would enable the remaining balance to be spent before the end of the year.

In response to a question from the Leader, Councillor Merryweather confirmed that the figure of £76,080 was the maximum needed and the figure proposed for the Bourne Pavilion was contingent on discussions with the current tenant. Councillor Townsend thanked the Portfolio Holder and welcomed the improvement to the borough's pavilions, which would provide access to leisure for residents.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The Asset Management Plan (AMP) produced by the Engineers for pavilions across the Borough and the RAG rating to prioritise works that are now critical be noted**
- 2. The value of up to £76,080* be approved from the 2021-22 capital budget**
[*full amount subject to clarification of approved works with Bourne Community Group].

Reason: For urgent maintenance works required to Waverley pavilions to take place now that a strategic AMP has been produced.

EXE 77/21 TAX STRATEGY 2022-24 (Agenda item 12)

Councillor Merryweather presented the report which set out a Tax Strategy and made clear that this did not relate to Council Tax or other taxes levied. The Council was required to have a tax strategy in place to fulfil its requirements under legislation relating to tackling tax evasion.

RESOLVED that the Tax Strategy 2022-24 at Annexe 1 to the report be approved.

Reason: The Council is required to have in place a Tax Strategy to fulfil its responsibilities under the Legislation in Criminal Finances Act 2017, and to respond appropriately to the 'Tackling tax evasion: Government guidance for the corporate offences of failure to prevent the criminal facilitation of tax evasion' Government guidance issued in September 2017.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 7.16 pm

Chairman