

- \* Cllr Penny Rivers (Mayor)
- \* Cllr John Ward (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr Lauren Atkins	* Cllr Peter Martin
* Cllr Jane Austin	* Cllr Heather McClean
* Cllr Zoe Barker-Lomax	* Cllr Mark Merryweather
* Cllr David Beaman	* Cllr Kika Mirylees
* Cllr Dave Busby	* Cllr Alan Morrison
* Cllr Peter Clark	* Cllr David Munro
* Cllr Carole Cockburn	* Cllr George Murray
* Cllr Janet Crowe	* Cllr Peter Nicholson
Cllr Jerome Davidson	* Cllr Nick Palmer
* Cllr Kevin Deanus	* Cllr Ken Reed
* Cllr Adam Duce	* Cllr Ruth Reed
* Cllr Tony Fairclough	* Cllr Connor Relleen
* Cllr Paul Follows	* Cllr Paul Rivers
* Cllr Maxine Gale	* Cllr John Robini
* Cllr Michael Goodridge	* Cllr Julian Spence
* Cllr George Hesse	* Cllr James Staunton
* Cllr Michael Higgins	* Cllr Richard Steijger
* Cllr Jerry Hyman	* Cllr Phoebe Sullivan
Cllr Jacquie Keen	* Cllr Liz Townsend
* Cllr Victoria Kiehl	* Cllr Philip Townsend
* Cllr Andrew Laughton	* Cllr Terry Weldon
* Cllr Andrew Law	* Cllr Graham White
* Cllr Gemma Long	Cllr Michaela Wicks
Cllr Andy MacLeod	* Cllr Steve Williams

\*Present

### **Apologies**

Cllr Lauren Atkins, Cllr Jacquie Keen, Cllr Andy MacLeod and Cllr Michaela Wicks

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, prayers were led by Father Jonathan How

### CNL43/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item 1.)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Atkins, Crowe, Keen, Macleod and Wicks.

CNL44/23 MINUTES (Agenda item 2.)

Subject to two amendments:

- i. paragraph 21.3 of the minutes of 18 July £138 should read £138 million;
- ii. only Councillor Goodridge should be attributed with the comments at minute 42.7 of 29 August, not Cllr Murray as well.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of 18 July 2023 together with the Extraordinary Meetings held on 29 August 2023 be confirmed and signed.

CNL45/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda item 3.)

- 45.1 Councillors Morrison and Liz Townsend declared an interest in agenda item 8 as Cranleigh Parish Councillors. Councillors Morrison and Austin declared interests in the same item as users of the leisure centre.
- 45.2 The Joint Chief Executive declared an interest on behalf of the Joint Management Team as employees of Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils, and advised that the Joint Management Team would not be present for the duration of Item 12.

CNL46/23 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda item 4.)

- 46.1 The Mayor thanked those that had attended the fundraising concert at Chart House; and was looking forward to the Mayor's Christmas Carol Service scheduled for 10 December; and the Mayors' quiz night on 9 February.
- 46.2 The Mayor then made the following statement: "*Waverley Borough Council condemns the appalling attacks on Israel by Hamas. Residents across our borough have been shocked and upset by the senseless loss of life. Our thoughts are with the innocent and vulnerable people caught up in these tragic events. We stand against all aggression and acts of terror, and we ask for calm and understanding at this time. We respect everyone - those of faith and those of none. Local government is based on the fundamental principle that communities are stronger when they support each other. We stand for justice and peace, shalom, salaam.*"
- 46.3 At the invitation of the Mayor, those present stood for one-minute in silent reflection.

CNL47/23 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda item 5.)

- 47.1 Mindful of the business on the agenda, the Leader stated that he had no announcements to make; however, he called upon the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Regeneration and Economic Development to update the Council. Councillor Liz Townsend thanked the planning team for the improvement in planning services. Non-major applications performance in the most recent quarter was 97%, which was significantly greater than the 70% threshold set by the government, accordingly, the Council had received confirmation that it not been designated by the Secretary of State.

- 47.2 Councillor Townsend continued by wishing every success to the Business Improvement District ballots in Godalming and Farnham that were underway and was looking forward to the results which would be declared on 1 November.

CNL48/23 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 6.)

There were none.

CNL49/23 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 7.)

- 49.1 **Councillor Austin had given notice of a question to be put to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development in accordance with procedure rule 11:** *“Waverley Borough Council recently disclosed that it is the third worst performing Council in the country for staff turnover in its planning department. The national average for District and Borough Councils is 16%. Waverley's planning team currently has a staff turnover of 47%. Our partner Guildford Borough Council follows close behind at 40%. Would the Planning Portfolio Holder please advise of the actions being taken to improve the staff turnover issue and also confirm the current numbers of interim/agency staff versus full time members of staff in the Waverley Planning team?”*
- 49.2 **Councillor Liz Townsend responded:** *“I'd like to thank Councillor Austin for her question which highlights a national crisis in planning officer retention and recruitment across the country the politically independent Local Government Chronicle who reported this information last year received replies from 276 councils and amongst those who responded only one in 10 Council planning departments were fully staffed and a quarter had a staff turnover rate of 20% or more.*
- 49.3 *London and the home counties were reported to be the worst affected as Waverley has one of the highest housing costs outside of London it is also not difficult to see that this could be a barrier to attracting planning officers whose skills are easily transferable our figures which include the high turnover of contract staff could be seen as having a distorting effect on our final figure it is also difficult to draw too many parallels across the councils who responded without inspecting the source data to ensure that permanent and contractor staff were given equal weight when calculating total turnover figures the article quoted reasons for the difficulty in attracting planning officers quoting the combination of low numbers of new entrance to the planning profession and the loss of many older highly skilled professionals through retirement or moves to employment within other sectors or fields from our experience private sector salaries can exceed those afforded by the public sector and these major factors remain difficult for the council to counterbalance.*
- 49.4 *However, in anticipation of a continued recruitment issues you'll be aware that this administration secured an additional budget of £350,000 to fund a series of initiatives to improve the planning service some of these measures are aimed at recruitment campaigns in addition to improving planning officer*

*roles and enhancing fulfilment levels and creating a more positive environment.*

- 49.5 *In the meantime given the national crisis around the shortage of planners and competition for candidates between the public and private sectors, the Council like many other councils across the country expects turnover to remain high and in the interim period to rely on temporarily covering vacant posts with able and experienced contractors whilst we run our recruitment campaign for permanent positions and investigate potential apprenticeship opportunities and in answer to council Austin's final question there are currently 44 posts within the planning service of which 14 posts are currently covered by contract staff"*
- 49.6 **Councillor Barker-Lomax had given notice of a question to be put to the Leader of the Council in accordance with procedure rule 11:** *"We welcome that Waverley is working with Woolmer Hill Sports Association to enable the community to enjoy the pitches at The Edge. We welcome too the progress that is being made on re-opening The Hall at The Edge. Further to the meeting arranged by Jeremy Hunt with Waverley's leader, plus Tom Horwood of Waverley Borough Council and Tim Oliver of Surrey County Council, will the Leader now confirm: 1. That the hall at The Edge will re-open this calendar year? 2. That the community clubs, who have done so much to raise funds for The Edge, will be given the right to enjoy the sporting facilities at and in The Edge? 3. That Waverley will work with the community clubs to find long term solutions to the financial viability of The Edge, such as disability funding?"*
- 49.7 **The Leader of the Council responded:** *"I would just like to correct one part - the meeting with Jeremy Hunt and the Leader of the County Council - I arranged those meetings which is why they were held here, just as I arranged the previous meeting with the Leader of the County Council the last time we hit an impasse with the County Council, now I flag this not to be petty or pedantic but because I want to be clear how many times Waverley has had to intervene to break through some of the issues at play here some of them real but many of them created by the problematic interventions of politicians at all levels.*
- 49.8 *It is collectively our hope that that is the case now we're aiming for the end of November at the latest, subject to the continuation of those relatively smooth discussions with the owner of the building. Now we've actually received the heads of terms from Surrey County Council to look at today at 4pm, so that is the absolute latest update that I can give right now and obviously I welcome the progress that's been made and want to thank our officers for the hard work that they have put in in getting this dealt with in a short space of time and for pursuing the County officers to make sure these things have been done properly.*
- 49.9 *As to your second question, it will be a commercial building and so all the community clubs will have the right to use it subject to the usual conditions of the use of a leisure centre, there won't be any restrictions on that.*
- 49.10 *Finally, on your last question we've obviously been looking at all these things as we go and I've made every effort to explore as many types of funding*

*streams as possible but I do want to take this opportunity to actually thank you because acknowledging the financial viability of The Edge is actually a question that requires a solution is something that I've been struggling to get certain individuals to do, in fact I was in the deeply surreal situation of having to remind the Chancellor of the Exchequer that Council Services cost money to run and so it's good to see at least one political associate of the Chancellor actually accept this reality in public."*

CNL50/23 CRANLEIGH LEISURE CENTRE NEW BUILD (Agenda item 8.)

- 50.1 Councillor Liz Townsend introduced the report and thanked Officers accordingly. The proposal was supported by a viable business case and was aligned with the Corporate Strategy which included improving the health and well-being of residents together with supporting a strong resilient local economy, and a serious commitment to be a carbon neutral Council by 2030. Architects GT3 had led the successful St Sidwell's Point Passivhaus development for Exeter City Council and subsequently had been engaged by Waverley.
- 50.2 All Councillors had been invited to be briefed on Passivhaus by consultants, and those that attended had heard the projected significant long-term energy consumption benefits of potentially up to a 70% saving. The Council had taken a cautious approach in its projections and had included a 50% saving in its proposal. The report showed a significant increase in budget required to progress to the next detailed design stage and Councillors could be assured that the procurement process would fix costs where appropriate and beneficial to the Council.
- 50.3 It was difficult to compare the initial capital budget agreed in December 2021 with the current proposal. The December 2021 proposal had been based on a traditional build leisure centre. Since then, costs had been negatively impacted by inflationary pressures and the effect of the mini budget in 2022 saw inflation rise to 10.1%. This had caused the cost of materials and associated fees to increase. The revised capital budget of £31.1 million was shown in the exempt Annexe with the use of £18 million capital receipts, section 106 contributions and internal borrowing of approximately £11 million. Greater borrowing costs of up to £18 million had been fully considered against the impact on the Council's treasury management and the proposal was still within the limit set by the Council in its Treasury Management Strategy.
- 50.4 Councillor Liz Townsend summarised that the proposal represented a significant opportunity to future-proof the leisure centre in Cranleigh, to build an exemplar accessible low energy and low carbon building, and to continue to provide much needed and valued health and well-being services to residents.
- 50.5 Councillor Austin spoke against the proposal due to the 50% cost increase on the 2021 feasibility study. Councillors had been given little information upon which to base their decision and no alternative options had been presented. The report appeared to cite the achievement of Passivhaus certification as the reasoning for the budget increase. Councillor Austin

illustrated that the original £20m budget plus actual build cost inflation over the period would be £23m. The additional £8m requested in the proposal before Members could not be accounted for. Councillor Austin had requested details of an alternative option from Officers and had been provided details of a less expensive alternative which provided carbon reduction not far off Passivhaus, with a shorter payback period than the many decades planned in the Passivhaus proposal. Councillor Austin was concerned that the specification could continue to change and consequently, the budget could increase,

- 50.6 Councillor Goodridge was concerned that insufficient information had been provided and that there was an absence of alternative options to consider. It was unclear what facility mix the Council would get for its money. Accordingly, Councillor Goodridge proposed that the proposal be deferred until such a time as further information had been made available, seconded by Councillor Austin.
- 50.7 The Leader spoke against the deferral and expressed dissatisfaction that Councillors had not sought further information from Officers or the Portfolio Holder before the meeting. Councillor Liz Townsend emphasised the urgent need to replace the existing complex due its poor condition and the risk of plant infrastructure failure. The Passivhaus proposal had a favourable 50-year projection and would represent a long-term saving for the Council. The facility mix was based on a full and formal assessment of need, engagement with stakeholders and Councillors had received reports on the matter previously.
- 50.8 Councillor Martin spoke in support of the deferral as the payback period would be measured in decades. Other options should be considered, an Option B existed, but was not evident in the report, it was understood that option could achieve near Passivhaus design within a significantly better payback period.
- 50.9 Councillor Murray spoke against the deferral and explained that he had emailed the Portfolio Holder to seek clarification, and the Portfolio Holder had provided a detailed response which had provided assurance that Cranleigh residents would achieve good value for money. Councillor Merryweather added that the project would pay for itself over time, and the principle factor in the increased budget was inflation.
- 50.10 The Leader proposed procedural Motion 14.11 (d) to take an immediate vote on the deferral. The Mayor considered that sufficient debate had been heard and called upon Councillor Austin as seconder to speak, followed by a right of reply being afforded to Councillor Goodridge. Councillor Austin cautioned that the proposal was a once in two generation opportunity which the Council could consult on to ensure that the specification was right. No scope of works or specification had been provided for the Council to consider. Councillor Goodridge concurred that consultation should be undertaken on the facility mix to determine the specification first.
- 50.11 Councillor Hyman raised a point of order in relation to Article 12.2 of the Constitution insofar as not all relevant matters had been considered; and that the report of 14 December 2021 stated that Officers would report back to

Council when final costs, the preferred contractor, and precise funding was known. The Monitoring Officer clarified that the amendment before Members was to defer the proposal, and as such was satisfied that Council had sufficient information to vote upon deferral. The Mayor called upon Council to vote.

The amendment to **defer** the proposal was **lost**.

- 50.12 The Mayor called speakers on the original Motion. Councillor R. Reed stated that she had attended the site visit offered to all Councillors. That site visit demonstrated why a replacement for the leisure centre was needed and the urgency to mitigate the risk of not having a leisure centre in Cranleigh at all. However, it was a concern that the cost was estimated and both the cost and specification should be clearly established before being put to the Council.
- 50.13 Councillor Hyman was disappointed that some Councillors had been in receipt of an alternative option, which not all Councillors had been party to. Further, he expressed concern that it was unclear whether the Council intended to replicate the proposal for an exemplar leisure centre across its other leisure centres, and if so, how that would be funded. No red-line had been identified, and the report set out a scheme of delegation which would limit Full Council's role in deciding the final cost and specification. Councillor Merryweather countered that the effect of the report was to establish a red-line. The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that the only recommendation for consideration was the capital budget, as the other matters had been resolved by the Executive.
- 50.14 At the invitation of the Mayor, the Executive Head of Commercial Services referred Members to the background papers listed at section 19 of the report. The facility mix had not changed since the need was identified in 2019 and accounted for growth of population in the Cranleigh and surrounding area up to the next 30 years. Councillor Hyman raised a point of order regarding Article 12 insofar as paragraph 7.5 stated that the facility mix may change at the detailed design stage, subject to consultation, to reduce build costs. The Leader countered with a point of personal explanation that the paragraph referenced was in fact consistent with the comments made by the Executive Head of Commercial Services. The Monitoring Officer concurred that there was no discrepancy.
- 50.15 Councillor Munro referenced his own experience regarding Surrey police headquarters and urged that Officers enquire whether the estimates for recently completed leisure centres had proven to be accurate on completion. The Council should be bold and ambitious but lessons could be learned from others.
- 50.16 Councillors Higgins spoke of the importance of the proposal for local residents and was impressed with the Passivhaus standard. The deterioration of the existing facility demonstrated that the Council should invest in a higher standard and should build a future-proof facility, in so doing, accepting the longer payback period. Councillor Beaman spoke further in support and highlighted the significant contingency element which would cover any changes to the specification.

- 50.17 Councillor Cockburn spoke against the proposal and noted that the draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not reflected its debate on the significant cost of the proposal, moreover, the Committee had not been presented with any alternative option to consider. The Council had a duty to its residents to consider all of the options and all of the information. Councillor Merryweather countered that inflation was the root cause of the increase in cost. Once the payback period was completed, the proposal would then generate revenue.
- 50.18 Councillor Clark reminded Members that Council had been informed in 2021 that the leisure centre was coming to the end of its serviceable life and that the 5-year maintenance cost would be in the region of £7m. The Passivhaus specification wasn't the reason for the cost increase, that element was £2.3m (7.5%) of the overall total. The centre would pay for itself primarily because it would be Passivhaus.
- 50.19 Councillor K. Reed acknowledged that large capital projects for Councils took a long time to pay back, but the proposal was viable. Furthermore, during the election, residents in the east of the Borough were in favour of a new leisure centre, as were the successful election candidates.
- 50.20 Councillor Martin emphasised that the 2021 report stated that Officers should report back to Members when final costs, the design, preferred contractor and precise funding arrangements were known. Instead, Members were being asked to increase the budget by around 50% to £31m. The financial analysis made generous assumptions, and the payback period was measured in decades, the Council should consider value for money and other options which could provide a better payback period for less cost.
- 50.21 Councillor Williams was surprised that some Members had not taken account of the detailed briefing and explanation of Passivhaus that they had been given. Future generations would benefit from the proposal as the current leisure centre comprised 11% of the Council's carbon emissions. The Executive was clear in its commitment to tackling the climate emergency.
- 50.22 The Leader was assured by the level of cost control and building assurance that Passivhaus would provide; and emphasised that residents clearly wanted the Council to deliver a high quality sustainable new leisure centre. It was disappointing that despite those speaking in objection, no recommendations had been made by either of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 50.23 Councillor Long advised that energy industry regulators stated that the best way of saving money on energy was to ensure that you paid as little as possible by consuming less of it and any compromise on the amount of energy consumed would leave the Council open to inflated energy costs in the future.
- 50.24 Councillor Townsend summed up and clarified that if there was going to be additional budget that would have to come before the Council to decide. Future generations should not pay for the environmental mistakes of the past. Members had received sufficient information to be able to make an



informed decision, and if Members had wanted more information they could have invited the Portfolio Holder to the Scrutiny Committees to respond to questions, or made a request for information directly.

50.25 The Leader called for a recorded vote, supported by more than 5 Members.

A recorded vote was undertaken by roll call whereupon it was **RESOLVED** to approve:

1. **That a revised capital budget of £31,137,252, as shown in the financial viability assessment at Exempt Annexe 1, be agreed and allocated to deliver a new-build Cranleigh Leisure Centre.**

#### **For (33)**

Councillors Beaman, Busby, Clark, Crowe, Davidson, Duce, Fairclough, Follows, Gale, Higgins, Kiehl, Law, Long, Mclean, Merryweather, Mirylees, Morrison, Munro, Murray, Nicholson, K. Reed, R. Reed, Paul Rivers, Penny Rivers, Robini, Spence, Steiger, L. Townsend, P. Townsend, Ward, Weldon, White, and Williams.

#### **Against (12)**

Councillors Austin, Barker-Lomax, Cockburn, Deanus, Goodridge, Hesse, Hyman, Laughton, Martin, Relleen, Staunton, and Sullivan.

#### **Abstentions (0)**

*Clerk's note:* Cllr Munro left the chamber upon the conclusion of item 8 and did not return.

#### **CNL51/23 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS UPDATE (Agenda item 9.)**

- 51.1 Councillor Spence moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor K.Reed. Councillor Spence highlighted the increase to the supplementary estimate limit which had not been reviewed for some time. An uplift to £250,000 was needed to allow for the smooth and efficient running of the Council.
- 51.2 Council Goodridge spoke against the recommendation as the increase in the supplementary estimate limit would increase risk and reduce transparency, and urged that a smaller increase be considered instead.
- 51.3 The Leader stated that it had been agreed that any spend in excess of the original £100,000 would be communicated to both the Audit & Risk Committee and to the Executive.

The Mayor moved to a vote and it was **RESOLVED** that

1. **The financial regulations be approved and adopted.**

CNL52/23 LICENSING ACT 2003 - APPROVAL OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY (Agenda item 10.)

52.1 Councillor Murray moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Ward. There being no speakers, the Mayor moved to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** that:

**1. The Statement of Licensing Policy 2023-2028 be approved.**

CNL53/23 QUARTERLY REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS (Agenda item 11.)

53.1 The Leader reported in accordance with Council procedure rule 15.3 that one special urgency decision had been made on 21 September 2023, to award a software contract for payroll and HR Administration. Councillor Martin had duly agreed in his role as Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Resources that the decision was urgent for the following summary reasons:

- 1) the existing software contract for payroll and HR Administration expired on the 30th of September 2023
- 2) the unanticipated expiry of the preferred procurement framework agreement
- 3) delays in the provision of information from the contractor; and;
- 4) approval was required before the expiration of the contract and could not be reasonably deferred.

CNL54/23 MOTIONS (Agenda item 12.)

54.1 Councillor Martin introduced the Motion submitted by himself, together with Councillors Cockburn and Goodridge. Cllr Martin stated that opposition groups at Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils voted against the collaboration or 'merger' at every opportunity and particularly at three Council meetings in July and August 2021 and April 2022. His view was that the governance structure was flawed, the idea of a single administration responsible to two entirely separate councils and political entities was questionable. It was poor even when the two bodies had similar political ideals and would be disastrous at some point in the future when that would not be so. The Business Case had never been clearly laid out, the idea was that each senior management post would be merged with each Joint Executive Head being paid more, but a saving would be generated because of the halving of the posts. Each Authority then had 16 halves of a senior executive working for it. No criticism of staff was meant but the Council was asking too much of them. The theory was that the bigger joint positions would be more attractive and would be easily filled. Reality showed that the Council had instead employed and lost two Section 151 Officers, three Executive Heads of Planning and were now looking for a second Joint Chief Executive in a short period of time.

54.2 Councillor Martin stated his opinion that collaboration savings were less than planned and the negative impact on service levels to members of the public and on staff morale was clear. The Council had an interim Section 151 Officer but had not yet been able to find a permanent replacement. There had been significant resignations, large numbers of interim and agency staff and high staff turnover. Waverley had found itself allied with a failing Council

in Guildford which was in financial difficulty and had recently avoided a Section 114 Notice. There were accounting and financial irregularities at Guildford centred around the housing maintenance contract, which the press had asserted amounted to many millions of pounds. Joint Senior Management time was drawn to the Council where the problems were, to the detriment of the other Council. The Collaboration Risk Register included joint risks 5, 8, 11 and 13 which were all red. The governance structure was not fit for purpose, it was 'a merger by the back door' and should be terminated.

- 54.3 Councillor Goodridge seconded the motion and spoke about his concern that no risk assessment had been made when the decision was taken. Subsequent risk assessments had been created and were regularly reviewed with the intention to reduce red to amber and from amber to green. The most recent report showed officers were recommending that some of the ambers should now be turned to red. The unavailability of Guildford Members to attend the scheduled Joint Governance Committee led to the Committee being adjourned without any consideration of business.
- 54.5 The Leader countered that the Motion was irresponsible, and objected to the use of the word merger. Local Government was under threat as the Government had persistently reduced funding to local government over the last decade. Although there were many councils that had declared a Section 114 Notice, Guildford had not. The systematic funding reductions across local government were starting to impact even the most prudent of local authorities. The Fair Funding Review and Business Rates reform had not materialised. It was unacceptable that authorities would only receive an annual funding settlement just before Christmas. No help was coming from the Government and councils would have to look after themselves.
- 54.5 The Leader continued that the Motion committed the Council to a course of action at the same time as requesting a review to establish if that action was appropriate. It failed to recognise the review mechanisms that already existed including the Council's Scrutiny Committees, which had neglected their own obligations. The Motion ignored the clear benefits of collaboration, no alternative means of achieving revenue savings had been proposed, and the budget gap would not be addressed. Most importantly, the Motion would have a negative impact on the well-being and morale of staff.
- 54.6 Councillor Merryweather spoke of the financial pressures on councils due to the way the Government had withdrawn funding since 2010. The administration had managed to balance its budget since Covid, in the face of high inflation and those factors would affect the Council for many years to come. The collaboration with Guildford was still on target to deliver £700k of savings annually.
- 54.7 Councillor Clark highlighted some words from a statement made by the opposition regarding collaboration previously which included 'chaos' 'falling apart' 'surprise and regret' 'unnecessary risk' and 'uncertainty'. There was no evidence of that, and Councillor Clark argued that the Motion was inconsiderate. The Government had not given local authorities the funding settlement required to maintain services. Waverley was an example to the

other ten districts and boroughs across the county for its robustness and financial sustainability under the leadership of the Joint Chief Executive. As a result of the collaboration, the financial irregularities at Guildford had been uncovered and were now being addressed.

- 54.8 Councillor Austin spoke in favour of the Motion due to the absence of a risk analysis and proper scrutiny when the collaboration was formed in 2021. Guildford and Waverley had poorly performing planning services. Risk 13 on the Collaboration Risk Register was that expected savings could not be realised, its likelihood was high and its current impact was critical. Taxpayers would expect 100% commitment to each Council, not the chaotic arrangements that had been created and the Council should seek an orderly exit strategy.
- 54.9 Councillor Cockburn stated that the senior management team did not collaborate, instead they worked together in a merged structure at the top, with an unmerged structure beneath. Staff morale could not be blamed on the Motion. It was understood that working across two authorities was difficult and where time was being spent on Guildford matters, Waverley was neglected.
- 54.9 Councillor Kiehl cautioned against scaremongering. The Motion was illogical as it sought to both simultaneously review and determined to end the collaboration without any relevant facts or figures giving staff cause to worry for their jobs and affecting their morale. New recruitment would also be affected. Regarding the recently adjourned Joint Governance Committee, Officers would be asked to revise communications so that Members would have greater notice to attend. The similar Motion at Guildford had failed which demonstrated the commitment of that Council to the collaboration. The Councils had a shared Vision and would continue to be accountable to their own residents, whilst remaining separate democratic and legal entities. The collaboration had saved money and enabled the sharing of expertise on the climate emergency, had achieved economies of scale and had reduced duplication.
- 54.10 Councillor Hyman questioned the benefit of Officers undertaking the review at all but would support an amendment for Members to work together in an informal group to conduct the review. Without further information, the Motion was premature.
- 54.11 Councillor Duce contextualised that the revenue support grant had decreased from £6m per annum in 2010 to zero by 2018. Councils were expected to continue to deliver despite rising inflation; and the those that spoke in opposition had overlooked that the planning service was improving, and instead focused on staff turnover.
- 54.12 Councillor Ward explained that the notion of collaboration had been under consideration for many years, with the objective to save money and to defend against proposals for large unitary councils. Councils that already collaborated could instead form the basis of a smaller unitary and choose to align themselves with authorities that were similar. Examples of successful collaboration existed elsewhere; and it was ironic that the opposition group across both Councils had collaborated to oppose collaboration.

- 54.13 Councillor Mirylees was concerned that should the Motion be carried, both Councils separately would have to decide upon a new structure which would be costly, lead to redundancies, impact on employees health, and take significant time. Future housing and development projects would benefit from collaborative working between two neighbouring councils. Councillor Palmer added that there needed to be a period of stability.
- 54.14 Councillor Murray argued that the motion was political posturing. Councillor Higgins praised Officers for their dedication and hard work on behalf of residents who were navigating a cost of living crisis, those were the real issues that Councillors should be debating.
- 54.15 Councillor Williams reminded Members that the Leader of the County Council had previously stated that the status quo structure of local authorities in Surrey was no longer a viable option. Government cuts had caused that, and if the Motion was carried it would dissolve the savings that had been made, which could not then be utilised in achieving Net Zero by 2030.
- 54.16 Councillor Townsend clarified that the collaboration had not caused staff changes in the planning service. Collaboration would instead bring benefits in Economic Development, Planning and in Procurement. Opposition Members had rejected participation in the cross-party Asset Investment Advisory Board which demonstrated that they were not interested in tackling the challenges the Council faced. Public sector workers felt undervalued, overworked and politicised and that should not be allowed to seep into the Council.
- 54.19 Councillor Martin exercised his right of reply. All governments since 2005 had reduced support for local government. The role of the opposition was to oppose the administration, and the high resignation rate and low morale were recent phenomenon. The collaboration was not yielding the results that it should. Collaboration in the form of joint procurement on waste contracts would for example be welcome; but the collaboration risk register demonstrated that the collaboration was in difficulty.

The Leader requested a recorded vote, supported by more than 5 Members.

A recorded vote was undertaken by roll call whereupon it was **RESOLVED** that the Motion be **LOST**.

**For (9)**

Councillors Austin, Barker-Lomax, Cockburn, Deanus, Goodridge, Martin, Relleen, Staunton, and Sullivan.

**Against (35)**

Councillors Beaman, Busby, Clark, Crowe, Davidson, Duce, Fairclough, Follows, Gale, Hesse, Hyman, Higgins, Kiehl, Laughton, Law, Long, Mclean, Merryweather, Mirylees, Morrison, Murray, Nicholson, K. Reed, R. Reed, Paul Rivers, Penny

Rivers, Robini, Spence, Steiger, L. Townsend, P. Townsend, Ward, Weldon, White, and Williams.

### **Abstentions (0)**

*Clerk's note:* The Joint Chief Executive and the members of the Joint Management Team left the chamber for the duration of this item.

### CNL55/23 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE (Agenda item 13.)

Councillor Austin had submitted a question to the Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development and Governance in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.8 in relation to the Executive Minutes of 5 September 2023. Councillor Austin read her question *“the resolutions of the minutes are unclear about the shared staffing arrangements please could the leader or an appropriate member confirm what you have actually agreed to. One, for a temporary delegation of the shared staffing arrangements of an up to unlimited number of staff, if so, what is the timeframe for that temporary delegation? Or, two, for this delegated authority to be permanent for an up to unlimited number of individual staff members to be shared for a designated time period?”*

Councillor Kiehl responded accordingly *“thank you Councillor Austin for your question on minute 43/23 from the Executive meeting on 5 September 2023. To provide some clarity the delegation is not intended to be temporary however delegations can be amended in future if necessary. It is a permanent delegation to the Head of Paid Service to consider sharing staff with Guildford Borough Council on a temporary arrangement which may include temporary circumstances there is no limit to the number of such arrangements that the Head of Paid Service may authorise. It is likely that the Head of Paid Service will keep such arrangements under regular review and that they would be for a maximum of two years to prevent employment rights being gained. It is anticipated that both councils may have made more permanent decisions by the about the sharing of Staff before such temporary arrangements expire, the purpose of the decision is to enable opportunities to be realised where they arise whilst both councils consider further options around collaboration and more permanent decisions.”*

On the recommendation of the Mayor, Council **RESOLVED** to receive and note the Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive held on 1 August 2023 and 5 September 2023.

The meeting concluded at 9.21 pm

Mayor