

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 8.00pm to 9.45pm**

Present: Councillors Margaret Cooksey (Chairman), David Mir (Vice Chairman), Emile Aboud, Tim Ashton, Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, Stella Brooks, John Chandler, Stephen Cooksey, , Rosemary Dickson, Paul Elderton, James Friend, Paula Hancock, Raj Haque, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Duncan Irvine, Howard Jones, Malcolm Ladell, Claire Malcomson, Simon Ling, Vivienne Michael, Santi Mondejar, Wayne Monkman, John Muggeridge, Paul Newman, John Northcott, Corinna Osborne-Patterson, Jatin Patel, Paul Potter, Sarah Seed, Philippa Shimmin, Peter Stanyard, Chris Townsend, Michelle Watson, Clayton Wellman and Charles Yarwood.

### **11. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **12. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Cooper, Clare Curran, David Draper and Tim Loretto.

### **13. Disclosure of Interests**

None.

### **14. Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman began by welcoming the two Councillors, who were successful at the by-election in the Holmwoods Ward on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, to Mole Valley District Council.

The Chairman advised that the Chairman's and Vice-Chairman's engagements for the week ahead were now being published on the Mole Valley website. A complete list of engagements carried out by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman since the Annual Meeting of the Council had been placed in the Members' Room for information and a number of these were highlighted. The Chairman reported that the Council had been very well represented at the Magna Carta celebrations at Runnymede and that the event had been extremely successful. Another very important event had been Armed Forces Day which had been attended by the Vice-Chairman. Finally, the Chairman informed Members of the opening of a secret garden that she had attended on 11<sup>th</sup> July. The garden had been developed by the Patchworking Garden Project, run by volunteers, whose aims were to offer people the therapeutic benefits of gardening in a welcoming and supportive environment. The project would work initially with mental health clients and with the elderly and people with early dementia, and then possibly with children from the SureStart scheme. Donations of equipment and plants would still be welcomed and the Chairman advised that contact details for the project could be obtained from the Strategic Leadership Team.

The following two dates for the diary were announced:

- Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October – Grand Walk for the Chairman's charities. Further details would be provided shortly.
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November – Chairman's quiz night at Café Rialto in Dorking. Teams were to be of up to 6 and tickets were £12.50 per person including supper.

**15. Returning Officer's Return of Members Elected on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

The Deputy Returning Officer advised that the candidates elected at the 18<sup>th</sup> June by-election for the Holmwoods Ward were as set out in the report to the Council on page 2 of the agenda.

**16. Political Balance/Committee Memberships 2015/16**

The political balance of the Council following the 18<sup>th</sup> June by-election and the consequent changes to the allocation of the number of seats allocated to each Group were noted. The proposals from the Leaders of the Liberal Democrat and informal Independent Groups in respect of amendments to the membership of the Development Control and Licensing Committees were circulated at the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the membership of the political groups on the Council of a Conservative Group of 23, a Liberal Democrat Group of 12, and an informal Independent Group of 6 be noted.
- (2) That the allocation of seats to the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and informal Independent Groups be on the basis that 27 seats are allocated to the Conservative Group, 14 seats are allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group and 7 seats to the informal Independent Group.
- (3) That the Standards Committee be not politically balanced and that two seats be allocated to each of the three Groups as at 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015.
- (4) That the proposals submitted by the Leaders of the Liberal Democrat and informal Independent Groups in respect of amendments to the membership of the Development Control and Licensing Committees for the remainder of the 2015/16 Municipal Year, as shown in the schedule which was circulated at the Council meeting be approved (attached at Appendix 1).

**17. Amendments to the Constitution – The Local Authorities Standing Orders (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015**

The Council considered the report set out at pages 6 to 8 of the agenda in respect of proposed amendments to the Constitution to reflect the provisions of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. The Executive Member for Finance and Performance introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

**RESOLVED:** That the Constitution be amended as detailed in paragraphs 1.5 to 1.6 of the report submitted to reflect the provisions of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 in relation to the disciplinary process for the posts of Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer (S151 officer).

**18. Leader's Statement**

The Leader reported that he was very pleased at the way the new Executive structure was starting to settle and that he could see a new energy around many issues that the Executive Members were tackling. He thanked the Executive Members for the effort and significant hours they had put in to serving residents, and also thanked Council officers for the dedication, flexibility and innovation they had shown in working with the new team as the delivery of the corporate priorities agreed by the Council a few months ago was accelerated. He noted that those priorities had been agreed on a cross-party basis with strong Member involvement in seminars and planning sessions. That approach had also shaped the more detailed underlying strategies that formed the foundations of delivery for many of the priorities.

The Leader stressed that he was absolutely committed to making the best of the ideas, expertise and community reach from across the Chamber in order for the Council to best serve its residents. He advised that he would like to return to a more collaborative and less political working culture, and encouraged Opposition Members to contact himself or the relevant Executive member if they had ideas they wanted the Council to pursue. Where there was demonstrable and clear resident support, these ideas would be backed. Where there was unclear support, but the idea contributed directly to the corporate priorities but was perhaps innovative or untested, he would ensure that effective consultation took place so that Members could be absolutely clear about what communities wanted to happen.

In light of the Executive Member reports later in the agenda, the Leader reported on only two specific issues. Firstly he thanked everyone who had asked how cold the River Mole was for the Duck Race, and confirmed that it was very cold! Secondly, he advised that he was keen to take up the Government's challenge for devolution, and reported that he had agreed to support colleagues in other Districts and Boroughs in Surrey and at County level to consider innovative ideas where local decision making could help communities to thrive. A number of ideas were emerging, including around planning matters, benefits delivery and infrastructure. The Leader confirmed that any development had to support the Council to deliver its recognised priorities for Mole Valley.

**19. Quarterly Report on Decisions Taken under Special Urgency Arrangements – 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

The Council considered the report set out at page 3 of the agenda.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

**20. Reports of Executive Members**

Councillor Vivienne Michael – Executive Member for Community Engagement and Resident Services

The Executive Member reported that in addition to the Executive Member updates being published on MOSS, she had asked officers to ensure that they also went onto the Mole Valley District Council website so that they were publicly available, and confirmed that this should be happening shortly.

The Executive Member stressed the administration's commitment to strengthening community engagement and was pleased to report that the regular meetings with Parish Councils and residents' Associations were now well established and well attended. She had addressed the last meeting of the Chairmen of the Town Residents' Associations in the north of the District about the Have Your Say consultation on the Council's priorities. A new page had also been added to the website with the contact details for the residents' Associations. If any Members knew of a group that would like to be included the Association should contact the Strategic Leadership Team directly.

Members were reminded that the Above and Beyond Awards recognised members of staff who had exceeded expectations in the course of their work. The judging panel had just finished reviewing the latest nominations and the Executive Member looked forward to announcing the recipients of the awards at a future date. She advised Members that nominations could be made at any time by councillors, officers and members of the public, and that more information was available on the website.

The Executive Member reported that, despite the challenges of welfare reform, the performance of the Benefits team had been strong and improving for some time. There were future changes to come with Universal Credit beginning to be rolled out in Mole Valley from February 2016. Initially this would be for new single claimants, that would then be followed by an incremental rollout for all Housing Benefit claimants. The team was working with the Department for Work and Pensions to

prepare for these changes and to make sure residents were ready for them when they were introduced.

The Executive Member advised that Mole Valley continued to take a robust approach to tackling benefit fraud and this work was now being strengthened and extended by working in partnership with seven other local authorities in Surrey. This would enable the authority to tackle other types of fraud against public bodies and to protect the public purse even more effectively.

With regard to housing, the Executive Member reiterated that over the last year the Council had invested in providing seven new Emergency Accommodation units, which had already helped to ease the reliance on bed and breakfast especially for families with children. Following an enquiry regarding numbers currently in bed and breakfast accommodation at the recent meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Member reported that the latest figures showed that there were 14 families in bed and breakfast accommodation, with one of those families being there in excess of six weeks.

The Executive Member advised that, earlier this year, the countywide Surrey Family Support Programme had achieved its overall target of working with 1,050 families in Phase 1 of the national programme. The Surrey programme was one of the few nationally allowed to progress to Phase 2 earlier than anticipated. Phase 2 of the programme opened up the criteria for acceptance into the programme and would allow more families in Surrey to be given intensive support to help improve their future. Mole Valley also continued to work with Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge Councils as the South East Surrey Family Support Programme and had been asked to run a pilot programme working with Early Help (Children's Services) to develop better integration of the two services for more efficient use of resources and to get the best outcomes for families. The Executive Member stressed that this was obviously the objective of all the work which everyone should feel very proud of.

The Executive Member was delighted to report that she had been asked to take on the role of heritage champion for the District and to formally undertake to do more to support the heritage of the unique District of Mole Valley. This year's Mole Valley Heritage Open Day would be taking place between 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September and there had been an excellent response this year with 75 events planned over four days. The full programme was now on the Council's website.

Finally, she reported that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant for the Hope Springs Eternal project of more than £1m was fantastic news that would deliver the transformation of the Dorking Deepdene estate, bring many more visitors to the District and provide a facility that would support the wellbeing of our community. Official Permission to Start was currently awaited from the HLF, and the Executive Member undertook to keep Members informed of progress.

#### Councillor Paul Newman – Executive Member for Environment

With regard to Environmental Services, the Executive Member reported that in our efforts to keep Mole Valley clean of litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and dog fouling, Mole Valley's *Keep it Clean* campaign would be launched shortly. The aim would be to educate those who currently carry out these anti-social behaviours about the damage they are causing and the potential consequences of enforcement. It would also raise awareness of the work Mole Valley District Council already did to combat these activities and keep the district clean. The campaign would be the fore-runner to greater enforcement activity later this year.

Members noted that Environmental Services were underway implementing the Waste and Recycling Action Plan for 2015/16, which began with ensuring recycling 'welcome packs' were delivered to all new residents to the District along with their Council Tax bills. The next step with this action was to ensure Parish Councils and Residents' Associations had the relevant information (in the form of a service guide) to forward on to their new residents.

The Executive Member advised that there had been two Surrey-wide recycling campaigns so far this year: Textiles (April-May) and Plastics, which was still running (June-July). These two campaigns had been supported locally by the Council's Communications Team - as per the Action

Plan - culminating in a promotional bin tag regarding plastics, being delivered to all households at the end of July. Later in the year there would be campaigns on General Recycling (what could and couldn't go into bins) and Food Waste. The recycling rate as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 was at 56.7%, which was 1.1% higher than at the same stage last year, so there had been a very good start to the year in that regard.

As part of the Council's ongoing efforts to enhance the environment and to tackle the problems of dog fouling, the Executive Member reported that work on the local launch of a new initiative, the Green Dog Walker Scheme (GDW), was underway. The Scheme was started in Falkirk in Scotland and was proving very successful. The scheme was a non-confrontational, friendly way to change attitudes about dog fouling in the local area.

GDW Volunteers wore a GDW armband (or their dogs wore the green GDW collar) to show they had "taken the pledge" to always:

- Clean up after their dog
- Carry extra dog waste bags
- Be happy to be approached to 'lend' a dog waste bag to those without confrontation
- Be a friendly reminder to other dog walkers to clean up after their dogs.

To become a green dog walker you had to sign the pledge form and get your four legged friend to stamp his paw print to pledge. You then received your free waste bags and green arm band to start patrolling.

The Green Dog Walker Scheme would be launched in September in Meadowbank in Dorking. It promised to be a great fun filled event and more details would follow. The Executive Member advised that if anyone would like to know before the launch, get a pledge form, or volunteer to be an "ambassador" for the scheme the Environmental Health team would be happy to help.

#### Councillor Corinna Osborne-Patterson – Executive Member for Rural Economies and Cycling

The Executive Member reported that the Rural Surrey LEADER grant programme had been awarded £1,642m. Rural businesses such as farmers and growers, retailers, tourism, rural enterprises, foresters, producers and rural communities could apply for grant funding support from £1,000 to £50,000, mainly for capital projects. The programme, run by the Local Action Group, was expected to launch in September 2015 and expressions of interest were currently invited. A project should benefit businesses, people or communities within the area and have a focus towards farming, woodlands, rural economy, culture and heritage, tourism and services.

Mole Valley District Council had submitted a robust response to the second phase of the Surrey County Council (SCC) consultation on the Local Transport Review, given the impact that the proposed changes would have in Mole Valley, particularly in the rural areas. The Council was continuing to work closely with SCC to ensure that the views of our local communities were heard.

With regard to the Local Cycling Plan, the Executive Member advised that progress on implementing the Local Cycling Plan which was adopted last year was continuing. A new cycling section had been created on the Mole Valley District Council website and this would be updated regularly. The site had four sections: people and places; safety and training; plan your journey; and cycling events.

Working with SCC and Public Health the Council was looking to bring the Sustrans Bike-IT scheme to Mole Valley. A Bike-IT officer would lead a programme working with a small number of local schools and a couple of businesses in the area. The scheme promoted cycling as a healthy lifestyle choice and was designed to get more people active on their journey to and from school or work. Participants were taught to cycle safely and considerately.

The Executive Member advised that it was now only just over two weeks to RideLondon on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2015. The second leaflet with detailed information on road closure times had been distributed to the homes and businesses along the route and the surrounding areas. The

RideLondon helpdesk was also now up and running to assist those with queries. There would be big screens in Westcott, Dorking and Leatherhead on 2<sup>nd</sup> August for spectators to watch live coverage of the elite race. The event continued to attract big names with both Mark Cavendish and Bradley Wiggins confirmed to be riding.

Finally, the Executive Member reported that the London Marathon Charitable Trust had revised its grants process and would now accept applications throughout the year and further information was available on our website. Local organisations had already benefited significantly from this funding and it was hoped that this trend continued.

#### Councillor Sarah Seed – Executive Member for Planning

The Executive Member reported that at the July Development Control Committee Members approved an extension to three premises to form a new supermarket on land off Church Street in Leatherhead. It was hoped that the proposal, which comprised an interesting and innovative design incorporating a number of features to maximise environmental efficiency, would help contribute to the wider regeneration of Leatherhead that was subject to on-going master planning work overseen by Councillor Jones, Executive Member for Town Centres. Thirty three sheltered flats at 53 to 59 Leatherhead Road Ashted were also granted permission.

With regard to planning appeals, it was noted that over the last three months, 13 appeal decisions had been received from the Planning Inspectorate. The Executive Member was pleased to report that 77% of the appeals had been dismissed.

Members noted that much of the Planning Policy Team's work over the last quarter had focussed on infrastructure planning matters. A methodology for preparing an Infrastructure Needs Assessment had been prepared and work to get the Community Infrastructure Levy in place as soon as possible was also advancing. Reports on both these initiatives would be considered by the Executive at its July meeting, following the views of the Scrutiny Committee being expressed on 7<sup>th</sup> July.

High level strategic infrastructure studies were also being undertaken by Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council and the Coast to Capital LEP, and the Planning Policy Team was contributing to these studies.

The annual update of housing land supply was finalised in May. It showed that there was now a 6.6 year supply of available housing land which is an improvement over the position in May 2014 when there was a 4.7 year supply. The improved situation had been driven largely by the conversion of office floorspace to residential use and the granting of planning permission for several large sites. Weekly monitoring of planning applications for new homes and completed new homes was being carried out.

The Planning Policy Team continued to contribute to the work of the Transform Leatherhead project and had taken part in several consultation events including the Community Planning Weekend. An application from Capel Parish Council to designate the parish as a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan had been received and all households in the parish had been consulted. A decision on the designation would be made by 20<sup>th</sup> July and reported to the Executive at its September meeting. The Bookham Neighbourhood Forum was consulting on a draft Neighbourhood Development Plan that it had prepared for Bookham. The draft Plan would be submitted to Mole Valley District Council by the end of July and a report on its next stages would be considered by the Executive in September.

Members noted that the Airports Commission had published its conclusions on the options for the location of additional runway capacity at Heathrow and Gatwick airports on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Although the Commission had recommended an additional runway at Heathrow, it concluded that Gatwick remained a credible option. The Government would now reflect on the Commission's recommendations and was expected to announce its response later in the year. In the meantime, the local planning authorities around Gatwick continued to work together to assess the infrastructure implications of an additional runway

Finally, the Executive Member reported that a number of the parishes and residents' associations had been making applications for funding from the Planning Infrastructure Contributions pot. Projects had included tree planting, river restoration, hard landscaping, and seating. The application process was simple but gave local Members the opportunity to support projects before sign-off from the Executive Member for Planning.

#### Councillor Lucy Botting – Executive Member for Wellbeing

The Executive Member reported that the Wellbeing Strategy had been being developed over the last few months in line with the Council's priorities. Evidence had been obtained from national and district level and up to date local health profiles obtained from Public Health. Emerging priorities thus far included addressing obesity, drinking, social isolation for the elderly and improvements in mental health and supporting carers. The draft Strategy would be considered at the Wellbeing Working Group in July and then presented to the Scrutiny Committee in September and the Executive in October.

The Executive Member updated Council on the progress made in rolling out the Community HeartStart Project to the rural communities of Mole Valley. The project was run in partnership with the British Heart Foundation and the Ambulance Trust and there had been ten courses in seven communities thus far. The ambition for the year was to roll out the initiative to the remaining communities across Mole Valley.

The Executive Member reported that the Exercise on Referral Scheme launched in January 2015 had been a great success with 102 referrals so far, 45 to Dorking Sports Centre and 57 to Leatherhead Leisure Centre. Referrals had been from most of the GP practices in the district, and referrals had also been taken from practices outside of the area. The Executive Member advised that the outcomes and benefits of this scheme would be considered in the context of the Wellbeing Strategy as well as looking at linkages with the Active Surrey Physical Health Activity Strategy.

The Executive Member confirmed that Safeguarding was very much a priority for Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) as it was for Surrey County Council (SCC), so there was work to be done to ensure the linkages between the two authorities. Following the Safeguarding Children update earlier in the year, Members had asked for a follow-up about their responsibilities especially in light of child sexual exploitation and the Rotherham and Oxford reports. Given the implementation of the Care Act and the duties in respect of vulnerable elderly people, an awareness session for Members in respect of both Children's and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding, as well as the Prevent Radicalisation agenda, would be arranged for later in the year.

The Executive Member reported that Youth Voice had held their final meeting of the academic year on Monday 6 July, and noted that they had done some excellent work. They had contributed towards the playground design for three playgrounds in the District and to the Transform Leatherhead Masterplan. Links had also been made with Active Surrey, looking at games and also talent shows that were run across the county.

The Surrey Youth Games had taken place on the weekend of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June. The Executive Member congratulated Team Mole Valley which had won nine medals, an impressive two of which were gold.

The Executive Member advised that the playground improvement works continued. Consultation had now commenced for the King George V and Lower Road Recreation Ground playgrounds, and the aim was to complete the works for October half term.

#### Councillor Charles Yarwood – Executive Member for Property and Parking

The Executive Member reported that the preparation for the refurbishment of Pippbrook continued with the appointment of Willmot Dixon as contractors. Detailed specifications were being shared with the contractor during July and the costs and proposals would be received during September. Discussions had been scheduled to review the programme of works and the potential use of

Pippbrook House as temporary offices during the refurbishment. If Pippbrook House were to be used as part of the decant strategy the marketing of the House would be deferred for 12 months.

With regard to the Foundry site in Dorking, Members noted that the marketing of the site for affordable housing had commenced earlier this month and bids were expected to be submitted by early September.

The Executive Member referred to the completion of the purchase of the Leatherhead riverside properties known as Claire House and James House, included elsewhere on the agenda. There had been a clear message, throughout the current Transform Leatherhead public consultation, that enhancement of the riverside area was seen as very important by many people. MVDC's purchase of these properties enabled the Council to facilitate that enhancement, although no decisions had yet been reached regarding the precise nature of any development. This would only become clearer as the Transform Leatherhead project evolved.

The Executive Member advised that the RingGo app had been updated so that it now allowed RingGo customers to pay for parking by the minute via the app, as well as on the phone. Mole Valley continued to be the only local authority that RingGo worked with that offered this innovative payment method to ensure people only paid for the parking time they really needed.

Finally he advised that Surrey County Council had introduced new parking restrictions in Dorking High Street in July, which had been designed to improve traffic flow in the evenings and on Sundays. The changes had generally been well received. The Parking team was enforcing these new restrictions and on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July had issued 12 penalty charge notices, all for parking on single yellow lines, with most being issued in the first two hours. Officers would continue to review how the Sunday enforcement worked to ensure that the best enforcement solution was in place. The new restrictions in North Street/Bridge Street, Leatherhead were expected to come into effect in the autumn.

#### Councillor Lynne Brooks – Executive Member for Finance and Performance

The Executive Member advised that when working in finance and performance there was always an element of looking back to historical data. She reported that the Finance team had concentrated over the last quarter on closing the accounts and confirming the balanced and solid year end position. The financial outturn reflected the monthly monitoring reports throughout the year and, as such, contained no surprises.

The Executive Member reported that the revenue budget for last year was underspent by £267,000, which equated to around 1% of the gross budget and was only £12,000 different to the figure projected in the last monitoring report at the end of January. In the first quarter of 2015/16 it would appear that there was also an underspend against the budget of around £140,000 which was good news. The capital budget for the previous year was also underspent at £864,000 which, again, was close to previous assessments, and was also going to be carried forward.

Going forward, the Executive Member reported that the Council faced increased pressure as funding routes changed again and further central government cuts were expected. The finance function would undoubtedly become tougher, whether this was in making the Council's finances work, paying the bills, the costs of developing services, or the need to be able to cope with reduced capital budgets. The Executive Member advised that she would like to work very closely with the Finance team in this area as the capital budget had reduced substantially and would continue to do so over the next two years. At the heart of going forward the key criteria as always was balancing the revenue budget and ensuring value for money at all times was achieved for residents, making sure that there were no surprises financially.

On performance, the Executive Member was pleased to report that MVDC continued to show good progress against the majority of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were linked to the overall corporate plan. However, there were plans to alter some of the KPIs and these would need to be monitored closer in the coming months, as pressure increased on some areas, and some KPIs needed to be updated.

## Councillor Howard Jones – Executive Member for Town Centres

The Executive Member advised that his was a new position on the Executive, relating principally to economic development in Leatherhead and Dorking, but he also had responsibility for monitoring economic development in the bigger settlements in the north of the district.

The Executive Member updated the Council on progress in respect of Transform Leatherhead, which was one of the major projects within his portfolio. Transform leatherhead had been in its consultation phase over the last month or so and this would conclude shortly with a final few meetings. It had been a very positive consultation. Officers had run dedicated stalls in Leatherhead town centre, including one in conjunction with the French Market, and arranged walking trips for residents and resident groups. In total 3000 face to face conversations were held, which was an impressive number for a 6-7 week consultation. In addition, meetings of the Member Reference group and Community Reference Group, which included businesses and community groups in Leatherhead, had been held. There had been 2000 hits on the dedicated Transform Leatherhead website and hits on Twitter and Facebook. In addition, nearly 1500 written responses to the consultation, in the form of completed questionnaires and postcards, had been received. The Executive Member congratulated the Officer team on achieving such active engagement.

The second major project within the portfolio was the Meadowbank development, which had featured significantly in the cycle of meetings since the last Council meeting. The Executive Member reported that this was an ongoing project. Officers were currently negotiating with the various partners the Council was looking to work with to ensure agreements were in place by the beginning of August as it was anticipated that work would start on the scheme in September. In order to secure the £0.5m grant funding from Sport England the suite had to be ready for senior football for the beginning of the 2016/17 season. This was a challenging but realistic timetable and the developer had already been appointed.

The executive Member advised that a French Market had traded in Leatherhead High Street and in part of the Swan Centre on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June. An additional 1800 people had visited the shopping centre compared with the previous Friday. The Executive Member reported that there had been a really vibrant feel to the town centre and he felt that it would benefit from future markets. The Executive Member understood that an Italian and a German market were also interested in coming to Leatherhead

He noted that anything that attracted people and increased footfall was good for Leatherhead as a town centre.

The Executive Member reported that the Duck Race held in Leatherhead had attracted a large number of people to the riverside. It had shown what a special spot that area was and why a number of consultees on Transform Leatherhead had referred to the riverside as somewhere that could be beneficial to Leatherhead. The Duck Race had been a great community event and had raised around £3000 which would help fund Christmas decorations, lights and trees.

Finally, the Executive Member referred to recent events in Dorking town centre. Dorking Independents Day had been held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July and, despite high temperatures, most shops had reported an increase in turnover for the day. The first monthly Farmers' Market had been opened in St Martin's Walk in Dorking on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July and attracted a large number of shoppers.

## **21. Questions to Members of the Executive**

(1) The following question was submitted by Councillor Hunt

“Could the Executive Member for Planning please update Council on the recovery of costs on the Cherkley Court legal issue which arose following decisions made by the Development Control Committee?”

Councillor Seed responded as follows:

- “1. From 2012 up to the present day, MVDC has incurred external costs of £93,000 (excluding VAT) in defending its legitimate decision in relation to Cherkley Court. This is over and above the internal costs in terms of time spent by MVDC staff. The Council has actively pursued maximum recovery of these costs.
2. The total amount successfully recovered to date is £58,000 (excluding VAT), paid in 2014/15 and 2015/16. This relates to both the High Court (Judicial Review) and the Court of Appeal proceedings. The costs relating to the proceedings after the High Court proceedings were capped by the Court and we obtained these fixed costs. Therefore, the only element of the costs which were negotiable related to the High Court proceedings.
3. The amount recovered represents about 2/3rds of the external costs. This is a rate of recovery in line with expectations.
4. MVDC has decided to accept this amount as final settlement rather than continue to pursue further claims. The Council’s external solicitors, who are very experienced in these matters, have strongly recommended settling. In their view the costs recovered to date are in line with expectations for ‘environmental’ cases, and the Courts rarely award costs of a greater proportion than we have already recovered. Prolonging the process will consume more time, resources and cost. There is little likelihood of success, with the possibility of a worse outcome. On the basis of this advice, and in consultation with the Leader and then Executive Member of Planning the decision was taken by the Chief Executive to settle at this amount.
5. The Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Planning were informed of progress throughout this process.
6. The information relating to the Judicial Review costs has already been made available on MOSS.”

Councillor Hunt asked the following supplementary question:

“Given item 9 on our agenda this evening about the Council Constitution providing for quarterly updates on decisions taken, do you know why this wasn’t reported to a public meeting earlier?”

Councillor Seed advised that she would ask officers to look into this and provide Councillor Hunt with a written response.

This is attached at Appendix 3.

(2) The following question was submitted by Councillor Philippa Shimmin

“Would the Executive Member for Planning please inform me of the number of applications for development within the Green Belt which have been approved by Development Control Committee in Council years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and in the first three months of 2015-2016?”

Councillor Seed responded as follows:

“In the period set out in Cllr Shimmin’s question the Council’s Development Control Committee has approved a total of 135 applications for development in the Green Belt.

Breaking that down by year, as she requests, the figures are as follows:-

2010 – 21  
2011 - 28  
2012 - 37  
2013 – 24

In the period April to June 2015, the Development Control Committee approved 6 applications for development in the Green Belt.”

She also undertook to provide a further breakdown to Councillor Shimmin in writing.

Councillor Shimmin asked the following supplementary question:

“In view of the importance residents place on the Green Belt and concerns about government plans to relax controls on local planning issues, would the Executive Member supply an analysis of the very special circumstances used to justify development in the Green Belt?”

Councillor Seed advised that she would ask officers to provide information on the very special circumstances used in respect of applications for development in the Green Belt. She confirmed that the Council followed the strict guidelines in the National Planning Policy Framework with regard to development in the Green Belt, and balanced the need to protect the Green Belt with the development which was allowed under the Framework. The Council, however, could not control the extension of permitted development that had been recently announced. The figures in respect of development in the Green Belt within the District were extremely low with only 1.5% of applications (129 out of 9,000) over the last five years being in the Green Belt.

The further information is attached at Appendix 3.

(3) The following question was submitted by Councillor Stephen Cooksey

“During the course of debate on the call-in regarding the Meadowbank Football Stadium at Scrutiny Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> July the Executive Member for Town Centres read out the following statement, which has been subsequently sent to Members, on behalf of the Leader of the Council:

*‘As leader of Mole Valley District Council, on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, I met with representatives of both Dorking Football Club and Dorking Wanderers Football Club to explore opportunities to deliver the council’s priorities for the future use of Meadowbank as a venue for youth football, a home for Dorking Football Club and as a potential venue for the Dorking Wanderers football club first team, in addition to Women’s senior football. The two football clubs mutually identified a willingness to schedule arrangements and, in due course, agree specific details to enable the council’s priorities to be delivered. Given the decision of the District Council’s Executive Committee to grant the main lease to the Surrey County FA, both clubs identified that prioritising appropriately scheduled use of any new facility for the more than fifty local youth football teams would require detailed planning from Surrey County FA and would require a holistic view to be taken over the proposed facility and other space available locally. It was jointly envisaged that a solution that would significantly extend the local capacity for youth football could be reached in such a way as to deliver an appropriate return for the district council on the capital investment associated with the project.’”*

Would the Leader of the Council:

1. Verify that this was an accurate description of the conclusions of the meeting held between himself and the two football clubs on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015;
2. Explain why this information was not made available to members of Scrutiny Committee and local members prior to the meeting of the Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> July and why it was disseminated through the medium of Twitter rather than the normal transparent Council process for providing written information for consideration by committee members?”

Councillor Friend responded as follows:

“I recognise that it must be disappointing to the residents of Dorking, to fans of local football and to all those who want the Meadowbank development to succeed, as it is to me, that some seem unable to support the work of the Executive in getting this development off the ground, and instead

continue to seek to cause uncertainty for all the potential occupiers of the facility by taking what may be seen as a political approach.

I explained to the Leader of the Opposition and other members in June that I had been asked to facilitate a meeting between two of Dorking's senior football clubs. The clubs wanted a shared, independent of either of them, statement to be put out into the public domain following that meeting, to try to set the record straight following what they both perceived to have been some misleading impressions that had been given locally. The clubs asked me to put that statement out, as I said, independent of either of them and I undertook to do that for them, and, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, social media is now a common channel for local football news.

So that we are clear here, let me repeat the clubs wanted the statement put out making it clear what they had agreed, it wasn't for my publicity or for that of the Council. The statement would have gone out irrespective of whether Scrutiny had been due to discuss the topic or not. The statement was not designed by them to be anything to do with the Scrutiny call-in. I know, and it is unfortunate that he's not here this evening, that Councillor Draper has independently asked at least one of the clubs to verify their acceptance of the statement and that that verification was directly given, copied to me and the other attendees. I suspect that Councillor Draper just wanted a little further reassurance and I truly believe he wasn't questioning my word or indeed trying to further undermine this key development in the eyes of the clubs in question.

The statement wasn't circulated directly to members of the Scrutiny Committee because it wasn't written for them as the intended audience. The fact that it was referred to in the Scrutiny debate last week was frankly fine by me, but to be honest it was by then old news.

Now I value the role played in our Constitution by Scrutiny call-ins of Executive decisions. However, unsurprisingly as this may sound, Scrutiny call-ins do not stop the rest of the world turning on its daily axis. They do not suck in all universal matter and energy. If two football clubs agree for me to communicate a statement agreed by them, then that's probably beyond the gravitational pull of even the Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to seeing if there are supplementary questions from the Leader of the Opposition, but perhaps he might choose to change tack, congratulate the Executive for the hours and hours, and indeed the officers, they are putting in to working with the community on this project and warmly welcome the way forward."

Councillor Cooksey asked the following supplementary question:

"I am disappointed at the political nature of the statement made by the Leader. I would like to ask the Leader for confirmation of whether in future he regards it as important for the Scrutiny Committee or any other of the Council's committees to have critical information prior to their meetings and whether that should be supplied in a manner which is usual to the Council and not through Twitter?"

Councillor Friend advised that Council protocol was followed, in that the statement was not a Council statement, but one issued by him as a community leader independent from both clubs at the clubs' request. He acknowledged that the Scrutiny Committee should have information available to it that was pertinent to the matters under discussion, but reiterated that the statement had already been disseminated in various different ways prior to the Scrutiny Committee meeting. He confirmed that he was happy to provide information when requested.

In accordance with Standing Order 7, the two questions submitted by the deadline but not asked and answered within the 15 minutes question period are recorded in Appendix 2 to these minutes with the responses of the Executive Member and Leader.

## **22. Motions**

### **Motion 1/2015**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Stephen Cooksey and seconded by Councillor Philippa Shimmin:

“This Council recognises the importance of encouraging the greatest possible use of retail and commercial facilities in our town centres and the value of operating a parking regime that will support this aim. It therefore resolves to introduce with effect from the 2016-17 Council year a policy of permitting the first half-hour of parking in all Mole Valley Council car parks to be free of charge.”

The Council resolved to take the motion on the night.

Members debated the motion in full. A number of Members spoke in support of the motion, stating that 30 minutes free parking would encourage people to the District’s town centres, promote local shopping and therefore support local businesses. Other Members opposed the motion on the grounds that parking charges in Mole Valley were already low and that a 30 minutes free parking regime would not encourage sustainable shopping and could have a negative effect on local shops outside town centres. There would also be a significant loss of income to the Council in parking charges and enforcement costs could increase.

**RESOLVED:** That Motion 1/2015 be rejected.

*(N.B. Counted vote on the motion – 9 for, 25 against)*

.....  
Chairman

.....Date

**ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE PLACES – 2015/2016****(a) Audit Committee (7 seats)****Conservative**

1. Tim Ashton
2. Emile About
3. Duncan Irvine
4. Michelle Watson

**Liberal Democrat**

1. Stella Brooks
2. Paul Elderton

**Independent**

1. Simon Ling

**(b) Development Control Committee (19 seats)****Conservative**

1. Emile About
2. Rosemary Dickson
3. Mary Huggins
4. Chris Hunt
5. Howard Jones
6. Malcolm Ladell
7. David Mir
8. Santi Mondejar
9. John Muggerridge
10. Jatin Patel
11. Sarah Seed

**Liberal Democrat**

1. Margaret Cooksey
2. Raj Haque
3. Tim Loretto
4. Claire Malcomson
5. Philippa Shimmin
6. Clayton Wellman

**Independent**

1. Simon Ling
2. John Northcott

## Substitutes

1. John Chandler
2. James Friend
3. Corinna Osborne-Patterson
4. Charles Yarwood

1. Stella Brooks
2. Stephen Cooksey
3. David Draper
4. Paul Elderton

1. Mary Cooper
2. Paula Hancock
3. Peter Stanyard
4. Chris Townsend

**(c) Licensing Committee (11 seats)****Conservative**

1. Emile About
2. Tim Ashton
3. John Chandler
4. David Mir
5. Sarah Seed
6. Charles Yarwood

**Liberal Democrat**

1. Margaret Cooksey
2. Paul Elderton
3. Wayne Monkman

**Independent**

1. Paula Hancock
2. Peter Stanyard

**(d) Scrutiny Committee (11 seats)****Conservative**

1. Tim Ashton
2. Clare Curran
3. Mary Huggins
4. Duncan Irvine
5. Malcolm Ladell
6. Jatin Patel

**Liberal Democrat**

1. Stephen Cooksey
2. David Draper
3. Paul Potter

**Independent**

1. Paula Hancock
2. Chris Townsend

## Substitutes

1. Rosemary Dickson
2. Michelle Watson

1. Raj Haque
2. Philippa Shimmin

1. Mary Cooper
2. Peter Stanyard

**(e) Standards Committee (6 Member seats)**

**Conservative**

1. Howard Jones
2. Charles Yarwood

**Substitutes**

1. Lucy Botting
2. Corinna Osborne-Patterson

**Liberal Democrat**

1. Stella Brooks
2. Paul Elderton

1. Margaret Cooksey
2. Wayne Monkman

**Independent**

1. Mary Cooper
2. John Northcott

1. Simon Ling
2. Chris Townsend

**Parish Council (non voting representatives)**

1. Roger Hammond
2. Stuart McLachlan

**Agenda Item 11 – Questions remaining to be asked**

(4) The following question was submitted by Councillor Raj Haque

“Would the Executive Member for Wellbeing please inform me of the number of complaints and uncomplimentary comments received by the Council with regard to grass and verge cutting since the new contracts came into operation?”

Councillor Botting responded as follows:

“No formal complaints have been made about the work of The Landscape Group since they took responsibility for the Council’s Grounds Maintenance and Arboricultural Services contract on 1 January 2015 and the Highways Horticulture contract on 2 March.

There have been a number of informal complaints and compliments about the service, mainly around grass cutting, and our parks team have worked with the contractors and local communities to resolve them. Some of the initial cuts undertaken under the Grounds Maintenance contract were not in line with the specification and the contractors returned to remedy the situation to the satisfaction of local communities. Where communities have identified issues with the work of the contractor, we have facilitated on site meetings between community representatives and the contractor. These have helped develop a shared understanding of the issues and solutions. Such meetings have taken place in Holmwood Park and Buckland and one is currently being arranged in Bookham. If Members think that an on site meeting would be useful in their areas, please contact Paul Anderson, Strategic Parking and Parks Manager, who will liaise with The Landscape Group to arrange these.

There were clearly issues with the high speed cuts on the A24 in that they were undertaken later than they should have done. The contractor has apologised for this and has undertaken a detailed de-brief session with the company that organise the road closures to ensure that such delays do not happen again. We have been given assurances that this will not be the case, and the next round of cuts will be undertaken in September. An application for the road closure has been submitted to Surrey County Council, and Members will be advised of the dates of the cuts once Surrey have approved the application.

There have also been issues relating to cuts that were not included on the Highways Horticulture specification. We tendered on the basis of the specification provided to us by Surrey County Council. It is clear that there are some verges which had been cut previously by Surrey, but which were not on the contract specification. When residents have advised us of these, we have added them to the contract so that they will get cut.

The issues around the cutting on the Grounds Maintenance contract have largely been around the new contractor learning the practicalities of delivering the contract in Mole Valley and bedding in the new staff who are delivering the contract. We always knew that the Highways Horticulture contract would deliver a number of challenges, and whilst this is proving to be the case, both ourselves and the contractor are committed to delivering improvements to the delivery of the contract this year and shaping the way it is delivered.

Officers meet with the contractors on a regular basis to ensure the contracts are being effectively delivered and to ensure they fully understand the requirements and expectations of the council and the community.

It is also important to recognise the work that we get right. We have had a number of compliments from residents about the way in which the Grounds Maintenance, Arboricultural Services and Highways Horticulture contracts have been delivered.

Finally, our experience of the new highway verge contract in particular, has shown that the same piece of work can please and disappoint people in equal measure – with one example being the

long grass on the A24. That is one area where we will investigate options of maintaining the long grass, to support the local ecology, providing it does not impact on driver and pedestrian safety.”

(5) The following question was submitted by Councillor Chris Townsend

“Why has the Land Swap between Surrey County Council(SCC) and Mole valley District Council (MVDC), involving SCC land at Deepdene (part of the MV Hope Springs project) and MV land at Woodfield Lane (part of the SCC road widening project), been stopped and by whom?”

Councillor Friend responded as follows:

“Councillor Townsend called me last week with this question and I was grateful for the conversation that we had. That discussion was a follow-up to an earlier telephone conversation we had held about the same subject.

In that first conversation, I explained to Councillor Townsend that I was unaware of the details of the two schemes to which he was referring and I gave him my promise to ask the Chief Executive for further information. I haven't yet had a full briefing on the two schemes, but I understand that the premise of the question is not quite right.

My understanding from the conversations I have had, although I haven't had any of this in writing so I could well be misinformed, is that a redevelopment scheme for Woodfield Lane was drawn up a few years ago and at the time a few hundred residents from the local area of Ashtead concerned gave their opinion in support of some change to the area, but that the detailed final plans were not presented at that time. As I say, I might be wrong here.

Subsequently the two council teams concerned have suggested that a land swap be enacted to reduce the capital investment required for the Hope Springs Project. I'm afraid I do not know the value of each piece of land, but presumably that will come to me at some point. Clearly it does have a value or otherwise this deal wouldn't be necessary. I am assuming that Councillor Townsend knows all the financial details from his time as Leader.

I understand that there is now some perception that the numbers of residents in Ashtead in favour of the Woodfield Lane scheme is not as significant a majority as perhaps was first envisaged. Councillor Townsend and I discussed the other day how the feedback on this latter perception has not arisen from a specific consultation but has been built up from different indirect sources.

Now, given the attention and passion that this issue seems to have raised, Councillor Hunt has suggested to me that some form of up to date touch point engagement might be held across Ashtead to demonstrate that the community really want the scheme as planned. I think this seems very sensible and I hope all Ashtead councillors will agree that taking the opportunity to fulfil our commitment to listen to residents and the community, in this case Ashtead, is a good idea before this council divests itself of an asset of value.

As we all know, we have a duty to use our assets to best value for our taxpayers. If we can demonstrate that there is a majority of Ashtead residents in favour of the proposed scheme then I think we will have demonstrated that we have fulfilled our duty to obtain best value. Conversely, if it turns out that we would be passing a council asset to another party in order to enable a scheme not championed by local residents then I would think that people across Mole Valley would rightly challenge us all on that.

So, in short, the land swap hasn't been stopped. I have asked to be better informed about and the Executive have taken up what I think is a sensible suggestion that we ensure we have listened to our residents and the community in order to demonstrate value for money for Mole Valley residents as a whole.”

## Agenda Item 11 – Responses to supplementary questions

(1) Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Hunt:

“Given item 9 on our agenda this evening about the Council Constitution providing for quarterly updates on decisions taken, do you know why this wasn’t reported to a public meeting earlier?”

Response from Councillor Sarah Seed:

“Item 9 on the Council agenda for 14<sup>th</sup> July advised the Council of an urgent decision which had been taken to commit the Council to spending Capital funding of up to £3.5 million. In accordance with the Council Constitution it was necessary to report this urgent decision to the next ordinary Council meeting.

The issue of the recovery of costs on the Cherkley Court legal proceedings was undertaken in accordance with the Council’s normal business. It was not an urgent decision and the Council Constitution did not require the decision to be reported to the Council.”

(2) Supplementary question from Councillor Philippa Shimmin:

“In view of the importance residents place on the Green Belt and concerns about government plans to relax controls on local planning issues, would the Executive Member supply an analysis of the very special circumstances used to justify development in the Green Belt?”

Response from Councillor Sarah Seed:

“Very special circumstances (VSC) for development in the Green Belt are unique to each site and generally cannot be repeated for other Green Belt sites. Below are some reasons given by developers for VSC –

1. Enabling development to allow the creation of a modern charity hub facility
2. Removal of HGV traffic movement along a narrow residential road and removal of commercial facilities and large piles of waste material, including improvements to fluvial flooding in the wider locality
3. Demand for a local service from local residents
4. Immediate need for medical and rehabilitation facilities for injured servicemen returning from battle zones
5. Highway improvements
6. Improvements to the setting of Listed Buildings
7. Employment generation
8. Removal of derelict buildings and large areas of hardstandings
9. Reduction in building mass and volume
10. Requirement to meet standards in new legislation for education.”