

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd July 2014 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.45pm to 10.18pm

Present: Councillors Emile Aboud (Chairman), Margaret Cooksey (Vice Chairman), Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, Stella Brooks, John Chandler, Stephen Cooksey, Clare Curran, Rosemary Dickson, David Draper, Paul Elderton, James Friend, Paula Hancock, Raj Haque, Valerie Homewood, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Roger Hurst, Howard Jones, Bridget Lewis-Carr, Mick Longhurst, Tim Loretto, Vivienne Michael, David Mir, Wayne Monkman, Stephen Musgrove, Paul Newman, John Northcott, Corinna Osborne-Patterson, Jatin Patel, David Preedy, Paul Potter, Sarah Seed, Philippa Shimmin, Peter Stanyard, Chris Townsend and Charles Yarwood.

Members of the Council observed a minute's silence in tribute to Mr Tony Huggins, a former Clerk and Chief Executive of Mole Valley District Council, who had passed away in June 2014.

11. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Ashton, Mary Cooper, Simon Ling and John Muggeridge.

13. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor James Friend declared an interest in Motion 4/2014 under item 11, left the room during consideration of this item and took no part in the discussion or decision thereon.

14. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman offered his congratulations to everyone who took part in the P&G Surrey Youth Games, which he had attended on the weekend of 21st and 22nd June. All 11 Surrey Districts and Boroughs had competed in various sports and the Chairman was pleased to report that Team Mole Valley had won gold in Girls Table Tennis and had won a further 11 medals across different sports, exceeding last year's medal haul. The Chairman stated that this was a great achievement and a testament to all the supporting clubs, coaches, volunteers, participants and parents involved in this year's Mole Valley team.

Secondly, the Chairman reported on his attendance at 'An Evening of Dance, Theatre and Film' at Epsom College performed by The Freewheelers Theatre Company, a theatre company which brought disabled and non-disabled actors and supporters, production teams and the local community together, using theatre and dance, wheelchair and voicebox technology, multimedia, animations, puppets and shadows to create innovative work. In a similar vein, the Chairman was looking forward to attending a production at the Nomads Theatre in East Horsley on 26th July.

Finally, the Chairman advised that a joint charity event to raise money for the Chairman's charity, the National Osteoporosis Society, and for Cancer Research would be held at Councillor Raj Haque's restaurant on Sunday 7th September, and encouraged as many Members as possible to attend the event to support both charities.

15. Council Tax Flooding Relief

The Council considered the report set out at pages 5 to 7 of the agenda, which, following guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government, proposed that the local discount offered in respect of Council Tax liability for householders who were unable to reoccupy their property due to it being flood damaged should be extended beyond the original three months to a maximum of 12 months.

RESOLVED:

That an extension to the local discount in respect of properties subjected to internal flooding and remaining unoccupied due to flood damage be approved, as detailed in paragraph 1.5 of the report submitted.

16. The Future of the Pippbrook Site

The Council considered the report set out at pages 8 to 65 of the agenda. The Portfolio Holder for Assets introduced the report and advised that the report was before Council for debate prior to consideration by the Executive in September. Councillor Yarwood outlined the results of the public consultation and the various options to be considered in respect of the Civic Offices, Pippbrook House and Enabling Development, which had been developed by the Pippbrook Working Group.

Councillor David Preedy moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Stephen Cooksey:

1. That, in respect of the Civic Offices, the Executive be recommended to pursue Option 1a – refurbish the existing offices at an estimated cost of £4.5m as detailed in the report; the order of priority should be Health and Safety, statutory compliance issues, sustainability and improvements to the working environment.
2. That, in respect of Pippbrook House, the Executive be recommended to pursue Option 2c – MVDC should market Pippbrook House.
3. That, in respect of Enabling Development, the Executive be recommended to not allow enabling development for purely financial reasons but to consider, if necessary, the release of some land from the Pippbrook site if it is required operationally to secure a new use for Pippbrook House.
4. That the Executive be recommended to re-establish the Pippbrook Working Group, comprising 5 Members - 2 Conservatives, 2 Liberal Democrats and 1 Independent member (Group Members to advise the Corporate Head of Services – Democratic Services of their nominees) and chaired by the Portfolio Holder or their nominee, to receive regular updates and information, to progress the approved options and to advise the Executive accordingly.

The Council debated the motion in detail. Members were largely in favour of the refurbishment option for the Civic Offices in light of the financial analysis provided in the report. Pippbrook was considered to be a landmark building within Dorking and, as such, most Members were of the view that it should be retained. Some Members expressed concern that the proposed budget of £4.5m would not be sufficient to refurbish the building to a reasonable standard, whilst others supported an ‘austerity refurbishment’. It was confirmed that the budget of £4.5m was based on September 2013 costs and would, therefore, be subject to change to reflect inflation. The refurbishment included in this budget related to ‘must do’ and ‘should do’ items which would address the critical health and safety and compliance issues whilst also reducing running costs through sustainability improvements and providing some improvements to the working environment.

With regard to Pippbrook House, Members accepted that its retention in community use was not financially viable and therefore supported the recommendation to market the building.

Members considered the issue of enabling development and debated the motion proposed by Councillor Preedy. A number of Members were of the view that enabling development to raise capital was not necessary if options 1a (refurbishment of the Civic Offices) and 2c (marketing of Pippbrook House) were agreed. It was felt that the only enabling development which should be considered was the release if necessary of some land from the Pippbrook site if it was required operationally to secure a new use for Pippbrook House. The maintenance of the current designation of the site was supported and the disposal of any of the land for housing was felt to be inappropriate and unnecessary.

Other Members, however, considered that some enabling development may be necessary depending on the future use of Pippbrook House, and were opposed to taking a decision at this stage to restrict it.

In accordance with Standing Order 26.8 the Council agreed that each part of the motion should be put to the vote separately. In accordance with Standing Order 26.5 a recorded vote was taken in respect of parts 1, 2 and 3 of the motion.

The Council agreed parts 1, 2 and 4 of the motion as set out in the resolutions below. Part 3 of the motion was LOST by 15 votes to 14 with 7 abstentions.

(N.B. Recorded vote on the decision of the Council on part 3 of the motion:

For: Councillors Stella Brooks, Margaret Cooksey, Stephen Cooksey, David Draper, Paul Elderton, Valerie Homewood, Roger Hurst, Bridget Lewis-Carr, Mick Longhurst, Tim Loretto, Wayne Monkman, Paul Potter, David Preedy and Philippa Shimmin

Against: Councillors Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, John Chandler, Clare Curran, Rosemary Dickson, Paula Hancock, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Howard Jones, David Mir, Stephen Musgrove, Corinna Osborne-Patterson, Jatin Patel, Sarah Seed and Peter Stanyard

Abstentions: Councillors Emile Aboud, James Friend, Vivienne Michael, Paul Newman, John Northcott, Chris Townsend and Charles Yarwood).

With regard to part 3 of the recommendations in the report, Councillor Yarwood proposed that the Executive be recommended to defer a decision on enabling development until a time to be decided. In accordance with Standing Order 26.5 a recorded vote was taken in respect of this motion.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, in respect of the Civic Offices, the Executive be recommended to pursue Option 1a – refurbish the existing offices at an estimated cost of £4.5m as detailed in the report; the order of priority should be Health and Safety, statutory compliance issues, sustainability and improvements to the working environment.

(N.B. Recorded vote on the decision of the Council:

For: Councillors Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, Stella Brooks, John Chandler, Margaret Cooksey, Stephen Cooksey, Clare Curran, Rosemary Dickson, David Draper, Paul Elderton, Paula Hancock, Valerie Homewood, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Roger Hurst, Howard Jones, Bridget Lewis-Carr, Mick Longhurst, Tim Loretto, David Mir, Wayne Monkman, Stephen Musgrove, Corinna Osborne-Patterson, Jatin Patel, Paul Potter, David Preedy, Sarah Seed, Philippa Shimmin and Peter Stanyard

Abstentions: Councillors, Emile Aboud, James Friend, Vivienne Michael, Paul Newman, John Northcott, Chris Townsend and Charles Yarwood).

- (2) That, in respect of Pippbrook House, the Executive be recommended to pursue Option 2c – MVDC should market Pippbrook House.

(N.B. Recorded vote on the decision of the Council:

For: Councillors Emile Aboud, Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, Stella Brooks, John Chandler, Margaret Cooksey, Stephen Cooksey, Clare Curran, Rosemary Dickson, David Draper, Paul Elderton, Paula Hancock, Valerie Homewood, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Roger Hurst, Howard Jones, Bridget Lewis-Carr, Mick Longhurst, Tim Loretto, David Mir, Wayne Monkman, Stephen Musgrove, Corinna Osborne-Patterson, Jatin Patel, Paul Potter, David Preedy, Sarah Seed, Philippa Shimmin and Peter Stanyard

Abstentions Councillors James Friend, Vivienne Michael, Paul Newman, John Northcott, Chris Townsend and Charles Yarwood).

- (3) That the Executive be recommended to defer a decision on enabling development until a time to be decided.

(N.B. Recorded vote on the decision of the Council on part 3 of the motion:

For: Councillors Emile Aboud, Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, John Chandler, Clare Curran, Rosemary Dickson, Paula Hancock, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Howard Jones, David Mir, Stephen Musgrove, Corinna Osborne-Patterson, Jatin Patel, Sarah Seed and Peter Stanyard

Against: Councillors Stella Brooks, Margaret Cooksey, Stephen Cooksey, David Draper, Paul Elderton, Valerie Homewood, Roger Hurst, Bridget Lewis-Carr, Mick Longhurst, Tim Loretto, Wayne Monkman, Paul Potter, David Preedy and Philippa Shimmin

Abstentions: Councillors James Friend, Vivienne Michael, Paul Newman, John Northcott, Chris Townsend and Charles Yarwood).

- (4) That the Executive be recommended to re-establish the Pippbrook Working Group, comprising 5 Members - 2 Conservatives, 2 Liberal Democrats and 1 Independent member (Group Members to advise the Corporate Head of Services – Democratic Services of their nominees) and chaired by the Portfolio Holder or their nominee, to receive regular updates and information, to progress the approved options and to advise the Executive accordingly.

17. Leader's Statement

The Leader thanked the Pippbrook Working Group for their work in developing the recommendations in respect of the future of the Pippbrook site that Council had just considered and thanked all Members for their contributions and the steer given to the Executive.

He expressed his sadness that the former Clerk and Chief Executive of Mole Valley, Tony Huggins had passed away after a period of illness, and expressed his gratitude to those Members, officers and former members and officers who had attended the funeral. Particular thanks were expressed to the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Margaret Cooksey, who had represented the Council at Mr Huggins' funeral. The Leader advised that Tony Huggins had been with Mole Valley from the outset and had done much to put Mole Valley District Council on the map. Colleagues and Members who had worked with him remembered him fondly as a well respected and much loved Chief Executive.

The Leader introduced James Lalor, the new Interim Corporate Head of Service with responsibility for Planning to the Council. He then reported on a number of success stories, firstly congratulating Graeme Kane, the Council's Strategic Leadership Manager, on his success in this year's Local Government Challenge. Graeme had helped to demonstrate the talent and ability that existed at Mole Valley and he looked forward to seeing the outcomes of his project which aimed to work with the Fire and Rescue Service, Environment Agency and other partners to develop a national network of community resilience teams, able to support communities during emergencies, and to build community cohesion.

The Leader reported that the Leatherhead Project (part of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership strategic plan), which included a proposal to revitalise Leatherhead town centre, had been successful in being allocated Growth Deal pump

priming to the value of £62,500. These funds would be match funded by Mole Valley District Council to bring the total to £112,500 which would enable Mole Valley to develop the vision for the town centre and produce more detailed plans in partnership with residents, local businesses and other key stakeholders. The Growth Deal announcement demonstrated that the government was seriously interested in supporting Mole Valley's aims and wishes to see the project through to the next stage. Whilst funding had only been announced for 2015/16, it was expected that if the more detailed plans were supported, further government funding would be obtained through the Local Enterprise Partnership in future years. This was a most exciting opportunity for Leatherhead which had a lot of support from local residents and businesses and marked the beginning of a great adventure as the vision for Leatherhead was put down on paper and the process of revitalising the town centre started.

Another success had been the award to the Mole Valley Heritage Open Days Committee for their outstanding co-ordination and promotion of Heritage Open Days. The Committee was made up of a small number of volunteers and supported by Mole Valley District Council both financially and through the tireless efforts of the Council's Principal Conservation Officer, Rod Shaw. The Leader, on behalf of all Members, congratulated all the members of the Heritage Open Days Committee and paid particular tribute to Rod Shaw who was another example of the talent and commitment displayed by Mole Valley staff.

The Leader advised Members of the retirement in September of Malcolm Dean, the Building Control Manager. Mr Dean had worked at Mole Valley and its predecessor authority, Leatherhead Urban District Council, since 1972, giving 42 years of service to the community. On behalf of Members, the Leader thanked Mr Dean and wished him well in the future.

Finally, the Leader drew attention to 'Lights Out', a UK initiative inviting everyone to turn their lights off for an hour at 10.00pm on Monday 4th August, leaving just a single light on or a candle lit for a shared moment of reflection. The Leader encouraged as many Mole Valley residents as were able to join in to mark 100 years since the start of the First World War.

18. Quarterly Report on Decisions taken under Special Urgency Arrangements – 1st April to 30th June 2014

In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the deed of surrender was necessary to ensure that Dorking Football Club maintained its registration with the Football League.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

19. Reports of Portfolio Holders

Councillor Vivienne Michael – Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Resident Services

Councillor Michael noted that a key measure of how effectively Mole Valley District Council was serving its residents was the performance indicators for the Customer Services Unit (CSU). Performance figures had been reported to the Executive in early July showing 84% for 2013/14, comfortably exceeding the target of 80% of calls answered within 20 seconds. Performance continued to be strong for the first quarter of the current year at 83%.

The Portfolio Holder reported on the project to refresh the Mole Valley website. The new site, to be launched later in the year, would be responsive to the needs of customers who used tablets or other mobile devices to use the website. Councillor Michael advised

that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to receive an update on the website at one of the Committee's autumn meetings.

Members were reminded that since the government gave control of Council Tax support to Local Authorities in 2013, while some neighbouring authorities had reduced the support available for households to pay their Council Tax, Mole Valley District Council had ensured that Mole Valley residents had not seen any reduction in this benefit. The Portfolio Holder reported that she would be recommending to the Executive the continuation of the current scheme in 2015/16 thereby maintaining support for Mole Valley residents at the current level for a further year.

Councillor Michael advised that the Council was committed to reducing reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families and to that end was continuing with its programme to acquire more emergency accommodation for homeless households. A conversion of the Council's existing commercial unit into two 2-bed flats at Edenside, Bookham was on site and due to complete in September. This brought the current programme of acquisition of additional emergency accommodation to five new units and the identification of two further opportunities was ongoing. Members should also note that there were a number of Circle Housing Mole Valley schemes nearing completion in Bookham and Dorking and these would together provide 16 affordable homes for rent.

Finally, Councillor Michael advised that local organisations seeking to apply for grant funding from the Council should submit applications by 30th September.

Councillor James Friend – Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing

The Portfolio Holder advised that a report from the Cemeteries Group in respect of Dorking Cemetery would be submitted to Scrutiny Committee and Executive in September.

The recent publication of the Public Health England Health Profiles for 2014 was highlighted. Members were encouraged to look at the profiles and to encourage residents and community groups to do so. The profiles gave a very clear description of the things local residents needed for improving their own wellbeing and health. There were a number of common themes locally, with skin cancer being a major issue. Councillor Friend reported that the Health and Wellbeing Board for Surrey had looked at some of the profiles for previous years in conjunction with the prevention agenda. The Board was planning a childhood obesity summit for children of year 6 (ages 10 and 11). The Portfolio Holder reported that the Council would try to align its parks refurbishment programme with the hotspots for childhood obesity, to ensure that assets were targeted to achieve improved health and wellbeing.

Councillor Friend referred to the offers made recently by South East Coast Ambulance Service regarding the delivery of their First Responder programmes, and hoped that this would be rolled out across the District in both urban and rural areas. Members were encouraged to join in the development of the scheme.

20. Questions to Members of the Executive

(1) The following question was submitted by Councillor Preedy

“Several households affected by last winter's flooding are concerned that their insurance companies have been dragging their heels in making payments and in preparing for restoration to be carried out speedily once Dry Certificates are in place. They do not feel that the recommendations of the Government document, “Signposting current Guidance” based on the Pitt Review in 2008 have been followed.

How many Mole Valley households have been unable to return to their homes following last winter's floods and how many are expected to remain so by the end of September – 9 months after the flooding?"

Councillor Townsend responded as follows:

In an effort to relieve some of the burden on those who were flooded during the Christmas period, the Council agreed in March of this year to offer residents three months relief on their Council Tax if they had suffered internal flooding. A total of 159 properties in Mole Valley were granted this relief. Since that time, residents have been returning to their homes. The Council continues to monitor the number of homes that are unoccupied as a result of flood damage and as of last week, 54 properties fell into this category. Each week residents are informing us about their return to their home, and whilst this is good news for the individuals concerned, it is not possible to predict how many homes will still be unoccupied in September. Naturally we continue to think of all those who were affected by the flooding, and the difficulties they face in returning their homes and lives to some level of normality. We have considered an item already this evening which extends the Council Tax relief for those who are still out of their homes.

Councillor Preedy asked the following supplementary question:

"Are there any steps the Council is prepared to take, perhaps in conjunction with the County Council, to bring pressure on the insurance companies to help our residents get back into their homes as quickly as possible and to make sure they improve their approach for victims of future floods because there are certainly residents who have suffered from unnecessary delays at the hands of insurance companies?"

Councillor Townsend advised that a group had been established specifically to look at flooding related issues and all the Surrey Districts and Boroughs were working with the County Council to facilitate this. He undertook to raise the matter with the County Council.

(2) The following question was submitted by Councillor Preedy

"Several weeks ago, the Leader promised to summarise how responsibility for the Council functions will be allocated to Portfolio Holders in his re-configured Executive. When can we expect to receive this information?"

Councillor Townsend responded as follows:

I thank Councillor Preedy for his question.

My indicative list of the allocation of Portfolio Holder responsibilities was posted on the Council website and MOSS in late June.

I have been working with the Team to pull together a wider set of themes for each Portfolio Holder and to ensure I have achieved the right balance in the allocation between Portfolio Holders. We are in the process of making a few final adjustments this week and I will arrange for them to be posted on MOSS and the website next week.

Councillor Preedy asked the following supplementary question:

"If this is still an indicative list that Portfolio Holders are working to, does that mean that Portfolio Holders have up till now not known what they were doing?"

Councillor Townsend reported that every Portfolio Holder was aware of their responsibilities and were working hard to deliver the services expected by residents.

21. Motions

Motion 2/2014

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Chris Hunt and seconded by Councillor James Friend:

"This Council fully accepts the guidance included in the Ministerial statement from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning), Nick Boles MP of 6 March 2014 namely that Local Plans:

- Can include windfalls for each year of the plan
- Do not need to identify land to meet housing targets for years 11 to 15 of the Plan
- Should not seek to release Greenbelt Land solely to meet Housing Target numbers

This Council resolves:

- to publish an updated position of new dwellings created and permitted since 2006 as at 30 June 2014
- to publish an updated assessment of the recent average annual rate of Windfall dwellings
- to publish the implications, for the level of new dwelling land required to be identified in the Local Plan, of the above updates when applied alongside the above accepted guidance from the Minister's written statement that if the level of new dwelling land calculated as now required to be identified is below 100, not to propose to make any changes to the Greenbelt boundary through the Local Plan except where local communities have demonstrated Very Special Circumstances apply and that where there is a majority of local ward residents in favour of such a change (including, where applicable, demonstration through the approval of a Neighbourhood Development Plan)."

In accordance with Standing Order 9.6, a motion that the Council should deal with motion 2/2014 at the meeting was proposed by Councillor Hunt and seconded by Councillor Friend. This motion failed to secure a majority of those Members present, so motion 2/2014 was referred to the Planning Policy Working Group for consideration.

RESOLVED: That motion 2/2014 be referred to the Planning Policy Working Group for consideration.

Motion 3/2014

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Stephen Cooksey and seconded by Councillor David Preedy:

"This Council:

Notes

1. that the Liberal Democrat Manifesto for the 2014 Local Elections in Mole Valley stated that 'no site should be released from the Green Belt unless it no longer contributes to Green Belt aims and has the consent of the community'
2. that in a press release dated 18th March 2014 the Leader of the Conservative Group stated 'that there will be no changes to the Green belt boundary without support of the local community' and 'that Conservative Councillors will remain resolute in listening to our residents and communities and rejecting greenbelt boundary changes unless local communities can demonstrate very special circumstances and full local support for any minor change'

3. that both Liberal Democrats and Conservatives have therefore committed publically to policies to oppose development on Green Belt sites which do not have the consent of the local community;
4. that policies and statements from Government Ministers with regard to Green Belt development lack clarity and that there is considerable uncertainty about the Government's position on whether the Green Belt or housing development have priority in local planning processes.

Resolves

1. to inform the Planning Policy Working Group that any proposals for development on Green Belt sites which do not have the support and consent of the local community following the recent and continuing public consultation exercise and which continue to contribute to Green Belt aims will not have the support of the majority of Councillors;
2. that if, as a consequence, Mole Valley is unable to meet the housing requirement agreed in the Core Strategy, a special case should be made to Government arguing that having conducted the review and taken account of the wishes of local residents, the target is no longer realistic given the desire of the Council to respond positively to the views expressed by local residents and its own determination to protect the Green Belt;
3. that the search for appropriate brownfield sites be intensified but full regard must be given to the importance of reserving and retaining land for industrial, employment, cultural, retail and recreational purposes within our urban communities."

In accordance with Standing Order 9.6, a motion that the Council should deal with motion 3/2014 at the meeting was proposed by Councillor Stephen Cooksey and seconded by Councillor Preedy. This motion failed to secure a majority of those Members present, so motion 3/2014 was referred to the Planning Policy Working Group for consideration.

RESOLVED: That motion 3/2014 be referred to the Planning Policy Working Group for consideration.

Motion 4/2014

The following motion was proposed by Councillor David Preedy and seconded by Councillor Chris Townsend:

"On 10th July, the Ministry of Defence announced that the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, currently based at Headley Court, will move to a new centre at Stanford Hall in the Midlands when it opens in 2018.

This Council regrets that, despite the motion passed unanimously by Council on 18th February, the Ministry of Defence has failed to engage with local representatives prior to this announcement.

This Council calls for urgent discussions with interested parties, including the Ministry of Defence and the Headley Court Trustees, to assess possible alternative uses which retain a centre of expertise at Headley Court, based on the specialist facilities on the site and any civilian staff who would prefer not to relocate. If no such alternative uses are viable, the Council should engage with the Headley Court Trustees to ensure that the views and interests of the local community are represented early in the process of deciding the future use of the site."

The Council resolved to take the motion on the night.

Members debated the motion in full.

RESOLVED: That the motion be accepted.

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Chairman

.....Date