

# Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at Pippbrook, Dorking, from 7.00pm to 8.21pm

Present:

Executive Members: Councillors Vivienne Michael (Leader/Chairman), Charles Yarwood (Deputy Leader), Lucy Botting, Simon Edge, Metin Huseyin, David Mir and Corinna Osborne-Patterson

Non-Executive Members: Councillors David Draper, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt and Paul Kennedy

## 58. Minutes

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

## 59. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Duncan Irvine

## 60. Councillor Question Time

1. The following question was submitted by Councillor Paul Kennedy:

“What assessment has the Council made of the accessibility to residents of activities requiring a reservation at the Leatherhead Leisure Centre, including problems reported with the app and online booking systems, delays in making bookings over the telephone, double and lost bookings, and the system for imposing penalties for missing reserved activities (as well as investigating and cancelling disputed charges)?”

Councillor Lucy Botting responded as follows:

“We are aware that there have been some issues for residents concerning accessibility to Leatherhead Leisure Centre’s facilities, especially during busy times, and we are addressing this with Fusion, who manage the facility for us.

The Centre is very busy and extremely well used, particularly during the first three months of the year and this does create its own challenges. However, in addition to this Fusion have been very short staffed recently, particularly the front of house team, which has affected their ability to deal with both telephone enquiries and bookings, as well as face to face.

We have taken this up with Fusion and, as a result, they have been actively recruiting, with two front of house staff recruited this week. In addition, they have also been upskilling some of the existing staff in order to be able to assist at reception.

There have also been some issues with the reliability of the turnstiles at reception which has caused some confusion with members registering their attendance at booked classes and resulted in incorrect arrear charges being incurred. This has been dealt with on an individual basis and the turnstiles have been serviced accordingly.

The introduction and ongoing development of the App has helped reduce the number of customers having to call in to book. However there have been a couple of issues with the main computer server malfunctioning, resulting in online bookings being disrupted. The main server has been replaced to address this.

We are fully aware how frustrating this can be to users and members of the centre and will continue to monitor this closely.”

2. The following question was submitted by Councillor Paul Kennedy:

“What steps will the Council be taking to ensure that the needs of Mole Valley residents are fully taken into account in any further planning decisions including enforcement of conditions that need to be made by Guildford Borough Council when implementing the decision of the Secretary of State to allow the Berkeley Homes/Howard of Effingham development between Effingham and Little Bookham?”

Councillor Vivienne Michael (answering on behalf of Councillor Duncan Irvine) responded as follows:

“Mole Valley District Council is usually consulted on planning applications close to the District boundary and which may have implications for the district.

However, enforcement powers only relate within a Local Planning Authority’s boundary. Therefore, in this case, the enforcement of conditions will be the responsibility of Guildford Borough Council.

As a result, it will be important that MVDC liaises closely with Guildford Borough Council to ensure that they are aware of any concerns raised by Mole Valley residents regarding compliance with conditions.”

## **61. Report of the Audit Committee**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee advised the Executive that at their recent meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March the Committee had considered a report from the Council’s external auditors, Grant Thornton, setting out their approach to the imminent audit of the 2017/18 accounts.

The Committee was conscious of the difficulties encountered by the Council and Grant Thornton in producing audited accounts last year, resulting in the failure to meet 30<sup>th</sup> September deadline, by a couple of weeks. The Committee was further conscious that the statutory timescales for production of both draft accounts, and a subsequent audit opinion, are materially shorter for the coming year. Specifically, following the end of the financial year, the Council was required to produce draft 2017/18 accounts within two months rather than three, i.e. by the end of May not June. Similarly the auditors will then have two months, rather than three to provide an audit opinion, in other words by the end of July, not September.

This presented a significant challenge, and the Committee asked officers and Grant Thornton for assurance that these deadlines would be met. In response The Council’s Section 151 Officer and Grant Thornton’s ‘Engagement Lead’ both confirmed that in their view the issues from last year had been jointly understood and addressed, and that the Council was in as good a position as any, to address the shortened timescales. In particular:

- A greater level of pre-planning has been undertaken, at a much earlier stage;
- More efficient methods of auditing certain items have been identified;
- Some parts of the audit will take place prior to production of the draft accounts, and indeed an interim audit of some items has already taken place;
- A clearer process for recording and dealing with issues arising from the audit had been agreed between the teams.

However, both the Section 151 Officer and Grant Thornton’s Engagement Lead had also stressed that there was no room for complacency. There was no allowance for slippage in the audit plan, and if any small element was not completed on time, first time, it would prove extremely difficult if not impossible to make up any lost time. It should be emphasised that this was not simply a Mole Valley focussed issue but a very real risk facing all local authorities in dealing with these far shorter timescales. It was also highlighted that there was a view within the audit industry that a significant number of authorities may fail to meet the new deadlines.

Consequently, given the potential reputational risk associated with any failure to meet the statutory deadlines, the Committee felt that these risks should be raised with the Executive.

The Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Services thanked the Audit Committee for their comments and confirmed that he was confident that lessons had been learnt from last year and that Grant Thornton and the Section 151 Officer were working together to ensure the new timescales for producing the accounts were achieved. The Executive Member also reassured Members that he held regular meetings with the Section 151 Officer to discuss any issues as they arose.

## 62. Report of the Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that apart from Executive reports to be considered elsewhere on the agenda, the Committee had received a report on the lessons learnt from the review of the demolition of the Royal Oak public house in Leatherhead.

The discussion of the Committee had focussed upon the different ways in which MVDC could learn from the events that had led to the demolition of the pub, with possible improvements suggested such as automatic replies on email inboxes which were no longer monitored. The Scrutiny Committee also suggested that the scope of the third recommendation detailed in the report should be extended to ensure that Members as well as Officers were briefed on any future changes to planning legislation.

## 63. Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee

### A. Car Parking Strategy 2018 – 2023

The Chairman of the Car Parking Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Chris Hunt was in attendance at the meeting to introduce the report from the Panel, summarising the Car Parking Strategy and accompanying action plan set out in the report. It was noted that there had been a general level of support from the Scrutiny Committee for the Panel to continue its work into 2018/19, with a view to developing a differential charging scheme that could be introduced in Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) car parks.

The Executive Member for Environment and Parking, Councillor David Mir, thanked the Panel for its work in developing the Car Parking Strategy, noting that the strategy provided scope for a flexible approach to car parking in the district and agreed that it would be useful for the Car Parking Panel to remain in place to review the implementation of the Strategy.

It was noted that the Car Parking Strategy included the installation of free 30 minute parking bays in selected Council car parks. It was confirmed that 17 such bays had already been organised for installation in car parks in Ashted and Leatherhead in May 2018 ahead of schedule.

**RESOLVED:** That the Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan 2018 - 2023 be approved for implementation.

### B. Report of the Planning Panel

The Chairman of the Planning Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Mary Huggins was in attendance at the meeting to introduce the report advising that the Panel had been tasked with reviewing the planning process at Mole Valley District Council, which had been achieved through a series of detailed meetings. As a result a number of recommendations had been identified by the Panel which had received the endorsement of the Scrutiny Committee. It was highlighted that the scope of the fifth recommendation had been expanded following a debate at the Scrutiny Committee meeting to include a peer review of the Planning Service as a whole rather than just the Development Control Committee as originally suggested by the Panel.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Panel for the work they had undertaken in producing what was considered to be a comprehensive report for the Executive. It was pleasing to note that the report highlighted the positive work of the Development Management service in processing applications, which was one of the best performing in Surrey, providing a high level of customer service.

The recommendation to commission a Peer Review of the Planning Service was felt to be particularly timely given that it had been five years since the previous review. It was confirmed that the Local Government Association (LGA) had been contacted about undertaking the review, with it likely to be scheduled for later in the year.

**RESOLVED:** That:

1. The resources of the Development Management Service are deployed to ensure the delivery of the planning enforcement function is improved.

2. The 2012 Local Enforcement Plan is reviewed and updated.
3. The content of the initial acknowledgement to reported alleged breaches of planning control is improved to explain the stages in the planning enforcement process and manage expectations of a resolution.
4. A mandatory training programme for Members of the Development Control Committee is established.
5. A peer review of the work of the Planning Service is commissioned.
6. Officers in the Planning Service and Members are encouraged to work collaboratively wherever possible on planning applications and in the preparation of the new Local Plan for the benefit of Mole Valley's residents and businesses.

**64. Affordable Housing – Alternative Methods of Delivery (Key Decision)**

The Executive Member for Communities, Services and Housing, Councillor Corinna Osborne-Patterson, introduced the report highlighting that the provision of affordable housing was one of the top priorities for MVDC and that the action outlined within the report would help to ensure the target of 50 new affordable homes per annum continued to be met.

Although when taken as an average over a number of years MVDC achieved its target of 50 affordable homes per year, it was noted that the actual number of new units delivered on an annual basis tended to fluctuate due to the amount of time it took for housing projects to be completed. For instance 15 affordable homes were delivered in 2016/17, 40 homes in 2017/18 and 70 homes were estimated to be delivered in 2018/19.

The feasibility of providing new affordable homes through the creation of a housing company would be explored, including the possibility of joint ventures as a method of delivery. However the availability of suitable land within Mole Valley was a key issue and would need careful consideration as part of the Local Plan setting process to identify potential sites.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee echoed the comments of the Executive Member in welcoming the exploration of the feasibility of using a housing company to provide more new affordable housing and also acknowledged the limited availability of suitable land in the District as a major risk to achieving the target. One suggestion arising from the discussion at the Scrutiny Committee meeting was the possibility of working with local charities to provide affordable housing. It was agreed that the possibility of working with charities would be welcomed, but it was likely that this would only deliver a small number of homes.

**RESOLVED:** That it be noted that the delivery of affordable homes will remain at an average of 50 per year unless a new Local Plan is adopted releasing land for development and alternative delivery methods are considered where appropriate.

The Executive therefore agrees that:

1. all Council assets considered for redevelopment are assessed for the inclusion of affordable homes
2. the development of the new Local Plan gives regard to measures to maximise the delivery of affordable housing
3. officers explore the feasibility of establishing a subsidiary of MOVA for the purposes of a housing company
4. over the next 6 months, officers explore further opportunities with all appropriate, and interested, development partners with a view to establishing joint ventures for the development of affordable housing.

**65. Adoption of an Economic Prosperity Strategy for Mole Valley 2018-2028 (Key Decision)**

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Transform Leatherhead, Councillor Simon Edge, introduced the report outlining the process undertaken to produce the strategy which had included workshops and a consultation exercise, the results of which had been positive about the aims of the strategy.

The Economic Prosperity Strategy presented a ten year vision for economic development in Mole Valley and included 30 projects that had been analysed and rated in terms of their achievability. The Strategy would be supported by an annual Action Plan which provided more information on the projects that would be pursued in the forthcoming year, as it was recognised that not all of the projects were achievable in the short term. The Action Plan would be revised each year and projects from the Strategy could be added as the timing became appropriate.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Members and Officers involved in the creation of the plan and in particular welcomed the extension to the consultation period, allowing any interested parties to feed their comments into the process. It was also pleasing to note that the comments raised by the Scrutiny Committee had been taken into account and incorporated where possible in the final document.

It was questioned whether there had been any work undertaken to ensure that the risks arising from the UK's exit from the European Union had been incorporated in the Strategy. It was advised that the whole Strategy was a response to all the challenges and opportunities to economic prosperity in Mole Valley and the actions outlined were designed to either mitigate or take advantage of these.

**RESOLVED:** That:

1. the comments made during the consultation period be noted.
2. the Economic Prosperity Strategy for Mole Valley 2018 to 2028 be adopted, subject to final amendments being made by the Executive Head of Services (prosperity), in conjunction with, the Executive Member for Economic Development and Transform Leatherhead.
3. the Annual Plan for 2018-2019 be agreed.

#### **66. Community Transport Strategy (Key Decision)**

The Executive Member for Wellbeing, Councillor Lucy Botting, introduced the report advising that a key aim of the Community Transport Strategy was to reduce social isolation in the District and had been driven by the need to tailor the service to the requirements of Mole Valley residents, rather than for financial reasons. As part of the Strategy it would be MVDC's role to signpost residents to the best option for their travel needs.

During the budget setting process in February 2018 it had been decided to discontinue the grant to the East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership as there was found to be duplication with existing services provided by MVDC. Since this decision Officers had continued to work with ES RTP and at this stage there were no plans for them to remove their existing services.

The charge for using the Dial a Ride scheme had been amended as part of the Strategy from a flat rate to one based on mileage. Journeys of five miles or less would cost £4 and for those journeys of six to ten miles the cost would be £6.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee welcomed the clarification of the new charges for the scheme and the Vehicle Replacement Strategy included in the report. However, concern was raised about the extent of the consultation on the new strategy. It was confirmed that there had been various consultations throughout the process and would be ongoing should Members be aware of any groups that wished to discuss the new strategy.

**RESOLVED:** That the Community Transport Strategy, 2018 – 2022 be approved and a review of the new operation to be conducted after 12 months.

#### **67. Adoption of new Data Protection Policy (Key Decision)**

The Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Services, Councillor Metin Huseyin, introduced the report advising that although much of the principle remained the same, the Council's Data Protection Policy had been updated in light of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). MVDC was required to have adopted the new policy by 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018, to ensure it was compliant with the new legislation.

It was confirmed that two training sessions had been organised for Members to provide them with an overview of the new GDPR requirements. These would be held on 12<sup>th</sup> April and 15<sup>th</sup> May. In response to a suggestion that it would also be useful to provide training for Parish Councils, it was confirmed that a session had been organised.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Data Protection Policy be adopted from a date to be determined by the Council's Chief Executive.
2. That authority be delegated to the Data Protection Officer in consultation with the Executive Member to implement further GDPR relevant policies and to make amendments to the Policy to enable the Council to make further progress in respect of measures that will improve GDPR compliance by the Council.
3. That authority be delegated to Information Asset Owner for HR in consultation with the Data Protection Officer and the Executive Member to implement a specific GDPR compliant HR policy (save where any aspect of the same already falls within the remit of the Head of Paid Service).

**68. Wellbeing Working Group Mid Term Review of MVDC Wellbeing Strategy (Key Decision)**

The Executive Member for Wellbeing, Councillor Lucy Botting, introduced the report, confirming that the Wellbeing Working Group had developed the original Wellbeing Strategy in 2015 and had continued to monitor its outcomes since then. Earlier this year the Working Group undertook a mid-term review of the Strategy and endorsed the outcomes achieved to date which including the Wellbeing Prescription scheme, the organisation of a Parkrun at Denbies, the Walking for Health scheme and the installation of defibrillators across the District and Heart Start training.

The Working Group was now recommending that for the remainder of its life, the Strategy should focus upon three key themes, namely Isolation and Loneliness, Getting or Keeping Active and Mental Health. It was also recommended that there should be an emphasis on preventative work with children, young people and older people.

The work arising from this would include the expansion of the Wellbeing Prescription service across the whole of the district, lifesaving skills and training in the use of defibrillators being extended to young people through schools and youth groups and a greater emphasis on the MVDC Community Transport Scheme as a means to tackle social isolation.

Both the aims and the outcomes provided by the Strategy were welcomed by Members, who agreed that the Wellbeing Strategy should be recognised as a huge success story for Mole Valley District Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the recommendations of the Wellbeing Working Group for the focus of activity for the remainder of the Wellbeing Strategy as the following areas be agreed:

1. Isolation and Loneliness
2. Getting or keeping active
3. Mental Health

with an emphasis on preventative work with Children and Young People and Older People

The Executive is asked to note the projects already identified to contribute to these priorities.

Chairman: ..... Date: .....