

# Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at Pippbrook, Dorking, from 7.00pm to 7.59pm

Present:

Executive Members: Councillors Vivienne Michael (Leader/Chairman), Charles Yarwood (Deputy Leader), Lucy Botting, Lynne Brooks, Howard Jones, Corinna Osborne-Patterson and Michelle Watson

Non Executive Members: Margaret Cooksey, Stephen Cooksey, David Draper, Paul Kennedy and Claire Malcomson

## 17. Minutes

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman/Leader.

## 18. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Duncan Irvine

## 19. Disclosure of Interests

None

## 20. Councillor Question Time

None received

## 21. Report of the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met on 5<sup>th</sup> July and considered a number of items which were included on the Executive agenda for 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, with the approval of the Leader, undertook to submit feedback to the Executive during their consideration of each report.

## 22. Transform Leatherhead: Masterplan and Implementation (Key Decision)

The Executive Member for Transform Leatherhead advised that the three stage consultation process undertaken to prepare the Masterplan was one of the largest and most inclusive ever undertaken by the Council, with input received from across the community. The final Masterplan presented as part of the report largely reflected the initial proposals made at the start of the project a year ago. Overall the consultation demonstrated that local residents and businesses recognised that change was needed within the town.

It was highlighted that highways projects were not included within the Masterplan as road improvements were the remit of Surrey County Council. Mole Valley District Council was working with the Surrey County Council Highways team to improve the highway layout in Leatherhead and had recently submitted a bid to the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for funding to undertake a traffic study in the town.

It was also highlighted that recommendation six, which proposed the procurement of a Property Advisor would help the Council plan its vision for the Claire and James House project, which would form a Development Brief to be used when the Council looked for a Development Partner.

The Scrutiny Committee Chairman reported that a range of views were offered regarding recommendations two and three. Some Members expressed full support for the recommendations, suggesting that a feeling of excitement at the Leatherhead project beginning to materialise could already be sensed around the town, for example with the preparatory work taking place on Church Street for a new Waitrose store. Other Members were somewhat more cautious, suggesting that giving 'significant weight' to the Masterplan in the preparation of the new Local Plan was a vague statement of intent, and more work would need to be done to ensure that the two plans did not end up conflicting with one another. Some Members also considered the report to be light on detail regarding how partner agencies would be brought on board in order to address issues such as traffic

and parking, given that these fell outside the remit of the District Council.

Discussing the fourth, fifth and sixth recommendations, the Scrutiny Committee were mindful of the potential dangers involved in failing to secure an appropriate balance between control, cost and risk in a project of such scale. There were concerns, particularly in light of the recent referendum result, regarding the uncertain economic outlook and where the project would stand if the desired levels of investment failed to materialise.

In response to concerns about a lack of provision for the disabled and people suffering vision or hearing impairment, the Executive Member for Wellbeing advised that discussions were ongoing with the Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Group and other health service providers to ensure that people with disabilities were catered for as part of the Transform Leatherhead project.

There was also concern about whether the Council would have sufficient staff resources to carry out a project of the scope of Transform Leatherhead. The Leader of the Council advised that there would not be sufficient resource or expertise within the Council's internal staff and the Development Reserve had been created to address this concern by allowing the Council to buy in external expertise as needed.

In response to a question about whether the LEP had committed to funding the traffic study, it was advised that confirmation had yet to be received, but even if the bid was unsuccessful at this stage, it was likely that the Transform Leatherhead project would be a ten year programme and a further bid could be made at a later stage in the project when more detail was available.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Executive:

1. Notes the Stage 3 Consultation Report, at Appendix 1;
2. Approve the final Transform Leatherhead Masterplan, at Appendix 2;
3. Endorse the Transform Leatherhead Masterplan as a material body of evidence to support the development of the Mole Valley Local Plan;
4. Approve the Development Partner approach to the delivery of MVDC property assets that form part of the Transform Leatherhead Masterplan;
5. Notes the creation of a £1m 'Transform Leatherhead Development Reserve', (considered by Council at its meeting on 12 July 2016), in order to enable the delivery of MVDC property assets that form part of the Transform Leatherhead Masterplan;
6. Allocate £100,000 of the Transform Leatherhead Development Reserve for the procurement of a Property Advisor, to develop, and subsequently market, a Development Brief for Claire and James House.

#### **23. 2015/2016 Outturn Report**

The Executive Member for Finance and Investment advised that the 2015/2016 Outturn report demonstrated that the Council had made good progress over the past year, with particular highlights being the Transform Leatherhead project, work on the Deepdene estate and the Heart Start project. The Council had also performed well against its performance indicators, most notably in recycling and Council Tax collection. Where the performance indicator had not been achieved there were good reasons why this had been the case, which were understood by officers and the Executive Member.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee highlighted a number of questions raised at their meeting, these questions together with the answer are set out below:-

Q. Why has our refuse recycling rate gone down? How do we stand in comparison to other Surrey Districts and Boroughs?

A. Our recycling rate has improved since last year, though it has not increased by the full 1% that was targeted.

In terms of the latest comparative information from 2014/15, MVDC's recycling rate leaves it 32<sup>nd</sup> on the Government's table of 352 Councils, so in the top 10%. There are three other Surrey authorities above us. Although there have been times in the past when we have been top, this tends to vary depending on each authority's progress and the impact of new approaches, processes and campaigns. Since finalising the Outturn Report, we have received provisional 2015/16 Surrey rankings and are placed second among the Surrey Districts & Boroughs.

Q. Why has the number of households in Bed and Breakfast increased?

A. MVDC has limited accommodation to offer. The numbers of families that are housed in bed and breakfast accommodation rises and falls month by month. In the last half of the year 2015/16 the numbers each month were 8 (September), 11 (October), 11 (November), 6 (December), 10 (January), 5 (February) and 11 (March). On 31<sup>st</sup> March, the final day of the 2015/16 year, there were 11 families. The latest position for 2015/16, as at mid-July, is 11.

Q. Does the negotiated reduction in the Street Cleaning contract price reflect a reduction in service quality?

A. No. The reduction has been made possible through the identification of efficiencies in Veolia's working procedures – in particular, weekend staffing and shifts – which have not impacted on service levels.

The Scrutiny Committee also asked whether, in light of the fact that most of the performance indicators showed the Council was achieving its targets, the targets themselves were sufficiently challenging or if they needed to be revised in order to drive further improvements. For example, the recent Infrastructure Needs Assessment which had been discussed by the Scrutiny Committee at its previous meeting had demonstrated that there were some areas of service provision where public expectations were not being met, and yet scored highly on this report. The Executive Member for Finance and Investments advised that a level needed to be struck for Performance Indicators between achieving an efficient service and delivering the level of service expected by residents. As such targets were reviewed annually to ensure they remained challenging, yet achievable.

In response to a question about whether the result of paying £4m from reserves in to the pension fund would achieve the stated equivalent of an 8% return on investment, it was advised that this figure had been based upon advice from the actuaries of the pension fund. The pension fund is due to be revalued in 2017 which will result in a revision to the assessed deficit and possibly the required contribution from MVDC. However, the contribution will be £0.4m lower from 2017/18 onwards as a result of this payment.

In response to a question about the location of defibrillators purchased through the Heart Start scheme, it was advised that this information was going to be made available on the Mole Valley District Council website.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the Executive:

- notes the Council's performance and financial position for the period April to March 2015/16;
- confirms the requested carry forwards amounting to £83,000 of revenue and £582,000 of Capital Minor Works from 2015/16 to 2016/17;
- approves the use of £4m from revenue reserves for prepayment of Pension Fund contributions, in order to achieve a c£0.4m reduction in annual revenue contributions;
- notes the s151 Officer's advice that a further £1m of revenue reserves is available to support the creation of a £1m 'Transform Leatherhead Development Reserve'. This is considered elsewhere on this Executive agenda.

## **24. Counter Fraud Policies**

The Executive Member for Finance and Investment advised that the Council had updated its Counter Fraud policies following changes to fraud detection procedures such as the centralisation of Housing Benefit Fraud across the country.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee advised that they had made a number of comments which had been incorporated in the final report presented to the Executive for approval. Overall they were happy with the content of the policies, but felt there would have been greater assurance through opening the policies to external scrutiny.

**RESOLVED:** The Executive is asked to consider and approve the revised and updated (1) Anti Fraud and Anti Corruption Policy and (2) Prosecution & Sanction Policy.

## **25. The Council's Corporate Procurement Policy and Principles**

The Executive Member for Finance and Investment advised that the Council had revised its procurement policy to take into account the latest procurement developments.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee advised that they had made a number of comments that were incorporated in the final report and highlighted that the three year review date may need to be revised given that a lot of the Procurement policy was based upon European Union law, which may change following the result of the recent EU Referendum.

**RESOLVED:** That the Corporate Procurement Policy & Principles be approved.