

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday 8th April 2014 at Pippbrook, Dorking, from 7.00pm to 8.09pm

Present:

Executive Members: Councillors Chris Townsend (Leader/Chairman), James Friend, Simon Ling, John Northcott and Charles Yarwood.

Non-Executive Members: Councillors John Chandler, Stephen Cooksey and Caroline Salmon.

67. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 4th February 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman/Leader.

68. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vivienne Michael.

69. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor James Friend declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 15 - Grounds Maintenance, Arboricultural Services and Highways Verge Maintenance Contract, and was not present during consideration of that item.

70. Councillor Question Time

(1) Councillor Stephen Cooksey asked the following question:

'At the Council meeting held on 19th March the Deputy Leader of the Council indicated that as a consequence of the recent Ministerial statement from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning), Nick Bowles MP, the green belt was now 'safe', that the housing land requirement should be reduced by at least 480 houses to a maximum of around 600, and that no further green belt land would be needed to meet these figures 'unless local communities can demonstrate very special circumstances and full local support for minor changes'. In the light of these statements and the time that officers have now had to consider the Ministerial statement would the Planning Portfolio Holder indicate whether in his view, and that of Mole Valley planning officers, they provide an accurate reflection of the current situation.'

Councillor John Northcott, Portfolio Holder for Planning, responded as follows:

May I thank Cllr Cooksey for his question.

Chairman, I must point out that at no time during the Council meeting held on 19th March did the Deputy Leader make the statements attributed to him. So the strict answer is that as the statements were never made they cannot provide an accurate reflection of the current situation, and the answer must be no.

However, if the Leader will indulge me I should like to take the opportunity of updating the Executive on where we are now, given the high level of interest in the progress of the consultation on the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan to which over 3000 members of the public contributed.

There are two aspects to be considered, the preparation of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan and the determination of planning applications for new homes in the Green Belt.

Starting with the former, the first thing to say is that the Council has given a commitment, with cross-party support, to review the Green Belt boundary to ensure there is sufficient land to meet the housing requirements of its adopted Core Strategy. That is Council policy, and that is what we are doing. It does not commit the Council in any way to redesignate any Green Belt land.

The Planning Minister's statement on 6th March indicates that 'windfall' sites can be counted to a

greater extent than previously. Our initial view is that their potential contribution could be between 350 and 600 dwellings. For clarification that is the total windfall sites. Applying these rates would reduce the amount of housing to be found from the Green Belt from 1,100 (the figure in the Consultation Document) to between 620 and 870. But that is not the whole story as there are other considerations that will affect the amount of Green Belt land needed: for example, it will also be necessary to take into account the planning permissions that have been granted since the base date of last September and the number of new homes built since then.

We will continue to refine our calculations and monitor how the NPPG is being interpreted by Planning Inspectors. While it does seem that less Green Belt land than was previously thought will be required to deliver the Council's adopted housing target, it is likely that some Green Belt land will still be required. The results of this work will be reported in due course to the Executive following consideration by the Working Group.

I'd now like to turn to the issue of planning applications for housing development in the Green Belt. I am pleased to say that the Planning Minister confirmed previous Ministerial statements that when planning applications for residential development in the Green Belt are being considered, unmet housing need by itself is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt to constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Given that we have been faced with a couple of appeals for new homes in the Green Belt in the last few weeks this is welcome support.

Councillor Cooksey clarified that everything he had quoted in his question was part of a press release issued by the Deputy Leader.

(2) Councillor Stephen Cooksey asked the following question:

'In view of the statement from the Deputy Leader of the Council that the green belt is now 'safe' and the statement from Sir Paul Beresford MP that development in the green belt will not be necessary, is the Executive considering abandoning the Green Belt Review and the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan and if not, why not?'

Councillor Chris Townsend, Leader of the Council, responded as follows:

I don't believe everything I read in the newspapers and I am sure there are many different views on the subject right across the board. However, to answer your submitted question, the Government requires local planning authorities to prepare local plans to identify enough land for the housing needs of their area.

The Council is discharging this responsibility through the preparation of the Housing and Traveller Sites Plan which is seeking to make sure there is sufficient land for the number of new homes proposed in its adopted Core Strategy. The current evidence points towards the need to release some land from the Green Belt for new homes.

If the Council was to abandon the preparation of the Housing & Traveller Sites Plan, it will be abrogating its responsibilities and leave local communities extremely vulnerable to planning applications for new homes being allowed on appeal in areas which should be safeguarded from such development.

Councillor Cooksey asked a supplementary question regarding how united the Executive was in proposing that the green belt review should continue. The Leader advised that the Executive and the Council as a whole had agreed that the review and consultation should be carried out and he confirmed that the Executive would be abrogating its responsibilities if it didn't continue the review.

71. Report of the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met on 4th March and 1st April. At the meeting on 4th March the Committee considered three substantive Scrutiny related items including a review of the flooding in Mole Valley in December 2013 and January 2014 and an update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that the debate on the flooding review had been very helpful and indicated that others agencies, such as Thames Water, would be

invited to a future meeting when the completed review were considered. The Committee at its April meeting received updates from the Community Support Manager and the Dorking Halls Manager, and had been very impressed with what had been done at Dorking Halls over the last year, and also a report from the Chairman of the Car Parking Panel on progress made against the Car Parking Strategy in the past year.

72. Local Enterprise Partnerships – Coast to Capital (C2C) Strategic Joint Committee and Appointment of Member [KEY DECISION]

The Executive considered a report on the establishment of the Coast to Capital Strategic Joint Committee which would provide a democratic forum to promote and support sustainable economic development and growth across the area served by the Coast to Coast Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It was noted that the final Heads of Terms were not yet available and therefore the Executive was asked to agree recommendation 3(ii).

The Leader introduced the report advising that Mole Valley District Council had participated in a bid for nearly £560m of funding for the South East. The Coast to Capital LEP had been required to produce a Strategic Economic Plan to bid into a possible £2bn pot for 2015/16 and £2bn for every year of the next Parliament. 38 other LEPs had submitted bids so it was a very competitive process with Mole Valley also competing against partners within the C2C LEP for a share of growth funding. Mole Valley District Council was seeking approximately £25m of the C2C bid largely to seed fund regeneration projects in Leatherhead, but also to support other mainly transport related projects throughout the District. The bid comprised a package of innovative and ambitious projects, some still conceptual time lined for 2018 and beyond. The results of the bid process were expected in June or July. Finally the Leader thanked officers for their work both on the bid and securing representation within the LEP.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee reported that the Committee had been very supportive of the recommendations. Members had recognised the large amount of work undertaken by the officers and Members involved to ensure that the bid was completed and submitted within the Government's short timescale, and, as such, accepted that most Members had not seen the details of the bid. However, it was hoped that Members would be able to participate more fully in future projects.

The Leader acknowledged the comments of the Scrutiny Committee, but advised that local Members in Leatherhead as well as local businesses had been fully briefed. The Sustainable Economy Working Group had also been well briefed on the bid. Details of the bid were available on the C2C website and also on the Members' Intranet (MOSS).

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress made by the Gatwick Diamond Initiative (GDI) and the C2C Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP); (both of which Mole Valley District Council are members), in making the case for additional investment in the County of Surrey be noted.
- (2) That the Chief Executive's action (having consulted with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Sustainable Economy Working Group) in supporting the Strategic Economic Plan for submission to the Government be confirmed.
- (3) That the establishment of the Coast to Capital Strategic Joint Committee be approved pending approval of the final Heads of Terms and the Chief Executive be authorised to approve the final Heads of Terms.
- (4) That, subject to all Joint Committee members agreeing to the establishment of the Joint Committee, the Chief Executive be authorised to take all measures necessary for, or incidental to, (i) the implementation of resolution (3) above and (ii) the ongoing management of the above resolution and administration of the Committee and to amend the Council Constitution accordingly.
- (5) That Mole Valley District Council be represented by the Leader in the proposed new local authority governance arrangements for the C2C Local Enterprise Partnership and that the

Leader agree which substitute Members he wishes to nominate.

- (6) To note staff resource/capacity implications of the ongoing work with the LEP and GDI , which will be delivered flexibly within the current resources.
- (7) That the enhanced collaboration between District and Borough Councils and Surrey County Council (SCC) which will include potential areas for joint working to secure additional benefits across the whole of Surrey be noted.
- (8) That an all member workshop be held on economic growth and the Local Enterprise Partnerships.

73. Leader Appointment to the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership and Community Safety Board [KEY DECISION]

The Executive considered a report on the establishment of the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership which aimed to make cross-border working between Mole Valley and Tandridge District Councils and Reigate and Banstead Borough Council more effective and to ensure the sustainable delivery of community safety objectives into the future.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee reported that the Committee had been supportive of the recommendations in the report, but had stressed the importance of communication to ensure that Members were aware of the work being done by the Partnership.

The Leader advised that the minutes of the Community Safety Partnership and Community Safety Board would be published on the Members' Intranet (MOSS) and he undertook to ensure that Members were advised of the Partnership's activities.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the establishment of the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership constituted and outlined in accordance with the Terms of Reference and supporting document set out in Appendices A and B to the report submitted be supported.
- (2) That Mole Valley District Council be represented by the Leader at the proposed new East Surrey Community Safety Partnership and associated Community Safety Board and that the Leader agree which substitute Members he wishes to nominate.
- (3) That the draft Terms of Reference for the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership be noted and the Corporate Head for Planning and Partnerships be authorised to approve any amended Terms of Reference.

74. New Taxi Tariff for 2014/15

The Chairman of the Hackney Carriage Consultative Group was invited to present a report which proposed a new taxi tariff for 2014/15. He confirmed that the increase being sought was 3.8% and that in accordance with the Department of Transport 'Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance', the Mole Valley tariff was transparent and easy to understand.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that there were differing views amongst Committee members with some questioning the proposed increase in light of falling levels of inflation and fuel prices, whilst others were of the view that the taxi operators knew the market.

The Executive considered the options set out in the report submitted and the comments of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That the new tariff set out in paragraph 3.0 of the report submitted be approved.

75. Street Naming and Numbering

The Executive considered a report which proposed the introduction of charges for the naming and

numbering of new properties to better ensure the authority covered its costs for the provision of the service.

The Executive noted that, with regard to new street names, a register of suggestions was kept by the Authority which was shared with developers and local Members.

RESOLVED: That the introduction of charges for naming and numbering new properties with effect from 1st April 2014 as detailed in the report submitted be approved.

76. Emergency Accommodation 33 and 34 Edenside, Bookham, Surrey

The Executive considered a report which sought approval for capital expenditure to convert the Council's asset at 33 and 34 Edenside from a commercial unit with residential accommodation to two x two bedroom flats for use as emergency accommodation. The initiative provided good value for money compared to the acquisition of property on the open market and also made best use of the Council's asset.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee reported that the Committee had been supportive of the proposal.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That capital expenditure of £150,000 from the budget approved by the Executive on 25th June 2013 to acquire emergency accommodation units be approved to convert the Council's asset at 33 and 34 Edenside from a commercial unit with residential accommodation to two emergency accommodation two bedroom flats.
- (2) That 33 and 34 Edenside be transferred from the Communities and Assets portfolio to the Customer Services and Wellbeing portfolio.

77. Planning Peer Review Working Group Update

The Portfolio Holder for Planning updated the Executive on the progress of the Planning Peer Review Working Group, following its establishment by the Executive in October 2013. A paper giving background information was circulated at the meeting. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Working Group had drawn up an action plan based on the 15 recommendations of the Planning Peer Review and had added a further five recommendations on issues which had been raised by the Peer Review team but had not been included in their final recommendations. The Working Group had noted that work was already progressing through other means on a number of these recommendations and had, therefore, agreed to consider eight recommendations in detail:

R6 – Terms of Reference of the Local Plan Working Group – a report would be considered at the next meeting of the Working Group;

R9 – Development Management – this involved a cultural shift and more work was being undertaken;

R10 – Performance Measures – this was still to be considered by the Working Group;

R11 – size and membership of the Development Control Committee – visits had been made to planning committee meetings in five other local authorities and an initial discussion on feedback had been held. Good practice had been identified, particularly at two of the authorities and it had been proposed Members should hold further visits to these committees;

R12 – the introduction of formal Development Control Committee site visits – the Working Group had agreed that organized visits should be held where necessary, with a date prior to each committee meeting being reserved. This could be in place for the new Municipal Year;

R13 – possible changes to the Scheme of Delegation – some changes had already been considered. In light of the findings from committee visits, this would be revisited before any recommendations were made;

S2 – Member involvement at pre-application stage – more work would be done on this; and

S5 – Committee procedure – these were largely custom and practice issues which would not require a recommendation but were changes which could be introduced by the Chairman.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Working Group's final report and recommendations were likely to be submitted to the Executive in the Autumn.

78. Final Report from the Waste Management Scrutiny Panel

The Executive considered the final report of the Waste Management Scrutiny Panel which had been endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee. The report recommended new waste and recycling targets and a Communications Plan for 2014/15.

Councillor Caroline Salmon, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel introduced the report and outlined the work undertaken by the Panel and their final recommendations. She noted that education and communication were key to increasing recycling rates.

The Executive welcomed the report and recommendations of the Waste Management Scrutiny Panel and noted the value of such Panels.

RESOLVED: That the new waste and recycling targets recommended by the Scrutiny Committee and detailed in the report submitted be approved and the Communications Plan for 2014/15 be endorsed.

79. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: That members of the Press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act; namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

80. Grounds Maintenance, Arboricultural Services and Highways Verge Maintenance Contract [KEY DECISION]

Having approved the procurement process and timetable to deliver a contract for the Grounds Maintenance and Arboricultural Services on 29th October 2013, the Executive considered a report detailing the service specifications for the contracts and an update with regard to the Surrey County Council Highways Verge Cutting Contract.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that the Committee had welcomed the devolution of highways verge maintenance from the County Council to Mole Valley District Council and hoped that this would result in an improved service. The development and management of this contract would be monitored by the Highways Verge Maintenance Working Group.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Contract Specifications set out in Appendix A to the report submitted be approved.
- (2) That the contracts be awarded for a period of seven years, with the flexibility to extend by a further three years and four years, subject to Council approval and satisfactory performance of the service provider's obligations under the contract.
- (3) That the contract award criteria should be 70% price and 30% quality.