

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 7 October 2021

Present:

Cllr A Azad (Chairman)
Cllr S Ashall (Vice-Chair)

Cllr K M Davis Cllr C S Kemp
Cllr G W Elson

Also Present: Councillors A-M Barker, A J Boote, M A Bridgeman, K Howard and I Johnson.

Absent: Councillor D Harlow.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 9 September 2021 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Harlow.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor A Azad declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor K M Davis declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

The interest of Councillor D Harlow was referred to in the agenda but it should be noted that Councillor Harlow sent apologies to the meeting.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor C S Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor I Johnson declared an interest in minute item 6 – Woking Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) in light of reference within the report to Woking Football Club. Councillor Johnson's interest arose from his wife's position as Chairman of Woking Football Club. The interest was such that Councillor Johnson left the Chamber during the determination of the item.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that Mrs Fisher could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Joanne McIntosh, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that Mrs McIntosh could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Planning, Giorgio Framalico, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that Mr Framalico could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Neighbourhood Services, Geoff McManus, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that Mr McManus could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Housing, Louise Strongitharm, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The interests were such that Mrs Strongitharm could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning Woking Football Club and/or the GolDev Woking Limited development. The interest arose from her husband having a small shareholding in Woking Football Club. The interest was such that Mrs Clarke could advise the Executive on those items.

5. QUESTIONS

No written questions had been submitted under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules.

6. WOKING SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD) – THE INSPECTOR'S FINAL REPORT EXE21-147

Councillor Elson, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy, introduced a report which recommended to Council to accept the Inspector's Main Modifications and the Council's Additional Modifications and adopt the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Proposals Map. Councillor Elson explained that the Council had made a

commitment in the Core Strategy to prepare the Site Allocations DPD to identify specific sites to enable the delivery of the Core Strategy, including a commitment to release Green Belt land between 2022 and 2027 to provide at least 550 new homes.

The Portfolio Holder drew attention to the community engagement and consultation which had been undertaken to inform the preparation of the DPD. A typo was highlighted in paragraph 1.3 of the report, namely that the Examination Hearings had taken place between 2 December and 11 December 2019, and not 2020.

The Executive was advised that the Local Development Framework (LDF) Working Group had considered the Inspector's Final Report at its meeting on 22 September 2021. An amendment suggested by the LDF Working Group had been incorporated into recommend (i) of the Executive report and the Group was supportive of the recommendations.

The Executive was informed that the Inspector had concluded that subject to his Main Modifications, the Site Allocations DPD was sound, legally compliant and its preparation had met the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate. Councillor Elson stated that the Inspector's report was binding. The Executive noted that the Council could not adopt the Site Allocations DPD without the Inspector's recommended Main Modifications. The Council, at its meeting on 14 October 2021, would therefore have a binary choice to adopt the Inspector's recommendations or not to adopt the DPD.

Following a question regarding whether all Green Belt in the Borough could be under threat if the Site Allocations DPD was not adopted, the Executive was informed that there was the likely risk that any Green Belt land that was not designated or protected by policy would be under threat from development if an applicant could demonstrate that the Council had not identified sufficient land to enable the delivery of development required by the Core Strategy.

The Executive was advised that it was not possible for the Council to amend the DPD, apart from minor editorial changes, as the Inspector's recommendations were binding. As previously stated, the Council could not adopt the Site Allocations DPD without the Inspector's Main Modifications.

The Prime Minister's recent Party Conference speech, which referred to the Green Belt, was highlighted and the Executive was advised that Officers were aware of the contents of the speech and were of the opinion that there was nothing significant or new to cause the Council not to accept the Inspector's recommendations or adopt the DPD.

The Executive was supportive of the recommendations and thanked the Planning Policy Team for their hard work on preparing the Site Allocations DPD.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) the Local Development Framework (LDF) Working Group accepts that the Inspector's Final Report is binding and that the Council has a binary choice to adopt the Inspector's recommendations in full or not to adopt the DPD. Although in the main the DPD presents a sustainable way forward for the development of the borough taking into account housing requirements, elements of the Inspector's Final Report are not what some Councillors and local residents would want. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that the failure to timely adopt the recommendations would result in a worse outcome for

the borough as a whole. Taking into account the above and national planning policy, the Working Group recommends that the Inspector's Final Report and the Main Modifications document be accepted by the Council in full;

- (ii) subject to the Main Modifications recommended by the Inspector and the Council's Additional Modifications, the Woking Site Allocations Development Plan Document and the Proposals Map be adopted in full for the purposes of development management and all other planning decisions;
- (iii) the entire provisions of the Woking Site Allocations DPD (draft is in Appendix 4 to the report) and the Proposals Map (Appendix 3 to the report) should be given full weight for the purposes of development management and all other planning decisions;
- (iv) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make sure that the Inspector's Main Modifications and the Council's Additional Modifications are fully incorporated into the Site Allocations DPD. A draft of the DPD is in Appendix 4 to the report;
- (v) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to oversee the preparation and publication of the post adoption Sustainability Appraisal Statement; and
- (vi) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to ensure that the adoption process as set out in Section 8 (next stages) of the report is strictly followed.

Reason: To ensure the adoption of the Site Allocations DPD to provide the necessary framework for the sustainable distribution of development across the borough.

7. UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) EXE21-064

Councillor Ashall, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, introduced a report which provided an update on the financial position of the Council for 2022/23 to 2024/25 following the earlier report to the Executive at its meeting on 15 July 2021. It was noted that the draft budget proposals would be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 18 November 2021. Councillor Ashall explained that there remained uncertainty as the country emerged from the impact of the Covid pandemic. The significant loss of income from car parking and commercial rents in 2020/21 and the first quarter of 2021/22 was highlighted. The Executive was informed that it was not possible to propose a balanced Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position without the use of reserves. Due to work on the Fit for the Future programme and MTFS over the last three months, the report forecasted a reduction in the use of reserves of some £10m. It was noted that since the

July Executive, the scale of the savings target had increased by £0.85m to £6.85m by 2025.

The Executive noted the work taking place on the Fit for the Future programme which was a cultural and extensive programme of change, as well as the Digital Transformation programme. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Azad, advised that both programmes were part of a recalibration of the Council towards greater engagement in a more open and transparent culture which listened to the needs of residents. Regarding Digital First, the Leader confirmed that personal interaction would be maintained for those that were not able to engage through digital means. The Leader was pleased to announce a series of community roadshow events to be delivered through November 2021 to obtain community feedback from residents regarding the priorities for the Council and communities. It was intended to hold a Member Briefing on the Fit for the Future programme in November 2021.

Following a question regarding the use of reserves, the Executive was advised that reserves had a variety uses, most importantly to provide resilience against unforeseen events such as the Covid pandemic, and also for strategic planned investments that supported the development of the Council's business and transformational change.

Regarding the Masterplan consultation, it was noted that the Council was leading on the consultation and had commissioned some external resource to provide additional capacity and expertise.

Following a question on the results of the 2021 Employee Survey on page 800 of the Agenda Pack, the Executive was informed that an action plan had been developed in response to the key areas of feedback from the Survey.

The Director of Finance confirmed that the payment to the Council of £2.8m received from High Speed 2 (HS2) funding was for long term maintenance commitment of a site at Brookwood Cemetery.

RESOLVED That the following be noted:

- a) update to the funding and economic outlook;
- b) progress on the Medium Term Financial Strategy following work over the last 3 months;
- c) progress on the Fit for the Future Programme;
- d) progress on Community Engagement and proposals for a series of community roadshow events;

And That:

- e) the Council joins the Surrey Business Rates Pool for 2022/23 if offered the opportunity.

Reason: To update Members on the issues which need to be taken into account in the priority and budget setting process for 2022/23 – 2024/25 and beyond.

8. HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND – UPDATE EXE21-148

The Executive received a report which provided an update on the work to date in relation to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) project and identified a number of key issues and actions in relation to the delivery of the project. Councillor Kemp, Portfolio Holder, drew attention to a clerical error in the report which named Councillor Johnson incorrectly as Shadow Portfolio Holder. It was noted that the Shadow Portfolio Holder was Councillor Barker.

Councillor Kemp explained the three main areas which required addressing before the complex project could move forward. Taking into account those areas and associated work streams, Councillor Kemp informed the Executive that a revised timetable was proposed for the project with a revised start date to the commencement of physical works until later in 2022/23. Members were advised that updates on the project would be published on the Council's website.

Regarding the need to submit two planning applications for a temporary and permanent access to the aggregates site, the Executive was advised that it was hoped for the applications to be submitted at the end of October 2021.

Following a question concerning road closures during the project, the Executive heard that plans were currently being worked up and would be scrutinised by Officers. A road diversion mitigation strategy would be created which would include options to mitigate against impacts of diversions and minimise disruption.

Members discussed the potential risk a delay in starting work on the project could have for Homes England delivery requirements. The Portfolio Holder advised that Officers had discussed the potential delay with Homes England and would continue conversations with both Homes England and Network Rail. The Executive was informed that Network Rail was fully engaged on the project and was an active and key partner. Network Rail was aware that the Victoria Arch bridge was reaching the end of its life expectancy, and Network Rail was also aware that improvements to the rail line were dependant on the capacity at Woking station.

Following a question regarding the Council's commitment to consult on the HIF housing numbers as part of the Town Centre Masterplan, it was noted that the study would be undertaken by specialist consultants and was expected to take about three months. The Executive heard that the core objective of the study was to check that the proposed housing mix to be delivered as part of the HIF project was aligned with current market trends.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the content of the report, including the progress of the project to date, next actions and project dependencies, be noted; and
- (ii) the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Executive Member, be delegated to reach agreement with Homes England and Network Rail on the proposed revised timetable for the project noting a revised start date to the commencement of physical works until later in 2022/23.

Reason: To update the Executive on the project, key matters and rescheduled timetable.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY PROTOCOL ANNUAL REPORT EXE21-075

Following the adoption of the Confidentiality Protocol at Council on 15 October 2020, the Executive received the first annual report on the Protocol. Following a question regarding the timeframe for releasing Part II papers into the public domain, the Executive was informed that the Monitoring Officer would review the Part II designation of documents held in the register on an annual basis. The outcome of the Monitoring Officer's review would be recorded in the register.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

Reason: To provide an annual report to the Executive.

10. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Executive considered the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book) August 2021. Following a question on page 17 of the Green Book concerning Leisure income and the impact of technical and staffing problems, the Portfolio Holder reported that there had been some technical issues at the Pool in the Park which had resulted in pool closures. Staff shortages had also caused partial closures due to staff isolating due to Covid, general sickness and vacant positions. However despite those problems, the Executive was advised that leisure was recovering and the Portfolio Holder was pleased to report 60 new memberships at the Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater.

Following a question on page 18 of the Green Book regarding Public Liability Claims, the Executive heard that the claims mainly related to tree and root damage.

Regarding strategic property investments, it was noted that the Council had implemented a property review strategy for properties with vacant accommodation to ensure those properties met the current market requirements. Where necessary, the Council would consider alterations to improve their market offer, such as investment in energy efficiency improvements.

The possibility of Midas House being put forward to house the new Great British Railways HQ was discussed. It was noted that the Council would review the requirements for the new Great British Railways HQ once released by the Department of Transport. Should Midas House or any other property owned by the Council meet those requirements an expression of interest would be submitted.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information, August 2021, be received.

Reason: To manage the performance of the Council.

<p>This document was published on Friday 8 October 2021 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday 18 October 2021, subject to call-in.</p>

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.08 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____