

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING

held on 2 December 2021

Present:

Cllr L S Lyons (The Mayor)
Cllr S Hussain (The Deputy Mayor)

Cllr M Ali	Cllr I Johnson
Cllr S Ashall	Cllr C S Kemp
Cllr A Azad	Cllr A Kirby
Cllr T Aziz	Cllr R N Leach
Cllr A-M Barker	Cllr N Martin
Cllr A J Boote	Cllr R Mohammed
Cllr M A Bridgeman	Cllr L M N Morales
Cllr J Brown	Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr K M Davis	Cllr M I Raja
Cllr S Dorsett	Cllr C Rana
Cllr G W Elson	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr W P Forster	Cllr J R Sanderson
Cllr K Howard	Cllr M A Whitehand
Cllr D E Hughes	

Absent: Councillor D Harlow

1. MINUTES.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 14 October 2021 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Harlow, Joanne McIntosh (Director of Legal and Democratic Services) and Claire Storey (Independent Co-opted Member).

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

The Mayor reported on recent events he had attended, including the opening of the Eastwood Centre, the Woking Music Festival and the New Beginnings art exhibition at the Light Box.

The Remembrance Day Service had been attended by many community groups and residents and had been a very moving event. The Service had been followed by a Veterans' Day event at Brookwood Military Cemetery.

Later in the month the Mayor had attended a Service of Remembrance at the Muslim Peace Garden for all those who had died as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Statement by the Leader of the Council – Victoria Square Development.

The Mayor, before moving to Agenda Item 4, invited the Leader of the Council to make a statement.

The Leader referred to the closure of Victoria Way on 20 October 2021 following the dislodgement of three exterior cladding panels from the hotel development. The Leader apologised for the inconvenience caused to local businesses and residents. The Contractor – Sir Robert McAlpine (SRM) – had since been working with its cladding sub-contractor (Prater) to understand why the cladding had failed and to identify what remedial action was needed in the short and long term.

The Leader advised the Council of the update recently provided to the Victoria Square Oversight Panel. The road continued to be closed to ensure public safety and SRM was working with the Council's Building Control Manager and the Health & Safety Executive. SRM was also working with Woking Borough Council, Surrey County Council and the Highways Agency to ensure effective traffic management arrangements were put in place.

In the short term Prater had started to install additional fixings to over 3,000 panels. The work would continue into January 2022, with the road remaining closed until the work had been completed. SRM was responsible for rectifying the issue under the terms of the design and build contract, and it was noted that the other elements of the Victoria Square development were not directly affected. Occupation of the residential units would start from March 2022 and the retail centre was due to open in the Spring.

4. URGENT BUSINESS.

No items of Urgent Business were considered.

5. 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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. 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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mrs Fisher could advise the Council 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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mr Framalico could advise the Council 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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mr McManus could advise the Council 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 companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mrs Strongitharm could advise the Council on those items.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Hughes declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7B – Notice of Motion – Cllr W Forster – Location of Woking's Rail Aggregates Yard – arising from the proximity of a family member's property to the site. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

6. QUESTIONS.

Copies of questions submitted under Standing Order 8.1 together with draft replies were laid upon the table. The replies were confirmed by Members of the Executive, supplementary questions were asked and replies given.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES WBC21-038

Councillor L Morales moved and Councillor T Aziz seconded the reception and adoption of the report and recommendations from the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 19 October 2021.

Councillor A Azad moved and Councillor S Ashall seconded the reception and adoption of the report and recommendations from the meeting of the Executive held on 18 November 2021.

Councillor D Hughes moved and Councillor M Whitehand seconded the reception and adoption of the report and recommendations from the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 25 November 2021.

7a Scheme of Delegations.

The Council considered the recommendations from the Planning Committee in respect of applications for approval of details reserved by condition submitted by Woking Borough

Council and its companies/entities. At the present time, all such applications had to be reported to the Committee for determination. However, the volume of applications was such that it was now proposed that authority for the determination of such applications should be delegated to the Development Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee.

Details of the applications submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities would be circulated to all Members on a regular basis.

RESOLVED

- That (i) applications for approval of details reserved by condition submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities be delegated to the Development Manager for determination in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee (or in their absence, the Vice-Chairman); and
- (ii) the Development Manager arrange for a list of conditions applications submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities to be circulated to all Members on a regular basis.

7b Notice of Motion - Cllr W Forster - Location of Woking's Rail Aggregates Yard EXE21-151

Councillor Kemp introduced the recommendation of the Executive to support the notice motion submitted by Councillor Forster in respect of the rail aggregates yard. Councillor Forster welcomed the support of the Executive, noting that the proposal called for the Council to endeavour to achieve the relocation of the yard as the matter was not under the control of the Council. The motion stated that:

“The Victoria Arch widening scheme has brought into focus that Woking's rail aggregates yard is in a completely unsuitable location.

The Council agrees to use its best endeavours to encourage Network Rail, Surrey County Council and other partners to move the aggregates yard to a more appropriate and non-residential location.”

Councillor Azad moved and Councillor Ashall seconded the following amendment to the motion, with additional wording highlighted in italics:

“The Victoria Arch widening scheme has brought into focus that Woking's rail aggregates yard is in a completely unsuitable location.

The Council agrees to use its best endeavours to encourage Network Rail, Surrey County Council and other partners to move the aggregates yard to a more appropriate and non-residential location.

In addition, the Leader of the Council will write to the Leader of Surrey County Council to advocate moving the goods yard. The Council will request that the Member of Parliament does so too.

The Council understands that this issue will be one requiring constant and ongoing attention. It therefore resolves to set up a Aggregates Site Working Group comprising the three ward members, SCC division member and portfolio holder for infrastructure.

The function of the working group will be to

- a) engage with key stakeholders with the aim of moving aggregates activity out of the town centre and*
- b) to keep oversight of what best endeavours the Council can employ to pursue this objective.*

It will report to the Council not less than once each year on its activity and progress.”

The Members of the Council were invited to debate the amendment, noting the additional provisions proposed. The amendment was broadly welcomed and was agreed nem con.

RESOLVED

That the motion, as amended and as set out below, be supported.

“The Victoria Arch widening scheme has brought into focus that Woking's rail aggregates yard is in a completely unsuitable location.

The Council agrees to use its best endeavours to encourage Network Rail, Surrey County Council and other partners to move the aggregates yard to a more appropriate and non-residential location.

In addition, the Leader of the Council will write to the Leader of Surrey County Council to advocate moving the goods yard. The Council will request that the Member of Parliament does so too.

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- a) engage with key stakeholders with the aim of moving aggregates activity out of the town centre and
- b) to keep oversight of what best endeavours the Council can employ to pursue this objective.

It will report to the Council not less than once each year on its activity and progress.”

7c Woking Borough Council Digital Strategy 2022-2025 EXE21-033

Councillor Davis introduced the recommendation of the Executive for the adoption of the Digital Strategy for 2022 – 2025. The Strategy set out the Council's vision on how it would use technology to continue to provide high quality, high priority and highly valued services

for residents and local businesses. The Strategy would also ensure digital technologies enabled Elected Members and Staff to work more productively and efficiently.

RESOLVED

That the Digital Strategy 2022-2025, as attached to the report of the Executive, be approved.

7d Thameswey Business Plans (to include company consolidation plan) EXE21-063

The Council had before it the recommendations of the Executive in respect of the Thameswey Business Plans for 2020-23. The intention was that the Thameswey Group would continue to work to the 2020 plans in 2022 ahead of a full review for 2023 following the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

During the debate, it became apparent that a number of Councillors felt removed from the work of the Thameswey Group of Companies and their objectives. In view of this, Councillor Barker moved and Councillor Kirby seconded an amendment to the recommendations, namely the addition of a new recommendation (ii) to be inserted between the existing recommendations (i) and (ii). The new recommendation would read:

“(ii) Council establish a review to assess how ThamesWey is delivering against the original objectives for each company, with the results used to inform the future business plan;”

The Members discussed the proposed amendment and welcomed the suggestion to undertake a review of the objectives of the Thameswey Group of Companies, noting that several of the arms-length Companies had been established for over twenty years.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the Thameswey Group continue to operate the Business Plans for 2020-2023;
- (ii) Council establish a review to assess how ThamesWey is delivering against the original objectives for each company, with the results used to inform the future business plan;
- (iii) the Poole Road land acquired by the Council in 2017/18, and on which the Energy Station has been constructed, be sold to Thameswey Energy Ltd and an increase to the Poole Road Loan facility of £1.3m on the same terms be agreed to enable this sale;
- (iv) loans advanced to the Thameswey Group for less than 10 years, be allowed to be repaid and converted to long term loans of up to 50 years where there is an appropriate existing long term facility available, including consolidating to a single loan for simplification; and
- (v) loans originally advanced to Thameswey Developments Ltd be allowed to transfer to Thameswey Housing Ltd or Thameswey Energy Ltd on the same terms as the original advance.

7e Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) EXE21-060

Councillor Ashall introduced the recommendations of the Executive proposing the implementation of the Public Spaces Protection Order for the town centre. The Order had been drawn up in light of a request received from partners following the identification of anti-social behaviour issues in Woking town centre. The Order would focus on anti-social behaviour linked to the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs and was one of a number of measures being used to address the identified problems.

During the discussion on the proposals, Councillor Aziz expressed a number of concerns around the possibility of the Order resulting in the anti-social behaviour being pushed out of the town centre and into surrounding areas. In view of his concerns, Councillor Aziz indicated that he would not support the recommendations and asked for his vote against the establishment of a Public Spaces Protection Order to be recorded.

The other Members of the Council welcomed the proposals and, whilst noting the views of Councillor Aziz and his decision to vote against the measures, agreed the recommendations subject to an amendment in recommendation (v), replacing the reference to paragraph 5.6 of the report to reference to paragraph 6.6.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the consultation be noted;
- (ii) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to implement the PSPO for the town centre with the amended map to the report in light of the overwhelming support in the consultation for its introduction;
 - (iii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to allow minor amendments to the order throughout the duration of the order;
 - (iv) regular reviews will be carried out via the Joint Action Group (JAG) meetings and quarterly updates will be circulated to the Community Safety Task Group; and
 - (v) delegated authority be given to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue fixed penalty notices at the level set at paragraph 6.6 in the report and to amend in line with any legislation changes.

7f Review of Fees and Charges 2022-23 EXE21-068

The recommendations of the Executive in respect of the fees and charges for the coming year were introduced by Councillor Ashall, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy. Councillor Ashall highlighted the key areas where changes to the existing fees and charges were proposed. These included the increase in the charge for the community meals service, the removal of the British Sign Language Interpreting charge and the changes to the leisure charges, previously ratified by the Leisure Partnership Board. The Council was urged to take into account the financial position of the Authority when considering the proposals.

Councillor Azad referred to the recommendation to increase the charges for the meals service by 15% and the concerns that had been raised over the proposal. In view of this, Councillor Azad moved and Councillor Ashall seconded an amendment which would have the effect of changing the increase from 15% to 10%.

Whilst the amendment was welcomed, concerns remained over the proposed increase to the meals service. Additional concerns were raised over the proposed parking charges, particularly in relation to the timing of the increases which coincided with the anticipated re-opening of Victoria Way. Attention was further drawn to a reference in Appendix 2 to the report which indicated that the cost of residential parking permits at Heathside Crescent Car Park for those living in the Woking CPZ would increase from £260 to £780. It was noted that the proposed increase had not been referred to within the main report.

Noting the concerns around the increase in the town centre residential parking permits, Councillor Ashall moved and Councillor Azad seconded an amendment to the recommendations to ensure existing permit holders were not disadvantaged by the new charges. The new charges would only apply to new applicants. The amendment proposed stated that:

“any historic agreements, currently in place for Woking Town Centre resident permits at £260 per annum be honoured in perpetuity as long as the existing permit holder continues to reside within the Town Centre boundary, the new charges apply to new applications for parking permits.”

Councillor Ashall responded to the main points raised during the debate before the Mayor invited Members to move to the vote. In view of the debate and in accordance with Standing Order 10.8 the names of Members voting for and against the recommendations, as amended, were recorded.

In favour: Councillors S Ashall, A Azad, J Brown, K Davis, S Dorsett, G Elson, S Hussain, C Kemp, N Martin, R Mohammed, C Rana and Whitehand.

Total in favour: 12

Against: Councillors M Ali, T Aziz, A Boote, M Bridgeman, D Hughes and M I Raja.

Total against: 6

Present not voting: The Mayor, Councillor Lyons, and Councillors A-M Barker, W Forster, K Howard, I Johnson, A Kirby, R Leach, L Morales, E Nicholson, D Roberts and J Sanderson.

Total present not voting: 11

The recommendations as amended were therefore carried by 12 votes in favour to 6 votes against.

RESOLVED

That (i) the discretionary fees and charges, as set out in Appendices 1 – 4 of the report, be approved;

- (ii) the increase in charges for the meals service be set at 10%; and
- (iii) any historic agreements, currently in place for Woking Town Centre resident permits at £260 per annum be honoured in perpetuity as long as the existing permit holder continues to reside within the Town Centre boundary, the new charges apply to new applications for parking permits.

7g Calendar of Meetings 2022-23 EXE21-076

The Council was invited to agree the calendar of meetings for the coming municipal year.

RESOLVED

That the Calendar of Meetings 2022/23 be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

7h Public Sector Audit Appointments STA21-021

The Council moved to the recommendations of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 25 November 2021. The Committee had considered a report on the procurement process for the appointment of external auditors for audits taking place from 2023/24 to 2027/28.

The Committee had recommended that the Council should opt into the sector-led appointment of external auditors by PSAA for five years from 1 April 2023. The recommendation was introduced by Councillor Hughes, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Council opts into the sector-led appointment of external auditors by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

8. RE-DESIGNATION OF BYFLEET NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM WBC21-037

The Council had before it a report on the Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum. The Forum had been designated on 13 February 2014 with the primary objective to prepare the Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan. The Forum was over 7 years old and had ceased to have effect in representing the community in preparing, reviewing or monitoring the delivery of the Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan. It therefore had no statutory status as a consultee on planning applications for development within the Neighbourhood Area.

In order to continue its work, the existing Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum had submitted a formal application to the Council to re-designate the Neighbourhood Forum for a further period of 5 years. The application did not seek to alter any part of the existing Neighbourhood Area and had been widely consulted upon. Twelve representations had been submitted by the end of the consultation period and a representation had been received after the consultation period. An analysis of the representations was set out in the report. Officers were satisfied that the proposed Neighbourhood Forum application met the requirements of Government legislation and should therefore be approved.

The report was welcomed by the Members, noting the amount of work the Forum had undertaken in submitting the application form.

RESOLVE That

- That (i) pursuant to Section 61F(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) the Council approves the re-designation of the Byfleet Residents' Neighbourhood Forum for a further period of 5 years for the purposes of supporting the future preparation of the Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan and to ensure the effective delivery of its requirements; and
- (ii) the effective date for the re-designation of the Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum should be the date of the Council's decision on the application, in this regard, 2 December 2021.

9. NOTICES OF MOTION.

Councillor M Whitehand

The following motion was moved by Councillor Whitehand and seconded by Councillor Hussain and referred to the Executive on 20 January 2022 in accordance with Standing Order 5.7.

"The Council will bring forward policies that ensure women feel safe when out and about in Woking's public places. One of which should be the designation of women only parking places in its car parks during the hours of darkness, especially those sited near staircases and entrances. Women's safety should feature greatly in its community safety programme and every endeavour be given in establishing what areas can be reviewed that would deliver such assurance."

Councillor E Nicholson

The following motion was moved by Councillor Nicholson and seconded by Councillor Barker and referred to the Executive on 20 January 2022 in accordance with Standing Order 5.7.

"That Woking Borough Council notes that violence against women is a serious, prevalent, and preventable issue in our society.

Male violence against women must be ended, once and for all. Simply agreeing with the principle is not enough.

As a responsible authority we have a moral obligation to stand against and work to end male violence against women.

MOTION

Council recognises the importance of White Ribbon and its contribution as part of a global campaign

taking action to stop male violence against women and resolves to become an accredited authority.

Council commits to making White Ribbon Day part of the civic calendar with ambassador-led activities involving staff, members and the public.

Council agrees to raise awareness of the White Ribbon Campaign through regular updates and features in internal and external communications and provide opportunity to highlight the work of the Women's Refuge and the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner.

Council will provide support to staff and members to take the pledge never to commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women and to become ambassadors and champions.

Council will work closely with local partnership agencies and organisations involved in tackling male violence against women to work towards making Woking a White Ribbon Borough.

Council commits to hosting annual awareness training for all members."

Councillor A-M Barker

The following motion was moved by Councillor A-M Barker and seconded by Councillor Sanderson and referred to the Executive on 20 January 2022 in accordance with Standing Order 5.7.

"Motion to update Goldsworth Park lake footpath lighting to LED system Council notes that

Taking exercise in the open air has become increasingly popular in a Covid world.

Reducing journeys by carbon emitting vehicles is good for the climate change agenda.

Goldsworth Park lake path provides both a pleasant and enjoyable environment for exercise and a walking route for journeys across and around Goldsworth Park.

Well lit paths encourage use of walking routes, particularly in winter months.

Many people will not use paths with significant dark spots.

There have been recent failures of lights on the Goldsworth lake path and SERCO are struggling to find parts to fix the lights.

Unlike most lighting in the borough the lights around Goldsworth Park lake are the responsibility of Woking Council.

Surrey County Council is converting all of its lighting stock to more environmentally friendly LED lights, which last longer and have fewer problems.

Council calls for:

A review of options to secure replacement LED lighting for Goldsworth Park lake footpath, to include:

Investigating whether Surrey would take on the responsibility for these lights as there may be economies of scale to upgrade these lights alongside work on their own lighting stock

Exploring funding options from environmental funders to update the lights.

Look for funding that may be available from crime and safety budgets, including those held by the Police and Crime Commissioner.”

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 9.55 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____