

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 16 June 2022

Present:

Cllr A-M Barker (Chairman)
Cllr W P Forster (Vice-Chair)

Cllr I Johnson	Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr R N Leach	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr L S Lyons	

Also Present: Councillors A Azad, T Aziz, K M Davis and C S Kemp.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 24 March 2022 and 23 May 2022 be approved and signed as true and correct records.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

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 I Johnson declared an interest in minute Item 9 – Review of Community Grants arising from his wife's employment by Citizens Advice Woking (CAW). 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 Strategic Director – Place, Giorgio Framalicco, 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 Framalicco could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director – Communities, 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.

5. QUESTIONS

No written questions had been submitted under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules. The Leader highlighted that the new administration welcomed questions from members of the public and explained the submission process. The deadline for written questions from members of the public was 12 noon, seven days before the Executive.

6. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR K DAVIS - HOUSING ALLOCATIONS EXE22-041

At its meeting on 31 March 2022, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor K M Davis

“It is vitally important that our residents directly benefit from new housing development in their local area. The Council already requires a 2-year local connection for applicants joining its Housing Register for affordable homes, as well as expecting any shared ownership homes secured through the Section 106 process to be first marketed to those living or working in the Borough.

However, the Council should consider going further in promoting a “Local First” approach by:

- Investigating any further flexibilities that could be incorporated into the Housing Allocations Policy to prioritise local residents;
- Exclusively marketing any new homes built and sold by Thameswey for a set period of time to residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area;
- Considering a local connection policy for any new homes delivered under the Government’s new “First Homes” tenure that prioritises residents living in that Ward or Neighbourhood Area before opening up to the Borough.”

Councillor Davis attended the meeting and spoke in support of the Motion. The Leader advised that the Executive was broadly supportive of the Motion. However the Executive did have some concerns in relation to some of the criteria suggested, such as by Ward or Neighbourhood area, as it was considered necessary to have regard to residents who had

moved away from an area temporarily. The Leader proposed an amendment to the Motion to read as follows:

“It is vitally important that our residents directly benefit from new housing development in their local area. The Council already requires a 2-year local connection for applicants joining its Housing Register for affordable homes, as well as expecting any shared ownership homes secured through the Section 106 process to be first marketed to those living or working in the Borough.

However, the Council should consider going further by asking officers to develop a scheme, in which, taking into account all other considerations of housing allocations, new homes are offered first to those with local connections, for a period of 3 months. These local connections should be flexibly defined by ward, neighbourhood area, a certain distance or a natural boundary.”

The Executive agreed the amended Motion, noting the need to take into account existing housing criteria.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the Motion, as amended by the Executive, be supported.

7. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR D ROBERTS - BENEFITS MANAGEMENT EXE22-042

At its meeting on 31 March 2022, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor D Roberts

“The council undertakes programmes of work to deliver benefits to the borough and controls are put in place to ensure the work is delivered on time, on budget and to scope. Whilst delivering to scope should result in the delivery of benefits, it may not always be the case. Complex projects spanning many years can require interim decisions to balance budgets, timescales, and scope because of issues arising throughout the life of the project.

This council is committed to both best practice and transparent project reporting including benefits tracking from the point at which it is considered for approval by members through to the conclusion and delivery of the project.

This council will therefore investigate how it will implement benefits management on all major projects as part of existing standard project controls such as risk and issues management.”

Councillor Roberts spoke in support of the Motion and drew attention to a suggested amendment to the wording of his Motion which recognised the Council's current benefits management practices and which proposed improvement to the practice to ensure that any changes to benefits were reported back to Members. The Executive was invited to recommend the revised wording to the Council. The revised wording of the Motion reads as follows:

“The council undertakes programmes of work to deliver benefits to the borough and controls are put in place to ensure the work is delivered on time, on budget and to scope. Whilst delivering to scope should result in the delivery of benefits, it may not always be the

case. Complex projects spanning many years can require interim decisions to balance budgets, timescales, and scope because of issues arising throughout the life of the project.

This council is committed to both best practice and transparent project reporting including benefits tracking from the point at which it is considered for approval by members through to the conclusion and delivery of the project.

This council will therefore investigate how it will improve its current benefits management practices to ensure that changes to benefits are tracked during the execution phase and reported to any council meeting in which project decisions are being made or project updates are being received by members. Also to report back, to full council, an analysis of any differences to the benefits captured at the time the project was approved against benefits realised at project closure.”

The Executive welcomed the Motion and noted the importance of benefits management. It was recognised that some projects were particularly complex, spanned many years, and had changed in scope since first agreed. Therefore the Executive was supportive of the need to track changes to project benefits. The Executive agreed to recommend the revised Motion to Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the Motion be supported.

8. SUPPLEMENTARY AND AMENDED PRIORITIES - WOKING FOR ALL STRATEGY EXE22-051

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Barker, introduced the report which sought approval of the supplementary and amended priorities to the Council's Woking for all Strategy 2022-27 following the change in administration. The Leader stated that the aim of updating the Strategy was to achieve gradual change through decisive and targeted actions, taking an approach that was affordable, responsible and sustainable. It was noted that the Strategy had been refreshed to build upon the new administration's key priorities of financial responsibility, a Masterplan for the Town Centre, and taking the Council carbon neutral.

The Executive supported the supplementary and amended priorities to the Woking for all Strategy. The planned work with partners to tackle the Cost of Living crisis, including holding a Cost of Living summit in the Autumn, was particularly welcomed.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the supplementary and amended priorities for 2022-23 to the Woking for all Corporate Strategy 2022-27, as attached to the report, be adopted.

Reason: To enable the Council to clearly articulate its strategic objectives and focus of work within the Council and beyond.

9. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GRANTS EXE22-046

Councillor Forster, Deputy Leader of the Council, introduced the report which recommended to Council a proposed new partnership between the Council and the Community Foundation for Surrey whereby the Community Foundation would administer community grants on behalf of the Council. Councillor Forster explained that the proposed new approach would enable community beneficiaries to apply for funding from a range of sources through one single expression of interest to the Community Foundation, creating a 'one stop shop'. It was noted that the Woking-based Community Foundation already administered the Woking Community Fund, as well as funds on behalf of Surrey County Council, Guildford Borough Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, and Spelthorne Borough Council. The administrative burden of the current grants process was raised, and it was highlighted that the new approach would allow Officer time to be used more productively by working directly with groups to advise and support.

Councillor Forster proposed an amendment to recommendation (ii) to include consultation with the Portfolio Holder. The Executive agreed the amendment to recommendation (ii).

Councillor Kemp, Shadow Portfolio Holder for Voluntary Sector, raised a number of questions regarding the proposal, including the decision making process, governance arrangements and Member oversight, and the proposed recipients of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which would provide secure funding. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council would continue to retain full control of the grants in setting the annual budget for the fund and agreeing the criteria as per the strategic priorities of the Council. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder and Senior Manager would sit on the decision-marking panel and an annual report would be received by Council. Regarding SLAs, the Executive heard that it was proposed that community groups considered essential by the Council, such as the York Road Project, would be offered an SLA in order to provide financial security. Discussions would be held with regular beneficiaries regarding the new approach.

Following a question, it was explained that it was proposed to combine the Council's community grant budget to the existing Woking Community Fund.

The Executive welcomed the proposed new approach to community grants, which included the opportunity for the Council to incentivise increased investment into the endowment of the Woking Community Fund by match-funding private sector donations.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the proposed new partnership between Woking Borough Council and the Community Foundation for Surrey be endorsed and take effect for grants in 2023/24; and**
- (ii) delegated authority to be given to the Strategic Director – Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to oversee the new partnership between Woking Borough Council and the Community Foundation for Surrey.**

Reason: To improve the process for administering community grants.

10. HOUSING DELIVERY TEST AND ACTION PLAN EXE22-040

The Executive received a report which set out the Government's 2021 Housing Delivery Test (HDT) and which sought approval to publish an Action Plan setting out how the planned Core Strategy housing requirement of 292 dwellings per year would be achieved by the Council in future years. Councillor Lyons, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy, explained that the Housing Delivery Test was an annual measurement of housing delivery against the planned housing requirement. It was noted that the Council would challenge the Government's calculation for Woking of 78%, however the requirement of the HDT to identify a 20% buffer of housing land supply would still apply but this can be met from existing housing allocations and commitments.

Councillor Azad asked about the reasons for under delivery of the Council's housing targets and the financial risks of not meeting the Council's statutory obligations. The Executive was informed that the main cause of the under delivery was the impact of the pandemic and the associated problems with the construction industry, as well as complications arising from development on previously developed land. Regarding financial risk, it was noted that there was no direct financial risk for failing the HDT. However, the Council could lose New Homes Bonus if it did not meet the housing requirement.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the Housing Delivery Test published by the Government on 14 January 2022 with Officers' response be noted; and
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director – Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to prepare and publish an Action Plan setting out how the Council would improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply of homes.

Reason: To ensure that Members of the Executive are informed about the Housing Delivery Test and the actions that the Council must take to address the failure to meet its planned housing requirement and to ensure that the Planning Committee is aware of the need to deliver new sustainable homes in accordance with the Local Plan.

11. UPDATE ON COMMUNITY PROVISION IN SHEERWATER EXE22-045

The Executive received a report which provided an update on the wider community developments and partnerships regarding health, wellbeing and community cohesion in Sheerwater. The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Forster, explained that the report provided an update on the Council's partnership with the North-West Surrey Alliance and development of the new Health and Community Campus building in Sheerwater. In addition, the report sought approval of funding of circa £1.85 million to deliver a new community hub through the refurbishment and extension of the St Michael's Church. It was noted that the new community hub would replace the existing Parkview Centre. The Executive heard that the new community hub would include the Maybury and Sheerwater Community Trust (MASCOT) which would be able to continue to support vulnerable residents within a shared, accessible community facility.

The Leader thanked RHS Wisley for scheduling the community hub development as its annual project for 2023/24.

The Executive welcomed the report, and the ongoing work with partners and communities in Sheerwater, which aimed to improve health outcomes for residents.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the positive progress being made in the community developments and partnerships in Sheerwater be noted;
- (ii) a new community hub in Sheerwater be supported through the refurbishment and extension of the St. Michael's Church;
- (iii) previously agreed funding of circa £1.85 million be confirmed to deliver the community hub as part of the overall Sheerwater Regeneration Project; and
- (iv) delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director – Communities, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to oversee the plans for the community hub and enter into a community-use agreement for the new Community Hub.

Reason: To provide for community activities and support needs, building on what already exists and supporting what is working well in the community.

12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 EXE22-037

The Executive received a report on Treasury Management performance for 2021-22 in accordance with the Council's policy on Treasury Management. Attention was drawn to the revised Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice, the reporting of which was planned in February 2023. In response to whether adoption of the revised CIPFA Code could be brought forward, the Portfolio Holder advised that Officers were looking at adopting a broader range of prudential indicators, including accelerating the changes to the CIPFA Code, whilst balancing the additional work that additional disclosures would generate. The Portfolio Holder would revisit with Officers in the autumn.

RESOLVED

That the annual report on Treasury Management performance for 2021/22 be received, and the compliance with the Council's approved arrangements be noted.

Reason: To receive the annual report on Treasury Management performance for 2021/22 in accordance with the Council's policy on Treasury Management.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY ANNUAL REPORT EXE22-036

The Executive received the annual report on Risk Management and Business Continuity. It was noted that risk management training would be provided to Councillors and Senior Officers. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be discussing corporate strategic risks in the autumn.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that Risk Management arrangements will continue to be reviewed and updated in-line with agreed monitoring arrangements.

Reason: The continuous development of Risk Management and Business Continuity is essential to ensure effective management and planning within the Council.

14. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Executive considered the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book) February 2022. The Leader apologised for the late publication of the Green Book and highlighted the current pressures on the Finance team. The Executive noted that the format of the Green Book was being updated with Councillor input.

The good progress made on affordable homes delivered and empty homes brought back into use was highlighted. Attention was drawn to the slight reduction in invoices paid on time, and Officers agreed to investigate the causes and make sure any issues were addressed.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information, February 2022, be received.

Reason: To manage the performance of the Council.

15. MONITORING REPORTS - PROJECTS EXE22-026

The Executive received a report which provided an update on progress on developments to the Council's project management methodology, assurance, processes and reporting. The report included the status of projects as at the end of March 2022. The Leader welcomed that the Playground Improvements project was still scheduled to complete by the end of the current Municipal Year, and also that the Goldsworth Park Cycle Park Upgrade project had completed and was a well-used facility.

Following a question regarding the overspend in relation to the Dukes Plaza project, the Executive was informed that the additional spend was due to the completion of the Plaza by tying in the hard and soft landscaping with the adjacent buildings.

The Executive requested that future project monitoring reports included a column setting out the original costs planned.

RESOLVED

That (i) the report be received; and

(ii) the project changes recorded in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

Reason: To monitor progress on development to the Council's project management approach.

This document was published on Friday 17 June 2022 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday 27 June 2022, subject to call-in.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.15 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____