

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 12 October 2017

Present:

Cllr D J Bittleston (Chairman)
Cllr C S Kemp (Vice-Chair)

Cllr A C L Bowes Cllr S Hussain
Cllr Mrs B A Hunwicks Cllr M Pengelly

Also Present: Councillors J E Bond, W P Forster, K Howard, D E Hughes and I Johnson.

Apologies: Councillors A Azad.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 14 September 2017 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, the Leader of the Council, Councillor D J Bittleston, Mrs B A Hunwicks and C S Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item 3 – The Transformation Agenda – Mandatory Training Programme for Elected Members, minute item 6 - Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 7 – Monitoring Reports - Projects arising from their positions as Directors of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with Officer Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, and Strategic Director, Sue Barham, declared an interest in minute item 3 – The Transformation Agenda – Mandatory Training Programme for Elected Members, minute item 6 - Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 7 – Monitoring Reports - Projects arising from their positions as Directors of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interests were such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, declared an interest in minute item 6 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 7 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from his position as a Director of Victoria Square Woking Limited. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, would declare an interest in any item in which Brookwood Cemetery was referred to arising

from his position as a Director of Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Park Limited and Brookwood Cemetery Limited.

In accordance with Officer Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, and the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, would declare an interest in any item in which Export House was referred to arising from their positions as Directors of Export House Limited.

3. THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA - MANDATORY TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Councillor C S Kemp, Lead Member for Elected Member Development, introduced the report which recommended to Council the introduction of mandatory training for Elected Members as part of the Council's Learning and Development Programme for Councillors from May 2018 onwards. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had supported the development of a mandatory training programme at its meeting in February 2017. Members discussed the proposed topics for the mandatory programme and it was commented that some topics could be incorporated in order to reduce the time burden for Members and simplify the programme. Councillor Kemp agreed to discuss the suggestion with Officers.

Councillor I Johnson, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, welcomed the proposed Scrutiny Training and asked for Officers to explore whether such training could be incorporated into the next meeting of the Committee on 27 November 2017.

Following a question regarding IT Training, Councillor Kemp advised that IT Training was not part of the mandatory programme due to the individual IT skill levels of Councillors. It was noted that IT Training would continue to be part of Induction Training and that there was an expectation that Councillors would take responsibility for their development and attend one to one sessions if required.

Regarding Planning Training, it was highlighted that the Conservative Group was of the opinion that all Members should attend Planning Training once every four years. The importance of arranging Planning Training immediately after Elections was highlighted in order to ensure that Planning Committee Members attending the first Planning Committee of the Municipal Year had attended the relevant training.

The Executive welcomed the greater use of online training proposed in the report. Equality of representation was also highlighted, namely the need to encourage people from different backgrounds to stand for election, and it was commented that the time burden of training should not be prohibitive.

Regarding Finance Training, it was considered important that all Councillors had an awareness and understanding of the Council's business and that such training was required more than once during each four year term of office. Councillor Kemp commented that Councillors did receive a briefing on budgets each year and that broadening that briefing could be explored in the future.

The Executive supported the adoption of a mandatory programme of training and development for Elected Members, noting it would improve the quality of democratic decision making.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That a programme of mandatory training for Elected Members be introduced as part of the Council's Learning and Development Programme for Councillors from May 2018 onwards as outlined in Section 3.0 of the report.

Reason: To establish a mandatory training programme for Elected Members to ensure that Members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are aware of any significant risks including any corporate or personal liabilities.

4. ADOPTION OF ORDINARY WATERCOURSE BYELAWS

The Executive received a report which recommended to Council a proposal to make land drainage byelaws in order to assist the Council in its role to help reduce the risk of flooding for local communities. A map setting out the location of ordinary watercourses within Woking was displayed at the meeting, along with a leaflet entitled "Riparian Owners – rights and responsibilities". The Executive was advised that the Council would use the legally enforceable model land drainage byelaws, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and that the byelaws would be translated into plain English. Following a question regarding riparian owners, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Councillor Mrs B A Hunwicks, advised that the Council would inform riparian owners of their responsibilities. Katherine Waters, the Council's Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer, informed the Executive that ordinary watercourses would appear in search packs and property deeds. In addition, where the ordinary watercourse was known, the Council would send out a letter with the riparian owner leaflet and Officers would meet with any owners who had questions and explain to them their riparian responsibilities.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That**
- (i) the proposal to make drainage byelaws, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed;**
 - (ii) the Council consult with Defra, Natural England and the local navigation authority on the Council's proposal to make the drainage byelaws;**
 - (iii) subject to there being no objections by Defra, Natural England and the local navigation authority to the informal consultation the byelaws be made;**
 - (iv) the Assistant Director (Place), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to consider and seek to resolve any objection to the said byelaws being made (including amending the proposed byelaws);**
 - (v) the byelaws be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation with or without any outstanding objections (as the case may be); and**
 - (vi) in the event these byelaws are adopted by the Council, authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Place) to**

authorise or refuse any applications for consents submitted under the said byelaws.

Reason: A decision is sought to allow the process of making land drainage byelaws to begin and to agree to make byelaws in connection with drainage matters to assist the Council in its role to help reduce the risk of flooding for local communities.

5. 100% BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT

The Executive received a report which sought approval of the arrangements for the Council's inclusion in the Surrey County bid for 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19. It was explained that the proposal for a Surrey-wide pilot would need to incorporate Surrey County Council and all the Surrey Districts and Boroughs in order to be accepted by the government. Following a question regarding autonomy, Officers advised that the pilot would result in no changes to the Council's business rates system, how the Council awarded any discretionary payments or to the business rates appeals system. Regarding financial analysis and risk mitigation, Officers explained that advisors for Surrey had not considered the pilot to be a significant risk and that financial analysis undertaken had supported that view. The Executive noted that details of the pilot bid would not be shared publically so as not to undermine the bid. The Executive supported the Council's inclusion in the joint bid which, if successful, would result in additional resources being retained locally.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the Council works with Surrey County Council and the other Surrey Districts and Boroughs to develop a joint bid to be a pilot for the 2018/19 Business Rates retention scheme; and
- (ii) the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Leader, approves the detail and terms of the bid and signs the application on behalf of the Council.

Reason: To approve arrangements for the Council's inclusion in the Surrey County bid for 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19.

6. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Executive considered the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book), August 2017.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information, August 2017, be received

Reason: To manage the performance of the Council

7. MONITORING REPORTS - PROJECTS

The Executive received a quarterly monitoring report on the progress of projects in the interest of financial prudence and to ensure open and transparent corporate governance. An update was provided at the meeting regarding the Victoria Arch – Stage 1 project on page 4 of Appendix 1. Officers reported that the Council had held aspirations for a long time to secure improvements to Victoria Arch but it had been difficult to obtain a positive dialogue with Network Rail. It was explained that the information in the report was out of date and Officers were pleased to report that there had been positive engagement with Network Rail in recent weeks resulting in it being likely that the project could be moved forward. An updated position statement on the project would be included in the next monitoring report.

Discussion ensued on the SharePoint projects report, including Ditch Restoration Smarts Heath and Sutton Green Flood Alleviation Investigation. The level of detail against each project in the report was raised and Officers undertook to consider ensuring the updates were more up-to-date and helpful in future reports.

RESOLVED

That the report be received.

Reason: To monitor the position of active projects on SharePoint.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 9 in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Local Government Act 1972.

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

9. HARDSHIP RELIEF ON BUSINESS RATES

[NOTE: Councillor D J Bittleston declared an interest in this item arising from his son being employed by the parent company. Although the interest was not a formal interest under the Local Code of Conduct, Councillor Bittleston left the Council Chamber during the consideration and determination of the item.]

[NOTE: Councillor D E Hughes declared an interest in this item arising from her daughter being employed by the parent company. Although the interest was not a formal interest under the Local Code of Conduct, Councillor Hughes left the Council Chamber during the consideration and determination of the item.]

RESOLVED

That the hardship relief outlined in the report be awarded.

Reason: The provision of financial assistance through the hardship relief scheme would help to ensure the venue remains a financially viable proposition. It is in the interest of the general body of Council Taxpayers to maintain the existence of the venue because its loss would result in a reduction in the employment prospects of the Borough and reduce the leisure and cultural amenities of the area.

This document was published on Friday 13 October 2017 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday 23 October 2017, subject to call-in.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.10 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____