

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 6 June 2019

Present:

Cllr A Azad (Chairman)

Cllr G S Cundy Cllr C S Kemp
Cllr K M Davis

Also Present: Councillors S Ashall, T Aziz, A-M Barker, J E Bond, K Howard, D E Hughes and I Johnson.

Absent: Councillors D J Bittleston and D Harlow.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Members commemorated the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings and stood in gratitude and remembrance as a mark of respect for all those who lost their lives on 6 June 1944.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor A Azad, read out a statement by the Leader of the Council, Councillor D J Bittleston, which gave the Leader's apologies for not attending the meeting and explained how the Leader intended to run the business of the Council. A copy of the Leader Statement is attached to the minutes. A 'Leaders Meeting' had been set up, to which all Group Leaders and the Deputies of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups had been invited, to provide a forum within which future business, issues of concern and priorities could be discussed. The first meeting would be held on Wednesday, 12 June 2019.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 28 March 2019 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bittleston and 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 and Councillor C S Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item 7 – Woking Borough Council Single Use Plastics (SUP) Policy and minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from their positions as Directors of the Thameswey Group of Companies. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor G S Cundy declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from his position as a Director of Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Park Limited and Brookwood Cemetery Limited. The interest was such that voting and speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, and Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared an interest in minute item 7 – Woking Borough Council Single Use Plastics (SUP) Policy and minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from their positions as Directors of the Thameswey Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan declared an interest in minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from his position as a Director of Victoria Square Woking Limited. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, and Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared an interest in minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from their positions as Directors of Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Park Limited and Brookwood Cemetery Limited. The interests were such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, and the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, declared an interest in minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from their positions as Directors of Export House Limited. The interests were such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, and the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, declared an interest in minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from their positions as Directors of Dukes Court Owner T S a r l. The interests were such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared an interest in minute item 9 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information arising from his position as Council appointed alternate Director of Rutland Woking Limited. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

5. QUESTIONS

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

6. NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR A-M BARKER - REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE EXE19-040

At its meeting on 20 May 2019, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive for consideration.

Councillor A-M Barker

“Council notes that

The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities power to choose the committee system over their current system of governance and that the modern committee system may offer advantages over the current Strong Leader and Executive model.

Council supports

The setting up of a task group to consider whether it would be beneficial to the Council to move to a committee system.”

Councillor Barker attended the meeting and spoke in support of the Motion. Councillor Barker commented that a move to a modern committee system would increase transparency and involve more Councillors in decision making. The Executive was supportive of reviewing the current Strong Leader and Executive model and was in favour of forming a task group to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the Council moving to a committee system. It was suggested that the task group consist of two Conservatives, two Liberal Democrats, one Labour and one Independent and that names be put forward at Council on 25 July 2019.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the Motion be supported.

7. WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL SINGLE USE PLASTICS (SUP) POLICY EXE19-039

Councillor K M Davis, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, introduced the report which sought approval of the Executive to recommend to Council the adoption of a Woking Borough Council Single Use Plastics (SUP) Policy. Councillor Davis advised that the Climate Change Working Group had been consulted on the proposed Policy at its meeting on 14 March 2019. Attention was drawn to paragraph 5.1 of the report which set out the positive steps taken by the Borough Council to reduce the amount of avoidable single use plastics, such as the launch of Refill Woking in the Town Centre and the installation of two new bottle filling stations in Albion Square.

Councillor Davis proposed an additional recommendation to the report in order to strengthen the Council’s commitment regarding single use plastics. The proposed additional recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Kemp, to read “the Council removes all single use plastics from its estate, and the services it provides directly, by the end of 2020, as far as is practicable”. The Executive agreed the additional recommendation.

Following a question regarding the term ‘Council estate’ used in the report, it was explained that the term referred to areas which the Council had control over at an operational level and which were directly owned by the Council. The Portfolio Holder suggested that the

Climate Change Working Group consider what could be included under 'Council estate' in terms of single use plastics.

Following a question regarding littering from vehicles, the Executive was advised that further work was required around identification of perpetrators and enforcement. However, a reference to this would be incorporated into the Policy before it was considered by Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the proposal for a Woking Borough Council Single Use Plastic (SUP) Policy be agreed, subject to amendments by the Executive;**
- (ii) the final policy be supported and published on the website;**
- (iii) delegated authority be given to the Green Infrastructure Manager, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, to approve future updates to the Borough Council's SUP Policy;**
- (iv) formal support be given to the Surrey Environment Partnership SUP Strategy and Action Plan;**
- (v) local initiatives to address SUP reduction in Woking Borough be supported, such as Plastic Free Communities; and**
- (vi) the Council removes all single use plastics from its estate, and the services it provides directly, by the end of 2020, as far as is practicable.**

Reason: To seek support for these policies and initiatives as part of delivery of the Borough's climate change and sustainability strategy – Woking 2050.

8. CHILDREN'S CENTRES EXE19-038

The Executive received a report which sought approval of the Executive to recommend to Council that Woking Borough Council become the lead provider for Family Centres in Woking and develop the vital outreach support to families. Councillor Kemp, Portfolio Holder for Family Support Programme, explained that the proposal followed the County Council's review of children's services and the development of the Family Service to support families with children aged 0 to 11 that were the most vulnerable. It was noted that service delivery would move from a centre based approach to a more flexible community based approach. Two Family Centres would be established in Sheerwater and Goldsworth Park and Borough-wide support from Family Centre staff would continue to be delivered by outreach staff in family homes and appropriate community venues.

Following a question concerning direct services with health, the Executive was informed that Officers were aware of the need to rehouse those services and that it would be part of the process going forward.

Regarding referrals, the Portfolio Holder advised that research had demonstrated that the majority of referrals came from GPs, social workers and other professional and voluntary services and not from children's centres.

The Executive welcomed the positive proposal for Woking Borough Council to become the lead provider for Family Centres in Woking in partnership with Surrey County Council, noting that it would be the first such arrangement in Surrey.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That Woking Borough Council will be the lead provider for Woking Family Centres in a partnership arrangement with Surrey County Council.

Reason: To ensure the continued provision of children's services in the Borough.

9. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Executive considered the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book) March 2019. Members discussed delivery against housing targets such as number of affordable homes delivered and net additional homes provided, noting the need for the Council to deliver more homes at a quicker rate whilst balancing the concerns of residents.

Regarding empty properties, Officers reported that Council Tax records showed that there were currently 85 properties in the Borough which had been empty for over two years and it was noted that Officers would work proactively with those properties. Following a question on the proportion of affordable homes to be provided, the Executive was informed that 80%-85% of the affordable homes would be flats. It was highlighted that the proportion was well-matched to the Council's Housing Register, with over 80% of those on the Register requiring one or two bed properties. Regarding routine repairs, it was reported that discussions had been held with New Vision Homes and an action plan was in place to improve performance.

As reported at the last Executive, it was confirmed that the Council had paid compensation of £145,000 to Freedom Leisure in respect of loss of profit arising from the technical issues suffered and the waterslides being out of action. On page 37 of the Green Book, it was noted that a long-term loan of £905,000 had been provided to Freedom Leisure in order to enable Freedom Leisure to invest in facilities. The loan was included in the Council's Investment Programme.

Members also discussed fly tipping on page 11 of the Green Book. The Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, Councillor Davis, advised that the Council used prosecutions to prevent fly tipping.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information, March 2019, be received.

<p>This document was published on Friday 7 June 2019 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday 17 June 2019, subject to call-in.</p>

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.17 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

Leader Statement to the Executive 6 June 2019

Members. Please accept my apologies for not attending this evening. This week is my 36th Wedding Anniversary and I am on holiday with Elly.

I did want to make this statement to explain how I intend to run the business of the Council.

Members will be aware of the convention I introduced two years ago for the Executive which enables any Member to give me notice, by 5pm on the Tuesday before the meeting on Thursday, and attend, ask questions or make representations about any business before the Executive. I have done this to ensure that all Members of the Council, from all parties have an opportunity to contribute to the business of the Executive; this arrangement will continue.

The change to “no overall control’ means I need to do more to ensure the business of the Council continues to be done efficiently and that the views of the four political parties are taken into account in consideration of business and the drafting of reports. I have therefore set up a “Leaders Meeting” to which I have invited all Group Leaders and the Deputies of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups to reasonably reflect the political balance of the Council; the first meeting will take place on 12 June. The Leaders Meeting will not have any Executive power but will be a forum within which future business, issues of concern and priorities can be discussed. This will enable Officers to prepare reports appropriately and hopefully enable the Council to continue to act in the interests of local residents and to avoid us all consuming too much time on “party politics’ solely for the sake of it. I am grateful that Group Leaders have accepted the invitation. In order that all Councillors have direct access to me as Leader I will be continuing the practice of offering all Members the chance to come and have a private meeting with me.

I have also reminded Officers and fellow Portfolio Holders that the Shadow Portfolio Holders must be formally briefed on the business of the Council. I know this has worked well in the past for many areas of our business, such as Recreation, Environment and Economic Development; I want to ensure that it works fully across all areas. I have the full support of Portfolio Holders and I am hopeful that the shadow will also support this.

I set out at the Council the agreed Council priorities upon which we will concentrate. To help progress the Environmental issues I have asked that the Climate Change Working Group review the Council’s approved Woking 2050 and Natural Woking strategies and advise the Executive of the actions it may be possible to undertake to accelerate the delivery of the strategies. I will also review with Officers how we ensure that Members and the public are more aware of the extensive work we have been doing and are planning to do as part of the 2019/20 Business Plan approved by the Council.

The approach we have taken to the awarding of grants has highlighted that whilst the system works well for the majority of the £1 million we give to good causes each year, there are two significant grants we award which need more scrutiny. These are Woking Community Transport and Citizens Advice Woking. In order that there is more time for debate I intend to invite the Shadow Portfolio Holder for grants to the initial meeting that I have with the Portfolio Holder and Officers in October. I would also welcome suggestions from Councillors about how we can better scrutinise these two bodies to ensure we get good value for money for our residents.

The Council commitment to deliver more affordable homes and to provide help to residents in need is most positive but perhaps not recognised by all because we've just got on with doing it, such as Moor Lane, but we need to communicate more widely on what the Council is doing. This was highlighted to me when the Local Government Association visited Woking and was astounded by the depth and breadth of what we are doing and said "why aren't you telling everyone about it".

I hope tonight, and later at Council, that Members will support the proposal for Children Centres. This is accompanied by the innovative proposal we are developing with the NHS and Surrey County Council to incorporate a Mid Wife and Family centre in the town centre Library which I hope will be completed this Municipal Year.

Finally I would like to lend my support to the Motion from Cllr Barker about the review of Executive arrangements. The current arrangements have been in place since 2000 so a review of them is well overdue. I think we can recommend to Council that the Motion is supported and a Working Group formed, (2 Conservatives, 2 Liberal Democrat's, 1 Labour and 1 Independent Member) to consider the issues. To avoid delay I suggest we put forward names at the July Council.