

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 6 February 2020
Present:

Cllr D J Bittleston (Chairman)
Cllr A Azad (Vice-Chair)

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

Also Present: Councillors S Ashall, A-M Barker, K Howard and D E Hughes.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 January 2020 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

[NOTE: In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Leader of the Council ruled that the following item be dealt with as Urgent Business due to the need to address public concern.]

The Leader of the Council reported that the Council had received a petition on Monday, 3 February 2020 regarding the Woking Walk-in Centre which had already received over 3,000 signatures. The Leader explained that the petition was due to finish on 3 April 2020 and therefore the earliest that Full Council could deal with the petition was at its meeting on 1 June 2020. As the issue was of serious concern to residents, the Leader asked the Executive to agree the following actions to be taken. Firstly, that the release by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), which had been tabled at the meeting, be published on the Council's website and webcast. The tabled update from the CCG stated that it was currently undertaking a review of urgent care and walk-in facilities across North West Surrey, using a programme called The Big Picture, and that there was no proposal to close the walk-in centre in Autumn 2020. The tabled update made clear that the current review would not affect any of the other services available at Woking Community Hospital, such as the Bedser Hub. Secondly, a copy of the Big Picture consultation document, which explained the seven potential options, be published on the Council's website and webcast.

Thirdly, the Leader would write to the CCG outlining both the Council's and residents' concerns, and explain that the Borough's need would likely increase over time in view of the predicted increase in the number of homes in Woking. Fourthly, the Leader would ask Officers to investigate the matter and bring a report back to the March Executive. The Executive agreed the proposed actions set out by the Leader.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the release by the CCG, entitled "Woking walk-in centre – correcting inaccurate information", be published on the Council's website and webcast;
- (ii) the CCG consultation document, entitled "The Big Picture – Stakeholder Briefing and Update January 2020", be published on the Council's website and webcast;
- (iii) the Leader of the Council be authorised to write to the CCG to outline the Council's and residents' concerns; and
- (iv) Officers be asked to investigate the matter and to bring a report back to the Executive at its meeting on 26 March 2020.

Reason: To address public concern regarding the Woking Walk-in Centre.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D J Bittleston 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 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 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 D Harlow 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 G S Cundy 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 Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, 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 Morgan could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, 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 Spinks could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, 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 Bryant could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, 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 Clarke 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 Finance Director, 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 (i) her husband having a small shareholding in Woking Football Club and (ii) being a Council-appointed director of Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited. The interest was such that Mrs Clarke could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, 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 (i) him being a member of the Cards Trust (the supporters' club for Woking Football Club), (ii) providing occasional unpaid assistance to Woking Football Club, e.g. acting as returning officer at the election of directors and (iii) being a Council-appointed director of Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited. The interest was such that Mr Bryant could advise the Executive on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in Item 5 – Questions (Question 20) arising from his position as a Director of Connect 2 Innovation Limited. The interest did not prevent Mr Morgan from advising on the matter.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, and the Head of Housing, Louise Strongitharm, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in Item 5 – Questions (Question 23) arising from their positions as members of Corporate Management Group. The interest did not prevent Mr Morgan, Mr Spinks, Mr Bryant, Mrs Clarke and Mrs Strongitharm from advising on the matter.

5. QUESTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Ms Karen Woodland, Mr Andy Caulfield and Ms Monique van Bellen who had submitted questions under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules regarding areas such as Woking Football Club development proposals, the lease agreement between the Council and GolDev Woking Limited, and comments on planning applications. Questions had also been submitted by Mrs Katie Bowes, Mr Oliver Bowes, Mr Lorin Adams, Ms Judy Adams, Mr Morgan Adams and Mr Reece Adams regarding areas such as Woking Football Club development proposals, official hospitality expenses, the Constitution, and the Council's level of debt. A copy of the questions together with the replies was before the Executive. The Chairman confirmed the replies, supplementary

questions were asked by the questioners present and replies given. The questioners not present would be sent a copy of the replies to their questions.

6. GENERAL FUND, SERVICE PLANS, BUDGETS AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2020-21 EXE20-001

Councillor Azad, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, introduced the report outlining the proposed General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2020-21. Councillor Azad advised that the provisional local government settlement announced on 20 December 2019 had been consistent with the forecasts in the November draft budget. As in 2019/20, the negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) had been removed. It was noted that the government review of local government funding had been deferred until 2021/22. The reduction in the New Homes Bonus (NHB) was highlighted.

Councillor Azad reported that the General Fund Budget proposed an increase in Council Tax of 2.08% for 2020-21 which resulted in a Band D Council Tax figure for 2020-21 of £245.46 or an increase of £5.00 per annum at Band D.

The Executive noted the proposal to bring forward the overnight charge for the town centre car parks from 7pm to 6pm from 1 April 2020 in order to encourage visitors to the town for evening theatre and cinema entertainment and to support the wider night time economy in the town centre. The Executive was advised that a one year pilot would be undertaken in order to assess the impact. The potential effect on climate change of the proposal was raised.

The Executive welcomed government legislation which would enable councils to increase the Council Tax premium on domestic properties that had been left empty and substantially unfurnished for two years or more. It was proposed that the Council implemented the increased premiums in line with the legislation.

Following a question regarding HG Wells Conference and Events Centre, the Executive was advised that Officers were continuing to work with the different user groups in order to find alternative facilities.

Discussion ensued on the pension fund and it was noted that the fund was performing well and was almost 100% funded.

Regarding paragraph 10.19 of the report, it was explained that the Council would be taking ownership of the boilers in Woking Park following their replacement upon reaching end of life.

Following a question regarding the Housing Service Plan, Officers confirmed that the New Vision Homes (NVH) Residents Board was still functioning and that the Council was open to new volunteers. It was noted that resident engagement was important particularly around the Council's Housing Strategy and the NVH contract, which was due to expire in 2022.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the Revenue Estimates and Human Resource requirements for 2020/21 be approved;
- (ii) a Band D Council Tax for the Borough of Woking for 2020/21 of £245.46 be approved;
- (iii) the charge for overnight car parking in the town centre car parks be amended to apply from 6pm from 1 April 2020;
- (iv) a long-term empty premium of 200% be added to the Council Tax payable for properties empty and substantially unfurnished for between 5 and 10 years from April 2020, and of 300% to be added to the Council Tax payable for properties empty and substantially unfurnished for over 10 years from April 2021;
- (v) the Prudential Indicators at Appendix 3 to the report be approved, subject to any changes arising from consideration of the Investment Programme, revenue budgets and Final Government Settlement;
- (vi) the Service Plans for 2020/21 at Appendix 4 to the report be approved; and
- (vii) the Food Safety Plan and Health and Safety Plan at Appendix 4a and 4b to the report be approved.

Reason: To recommend that Council approves the resources necessary to implement its Service Plans and objectives and raises the necessary revenue through the determination of Council Tax for 2020/21.

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETS 2020-21 EXE20-002

The Executive received the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budgets 2020-21 for recommendation to Council. Councillor Azad reported that the four year rent reduction period would come to an end and that rent increases would return to CPI + 1% with effect from April 2020. It was noted that the rent reduction had resulted in a significant impact on the financial position of the HRA with it receiving some £6m less income over the four years. The effect of the Sheerwater Regeneration on the HRA was highlighted.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and
- (ii) with effect from 6 April 2020, rents be increased by 2.7%.

Reason: To recommend that the Council approves the resources necessary to implement its objectives and to enable the Council to determine charges to tenants for 2020/21.

8. INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2019-20 TO 2023-24 EXE20-003

The Executive received the Investment Programme 2019-20 to 2023-24 which set out the capital and one off investments required to deliver the Council's key strategies and objectives.

Regarding paragraph 8.28, the Executive was informed that the Investment Programme included allowance for a £705k loan to Freedom Leisure to finance improvements to the changing rooms at Pool in the Park. It was explained that the works had been costed at £925k and that, in order to achieve the desired benefits such as an accessible changing places facility, it was proposed that the Council would use the Asset Management Plan budget to provide the additional investment to complete the upgrade.

Following a question regarding Lockfield Drive Junction, the Executive was advised that the improvement works were part of the Victoria Square development. It was noted that the new cycle bridge was part of the Woking Sustainable Transport Package.

Regarding the Robin Hood site, the Executive was advised that the site had been acquired for development by Rutland Woking. It was noted that Ward Members would be invited to a briefing in due course.

Discussion ensued on Brookwood Cemetery, an important heritage asset in the Borough. The Executive was informed that a Masterplan was currently being worked upon and a presentation to Members would take place on 26 February 2020. It was commented that substantial improvements had been made since the Council purchased the Cemetery, however further investment would be required to protect the heritage asset.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) **the Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24 be approved subject to reports on projects where appropriate;**
- (ii) **the proposed financing arrangements be approved;**
- (iii) **additional loan facility of £500,000 to Thameswey Energy Ltd be approved on the same basis as previous loans; and**
- (iv) **capital and revenue grants for Brookwood Cemetery for 2021/22 be approved.**

Reason: To recommend to the Council that it approves the capital resources for 2019/20 onwards considered necessary to support its service plans and objectives.

9. CAPITAL, INVESTMENT AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES EXE20-004

The Executive received a report which set out the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020-21 and recommended to Council that the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy be adopted. Following a question regarding Table 1 in the Investment Strategy Report, Officers confirmed that the Council had historically held a small number of local residents'

mortgages. It was noted that the Council had provided mortgages to a small number of Sheerwater residents as part of the Sheerwater Regeneration.

RESOLVED

That (i) the Treasury Management Strategy set out in the report be approved; and

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (ii) the Capital and Investment Strategies for 2020/21 be approved; and

(iii) the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators set out in table 1 of Section 4 of the Treasury Management Strategy and the MRP policy set out in Appendix A be approved, subject to any changes arising from consideration of the Investment Programme, revenue budgets and Revenue Support Grant Settlement.

Reason: To determine the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 and to recommend to Council the Capital and Investment Strategies, Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and MRP Strategy to be adopted.

10. RECOMMENDATION FROM CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP - CLIMATE EMERGENCY - PLANNING FOR CARBON NEUTRALITY EXE20-010

Following the Council's declaration of a 'climate emergency' at its meeting on 25 July 2019, Councillor Davis, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, introduced a report which set out recommendations from the Climate Change Working Group to accelerate the existing Woking 2050 Strategy and work towards achieving carbon neutrality across the Council's estate and operations by 2030. Councillor Davis spoke in support of the draft Carbon Reduction Action Plan which focussed on mitigation measures to help reduce the Council's carbon footprint. The collaborative work with Thamesway, such as improving energy efficiency in Council homes, was highlighted. The need to encourage the use of electric vehicles and provide the necessary infrastructure was raised. Suggestions for possible communal electric vehicle charging areas were noted, such as Goldsworth Lodge.

Councillor Davis commented that the most challenging aspect of carbon reduction was behavioural change of individuals. Following Councillor Davis's Motion at Council on 5 December 2019 regarding the delivery of a programme of engagement with Woking residents and businesses, it was noted that WeAreWoking would be carrying out a major piece of work to publicise what the Council was doing and what the public could do to address climate change.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) officers be authorised to implement initial actions for 2019/20 and 2020/21 as recommended in the report; and

- (ii) **delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Place) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability to agree new actions as they are identified.**

Reason: The report outlines the carbon reduction action plan and initial activities identified to accelerate action in furtherance of the Council's climate emergency declaration. The report also requests the identification of funding within the Council's budgets for 2020/21.

11. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY EXE20-007

Councillor Harlow, Portfolio Holder for Housing, introduced the report which recommended to Council the adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024. It was noted that the draft Strategy had been discussed and supported by the Housing Task Group.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024 be approved; and

- (ii) **the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Strategy and to update the action plan as required.**

Reason: The Council has a legal duty to have an up-to-date Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in place.

12. HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND - FUNDING ALLOCATION OF £95MILLION TO WOKING TOWN CENTRE EXE19-060

Following the successful Housing Infrastructure Fund bid made by Surrey County Council in conjunction with Woking Borough Council, the Executive received a report which recommended to Council that the £95m grant awarded to the Borough Council by Homes England be accepted. Discussion ensued on the consultation responses and it was noted that the responses had been taken into account and detailed design was underway. Following concern raised regarding potential congestion points, the Executive was advised that extensive modelling had been undertaken.

The Executive welcomed the Government's commitment, through Homes England, to invest in Woking Town Centre and deliver major infrastructure. It was noted that the grant would fund the replacement of Victoria Arch and critical highway improvements which would support Woking to meet its housing needs, support growth and sustain economic and community vitality.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) the £95m grant awarded to the Council by Homes England be accepted, and that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to agree the terms of the contract in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder, and to undertake necessary prerequisite work to develop the project;
- (ii) the Council accepts that it will be responsible for any project cost overruns;
- (iii) any underspend of the grant award, and/or any surplus funds from the sale of the Triangle site, will be made available to fund project cost overruns, with any balance to be reinvested into local infrastructure that supports housing delivery;
- (iv) the Council authorises advance funding of £10m, in the form of a 15 year annuity loan from the PWLB for the scheme, to be recovered from a proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy and from site specific S.106 tariffs, over the next 15 years;
- (v) the Council commits to use reasonable endeavours, including use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers, to acquire the Triangle site, land required for the replacement of Victoria Arch, land required for widening of the A320, and land required for development sites as outlined in the bid, if not brought forward by current owners;
- (vi) the Council commits to the delivery of homes, as outlined in the bid, on the sites owned by it or its subsidiary Thamesway;
- (vii) the Council approves the Recovery Strategy set out at Appendix 7 to the report; and
- (viii) the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to undertake a review of Community Infrastructure Levy and to establish a Section 106 Tariff for town centre infrastructure associated with the HIF project.

Reason: To accept funding that will enable rail infrastructure, highway enhancements, remove congestion, and promote town centre growth and development.

13. RECOMMENDATION FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WOKING COMMUNITY LOTTERY PROPOSAL EXE20-014

The Executive received a report which set out a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asking the Executive to support the proposal to seek the introduction of a community lottery scheme for the Borough of Woking through an External Lottery Manager (ELM). Councillor Hughes, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, reported that the Committee had received an interesting presentation by Gatherwell, an ELM, which had answered the Committee's questions. It was noted that the cost to the

Council was relatively small and that the contract period was a minimum of one year. The need to consult with local charities was highlighted.

The Executive agreed that the Council should explore the proposal further and that a proposals report be brought back to a future meeting of the Executive.

RESOLVED

That in accordance with the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council explores further the possibility of adopting a Community Lottery Scheme and that a proposals report be brought back to a future meeting of the Executive.

Reason: To create a new revenue stream for local community organisations.

14. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Executive considered the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book) December 2019. Discussion ensued on the waste sent for recycling figures on page 10 of the Green Book. Councillor Davis, Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, advised that some recycling had been refused at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) due to contamination and had been sent instead to landfill. It was commented that making residents aware of what could and could not be recycled needed to be a constant campaign and that the Surrey Environmental Partnership was looking at the issue. It was suggested that recycling targets in the Green Book could need to be adjusted in light of changing recycling habits.

Following a question regarding fly tipping, the Executive was advised that it was not possible to quantify the amount spent on fly tipping because the work and resources to obtain evidence to prosecute cut across many agencies.

RESOLVED

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

Reason: To manage the performance of the Council.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of items 16 and 17 in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during these items, 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).

16. LAND MANAGEMENT EXE19-121

RESOLVED

That the recommendations set out in the Part II report be agreed.

Reason: To support the Investment Strategy of the Council and future development of Woking town centre.

17. HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND - FUNDING ALLOCATION OF £95MILLION TO WOKING TOWN CENTRE EXE20-015 - CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Executive received the background confidential information related to Agenda Item No. 12 – Housing Infrastructure Fund – Funding Allocation of £95Million to Woking Town Centre which had been dealt with under Part I of the Agenda.

<p>This document was published on Friday, 7 February 2020 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday 17 February 2020, subject to call-in.</p>
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The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.54 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____