

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES

Executive Summary

The Council is invited to consider the recommendations from the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 19 October 2021, the meeting of the Executive held on 18 November 2021 and the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 25 November 2021. The recommendations of the meetings are outlined below.

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2021

7A SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Under the current scheme of delegation, applications for approval of details reserved by condition submitted by Woking Borough Council and their companies/entities needed to be reported to Planning Committee for determination. There had been two periods (between 6 April 2021 to 8 June 2021 and 20 July 2021 to 7 September 2021) when temporary arrangements were agreed to allow these types of applications to be delegated to the Development Manager for determination in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee. It was proposed to make these arrangements permanent.

Councillor D Hughes commented that she thought it was important not to lose the openness that came with the reserved conditions coming before the Planning Committee for determination. She noted that the recommendation before them was sensible, however asked if an additional recommendation could be added which would ensure members continued to be advised of those details that were reserved by condition and where authority was delegated for determination. These would be circulated on a regular basis in a similar way as the fortnightly planning lists. The timescale and frequency of circulating this condition list would be determined by Officers when they knew what was technically possible.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

- 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.

EXECUTIVE – 18 NOVEMBER 2021

7B NOTICE OF MOTION - CLLR W FORSTER - LOCATION OF WOKING'S RAIL AGGREGATES YARD EXE21-151

At its meeting on 14 October 2021, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor W Forster

“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 Forster attended the meeting and spoke in support of the Motion. Councillor Forster highlighted the unsuitability of the current town centre location of the aggregates yard and suggested that the Council's corporate policy should be to try to move the yard to a more suitable alternative location. The Executive agreed that having an aggregates yard in the middle of the town centre was neither sustainable or desirable. The Lead Executive Member, Councillor Kemp, had written to Network Rail to express that consideration be given to finding a suitable alternative. Councillor Kemp undertook to share the response from Network Rail with Councillors when received.

It was noted that Surrey County Council (SCC) had recently launched a consultation on its new Minerals and Waste Plan, and the Council would submit a corporate response to the consultation on the unsuitability of the current site of the yard. Councillor Kemp advised that the consultation would be publicised on the Council's website and members of the public were encouraged to engage in the consultation.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Azad, would also be writing to the Leader of SCC to advocate moving the goods yard.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the Motion be supported.

7C WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022-2025 EXE21-033

Councillor Davis, Portfolio Holder for Information Communication Technology, introduced the report which sought approval of the Executive to recommend to Council the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2022-2025. Councillor Davis explained that the three year strategy was presented across three themes; Smart People, Smart Place and Smart Council. The Executive was advised that 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 its residents, how it would enable businesses to be even more competitive, and how it would ensure that digital technologies enabled Members and staff to work more productively and efficiently.

The Executive congratulated the Portfolio Holder and Officers on the enormous amount of work undertaken on the strategy which would provide an ambitious and visionary future for the Borough.

Recommendations of the Executive and Committees

Following the late submission of questions from the Liberal Democrat Group, the Leader of the Council reminded Opposition Members to submit their questions by the protocol deadline.

RECOMMENDED to Council

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

Reason: The priorities identified in the Digital Strategy 2022-2025 will positively impact and support Woking's businesses, residents and its wider community.

7D THAMESWEY BUSINESS PLANS (TO INCLUDE COMPANY CONSOLIDATION PLAN) EXE21-063

The Executive received a report which sought approval of the Executive to recommend to Council that the Thameswey Group continue to operate the Business Plans for 2020-2023. Councillor Azad explained that it was proposed that the Thameswey Group continued to work to the 2020 plans in 2022 ahead of a full review for 2023 following the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy. It was noted that it would also enable the updated plans to reflect the Financial Review of the Council's Assets and Liabilities, and advice secured on the Group structure going forward. A Member Briefing on the Thameswey Group of Companies had been held on 17 November 2021.

Following a question regarding the reasons for losses on Thameswey shown in 2019 and 2020 accounts, the Executive was informed that the Thameswey Business Plans were all long term in nature, making losses to start with and moving to a profitable position over time as energy customers were connected and rents increased. It was noted that the Thameswey audits for 2019 and 2020 had now been signed off and the auditors questions had been resolved.

Following a request for more clarity on the arrangement in paragraph 4.2 of the report, it was reported that the relevant land asset was to be sold to Thameswey Energy Limited (TEL), requiring TEL to increase its loan facility to secure the acquisition. Therefore TEL would service the financing costs for the site of the energy centre, not the Council.

Regarding Thameswey Housing Limited (THL), the Executive was advised that THL continued to develop and acquire properties for rent in the Borough, with half of the properties at affordable or social rents.

RECOMMEND to Council

That (i) the Thameswey Group continue to operate the Business Plans for 2020-2023;

(ii) 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;

(iii) 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

Recommendations of the Executive and Committees

- (iv) loans originally advanced to Thamesway Developments Ltd be allowed to transfer to Thamesway Housing Ltd or Thamesway Energy Ltd on the same terms as the original advance.**

Reason: To agree the approach to Business Planning for the Thamesway Group for 2022.

7E TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) EXE21-060

Councillor Harlow, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, introduced the report which sought approval of the Executive to recommend to Council the implementation of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for the town centre. The Executive welcomed the report and noted the consultation undertaken regarding the proposed PSPO which had been broadly supportive. The Executive supported the proposed PSPO which would be another tool to make people feel safe.

In answer to a question about why a new order had been created, rather than reviewing the previous order, Officers explained that the previous order had come to an end at a time when the Council did not have an evidence base to expand or continue the order. It was noted that PSPO's can only be made for three years as part of the legislation. At that time, there was an improving picture in the town centre because of Covid and other activities and interventions the Council had put in place.

RECOMMENDED to Council

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 5.6 in the report and to amend in line with any legislation changes.**

Reason: To approve the terms of a Public Spaces Protection Order and approve delegations to enforce the Order.

Recommendations of the Executive and Committees

7F REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2022-23 EXE21-068

The Executive received a report detailing the proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2022-23. Concern was raised by Non-Executive Members regarding the proposed increase to Meals on Wheels charges. The Executive noted that the Council offered one of the most comprehensive and responsive community meals services in Surrey at one of the lowest costs, however the level of subsidy required was not sustainable.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the discretionary fees and charges, as set out in Appendices 1 – 4 of the report, be approved.

Reason: The regular review of discretionary charges ensures that the Council maintains its income base and generates additional resources for the provision of services.

7G CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2022-23 EXE21-076 The Executive received a report which sought approval to recommend to Council the Calendar of Meetings 2022-23.

RECOMMENDED to Council

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

Reason: In accordance with Standing Order 1.2 of the Constitution, which states that “The date of the annual (Council) meeting and those of ordinary meetings shall be fixed by the Council in or about December of the preceding municipal year”.

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 25 NOVEMBER 2021

Set out below is the recommendation to be considered by the Standards and Audit Committee at its meeting on 25 November 2021. An extract from the minutes of the meeting will be published once available.

7H PUBLIC SECTOR AUDIT APPOINTMENTS STA21-021

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

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.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Recommendations of the Executive and Committees

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