

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 13 June 2024

Present:

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

Cllr I Johnson Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr L Lyons Cllr D Roberts

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources, Kevin Foster, 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 Foster 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.

The interest of the Head of Transformation, Digital and Customer, Adam Walther, was referred to in the agenda but it should be noted that Mr Walther was not present at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 21 March 2024 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

5. QUESTIONS

The Leader reported that a question had been submitted by Mr Braddin Ley under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules regarding Sheerwater. A copy of the question together with the reply was before the Executive. The Leader advised that Mr Ley had been unable to attend the meeting and would be sent a copy of the reply to his question. The question, together with the reply from the Portfolio Holder, was presented as follows:

Question from Mr Braddin Ley

“When will the remaining properties be sold off in Sheerwater for redevelopment, and when will the roads be improved - the residents are feeling left in the dark and forgotten about once again. It would be in your best interests financially to expedite this. Please also consider the height and density for any new developments so that good urban design is upheld and the roads can tolerate the increased vehicular and foot traffic (currently they do not).”

Reply from Councillor Ian Johnson

“Last year, following public consultation, the Council agreed a new plan for the Sheerwater regeneration. This will see ThamesWey completing the phases currently being constructed, over 100 Council homes being refurbished and 3 large land parcels being sold and redeveloped by third parties.

The Council recently appointed a firm of consultant surveyors to assist the authority in bringing the surplus sites to the market for redevelopment. We are in the process of agreeing the precise timescales but anticipate that the marketing process will commence in July. Each disposal will require a new planning application to agree the exact form of development and the published guidance will ensure that there is detailed consideration of the height and density for any new development and that good urban design is at the forefront of any application. This will include a revised approach to the highways issues.

In the shorter-term, there are various S278 and S38 applications (Highways improvement and adoption agreements) being considered by or awaiting start dates from Surrey County Council in relation to the current phases completed or under construction by ThamesWey. These works will include resurfacing parts of Dartmouth Avenue and Bunyard Drive, refreshing road markings and signage and some footway improvements. ThamesWey are aiming to complete all of these works by the end of 2024. A solution is also currently being explored with Surrey County Council to reconnect Blackmore Crescent with Devonshire Avenue.

We understand that the ongoing construction works continue to be an inconvenience for residents in Sheerwater and are committed to progressing the project as swiftly as possible.”

The Leader highlighted that the Executive 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. The next Executive would be held on 11 July 2024, so the deadline for written questions was 12 noon, 4 July 2024.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY UPDATE EXE23-045

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Forster, introduced the report on the Woking Net Zero climate change strategy. The Strategy had been reviewed in recent months, in part to take into account the Council's focus on statutory functions. In particular, Officers had considered how the actions within the Strategy could best be delivered with the reduced resources now available.

The proposal was for a repositioning of the Council's strategic direction to place greater emphasis on the tools and levers available and within the resource of the Authority to deliver the actions in the consultation version of the document. The Council would pursue its own plans to reduce its carbon footprint and where possible steer and shape the actions and activities of others. Within this context, a revised Woking Net Zero climate change strategy would be presented to the Executive in the Autumn.

In considering the report, the Leader emphasised that climate change remained a priority for the Council and that the work to achieve a net zero authority would continue, together with the ambition for a net zero Borough.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the Woking Net Zero climate change strategy be re-shaped and amended to demonstrate how the Council will 'get their own house in order' and influence and steer the actions and activities of others through Council strategies, policies and plans; and
- (ii) within this context, a revised version of Woking Net Zero will be presented to Members in the Autumn for consideration and adoption.

Reason: To ensure the adoption of the Woking Net Zero climate change strategy is deliverable within the resources available across the Council.

7. WOKING ENVIRONMENT ACTION (WEACT) – RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES EXE23-063

In February 2023 the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had received a presentation from Woking Environment Action (WEAct) on their work to address issues relating to climate change and sustainability. The presentation had led to a series of recommendations which had been referred for consideration by the Greener Woking Working Group. Councillor Forster, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, advised that the Government intervention had delayed the Council's response to the recommendations whilst consideration was given to their deliverability.

The intention now was to revise the consultation version of the Woking Net Zero climate change strategy to reflect the changed circumstances of the Council and achieve what was practical within the recommendations from WEAct, with whom the Council would continue to work closely.

RESOLVED

That WEAct's recommendations be noted and that the suggested next steps be actioned as part of the forthcoming updated Climate Change Strategy, Woking Net Zero.

Reason: To update the Executive in accordance with the resolution made at its meeting on 23 March 2023.

8. FUTURE OF BROCKHILL EXE24-067

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Johnson, introduced the report which outlined the future of the Brockhill Extra Care Housing scheme. The decision to close the Centre had been taken in February 2024 in light of the significant capital expenditure required and the advice that the Centre no longer met the standards necessary for extra care provision. The Council had worked closely with the tenants and positive progress had been achieved, with the level of occupancy falling from 24 to 9, of which 4 had been offered accommodation elsewhere.

In view of the ongoing safety concerns, it was proposed that the Centre should be fully closed by 30 September 2024. Unfortunately, this could require some residents to move twice in order to secure their ideal long term home. The report before the Executive sought authority to start the process of selling the Council's freehold interest for the redevelopment of the site in keeping with the local area. The income from the sale of the site would be used to invest in other Council homes.

RESOLVED

- That (i) a target date for the full closure of Brockhill be set at 30 September 2024;
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Director - Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Director of Democratic and Legal Services, to seek possession (under the Housing Act 1985) of homes at Brockhill where negotiation with tenants proves unsuccessful;
- (iii) following vacant possession being achieved, the Brockhill building is demolished and the site redeveloped;
- (iv) officers be authorised to engage agents and commence marketing of the Brockhill site for redevelopment purposes; and
- (v) authority be delegated to the Strategic Director - Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make any further decisions required in respect of the decommissioning (including demolition) of the building once vacant possession has been secured.

Reason: To provide residents with a clear plan around the closure of Brockhill Extra Care scheme and the long-term future for the site.

9. STRATEGIC PARKING OBJECTIVES EXE24-069

The Executive considered a report which sought approval for strategic objectives to provide a framework for setting parking fees and charges for Woking car parks on daily tariffs and permit parking. The intention of the proposals, introduced by Councillor Roberts, Portfolio Holder for Parking Services, was to rationalise the daily tariff options into a simplified, user-friendly structure which would focus on encouraging longer stays. The number of parking permit options would also be rationalised to better incorporate Woking's overall corporate policies. In drawing up the changes, Officers had taken into account guidance from the British Parking Association.

The Portfolio Holder concluded by stating that the principles within the report reflected changes which were fair, equitable, affordable and socially responsible.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the proposed strategic objectives for setting parking fees and charges be agreed; and
- (ii) a report be brought to a subsequent meeting of the Executive to consider a revised fees and charges schedule for the Council's car parks, in line with the agreed strategic objectives.

Reason: To help rationalise, regulate and manage the use of off-street parking facilities in the Borough and ensure clear objectives are set to provide a framework for future reviews of parking fees and charges, to support a healthy local economy, meet Council policy on sustainability and, to support services and needs for all visitors to, and residents of, the Borough.

10. NCIL - APPLICATION FOR FUNDING - WHEATSHEAF PLAYGROUND REFURBISHMENT EXE24-065

The Executive received an application for Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) which sought to secure £27,000 from Canalside Ward Neighbourhood CIL to improve the Wheatsheaf playground park area. It was noted by the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Lyons, that, although the application had been submitted by a Ward Councillor for Horsell, the site fell in the Canalside Ward. The application had met the requirements for a NCIL application and had been supported by the Ward Councillors for Canalside.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the application submitted by a Ward Councillor for Horsell to improve the Wheatsheaf playground be approved; and
- (ii) the Horsell Ward Councillor who made the application be asked to oversee the delivery of the project in accordance with the project plan, project specification, costs and quality control.

Reason: To enable funding to be secured for the Wheatsheaf playground to be made safe and to be reopened for the benefit of children within the Canalside Ward.

11. NCIL - APPLICATION FOR FUNDING - SURFACE IMPROVEMENTS TO FOOTPATHS IN HOOK HEATH EXE24-040

The Executive received an application for Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) which sought to secure £24,000 to improve the surfaces of two footpaths in the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area. The application had been supported by the three Ward Councillors and the local County Councillor and met the requirements of the application process.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the costs would be met from the community projects fund for the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area.

It was noted that the application had been submitted by former Councillor, Kevin Davis, and as such would be overseen by Ward Councillor Leslie Rice going forward.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the application submitted by a former Ward Councillor for Heathlands to improve the surfaces of two footpaths in Hook Heath be approved; and
- (ii) Councillor Rice, Ward Councillor for Heathlands, be asked to oversee all works relating to the surfacing of the footpaths in accordance with the project plan, project specification, costs and quality control.

Reason: To enable funding to be secured for the improvement of the surfaces of the two footpaths in the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY ANNUAL REPORT EXE24-051

The Leader of the Council advised that each year a report on the risk management and business continuity management activities of the Council was reported to the Executive, highlighting any issues. Since 2023, good progress had been achieved, including the updating and mapping of risks, and the updating of business continuity objectives in-line with agreed monitoring requirements. It was further noted that the Business Continuity Strategy, Incident Plan and associated documents were scheduled to be updated over coming months, including a full review of content and structure.

A key next step would be to further embed risk across all levels of the Council through training/workshops for Heads of Service and all Senior Managers.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the report be noted; and
- (ii) Risk Management and Business Continuity 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.

13. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Executive considered the performance monitoring information contained in the Performance Management Report – Quarter 4, 2023/24. The report, covering January to March 2024, provided progress against corporate key performance indicators (KPIs), corporate health indicators and key corporate strategic risks. The Performance Management Report was structured around the three Directorates within the Council.

The Leader of the Council highlighted key areas within the document, including around staffing, complaints and planning services and noted that, in regard to housing provision, a large number of families were housed in temporary accommodation due in part to the significant increases in rent. The report contained many positives though many challenges remained for the Council.

Councillor Roberts expressed his appreciation for the work undertaken by Officers to draw together the information.

RESOLVED

That the performance monitoring information contained in the Performance Management Report – Quarter 4, 2023-24, be received.

Reason: To manage the performance of the Council.

14. BUDGET MONITORING Q4 AND DRAFT OUTTURN 2023-24 EXE24-041

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Roberts, introduced a report which set out the budget monitoring position for the three months to the end of the 2023/24 financial year. The report provided a comparison with the previous three months and reflected the views of budget managers within the Council's Directorates.

The Members of the Executive were asked to note the draft outturn position for 2023/24 for the Council's General Reserve Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme.

RESOLVED

That the Council's draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account outturn position for 2023/24 be noted.

Reason: It is essential that the Council received regular reports on actual spend throughout the financial year to enable it to exercise its responsibilities for financial control and support the journey to financial recovery.

15. PROJECT MONITORING REPORT EXE24-050

The Executive received a report which provided an update on progress in relation to the Council's project management arrangements, assurance and processes. The report included the status of projects as at the end of April 2024, incorporating both capital and revenue projects.

RESOLVED

That (i) the report be received; and

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

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

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 17 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).

17. FUTURE OF BROCKHILL EXE24-068

RESOLVED

That the commercially sensitive information, in support of the Future of Brockhill report under Part I of the agenda, be noted.

Reason: To provide residents with a clear plan around the closure of Brockhill Extra Care scheme and the long-term future for the site.

<p>This document was published on Friday 14 June 2024 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday 24 June 2024, subject to call-in.</p>
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The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.11 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____