

**Minutes of a Meeting of the  
Performance and Finance Scrutiny  
Committee held at Council Chamber,  
Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road,  
Camberley, GU15 3HD on 6 December  
2017**

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- Cllr Jonathan Lytle (Chairman)  
+ Cllr Katia Malcaus Cooper (Vice Chairman) (In the chair)
- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| + Cllr David Allen    | + Cllr Robin Perry      |
| Cllr Nick Chambers    | Cllr Chris Pitt         |
| + Cllr Bill Chapman   | - Cllr Joanne Potter    |
| + Cllr Edward Hawkins | + Cllr Wynne Price      |
| - Cllr Paul Innicki   | + Cllr Darryl Ratiram   |
| + Cllr David Lewis    | - Cllr Victoria Wheeler |
| - Cllr Oliver Lewis   |                         |
- + Present  
- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: Cllr Rodney Bates and Cllr Max Nelson

In Attendance: Cllr Paul Deach, Cllr Colin Dougan and Cllr Richard Brooks

**20/PF Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**21/PF Scrutiny of Portfolio Holder - Transformation**

Cllr Colin Dougan, the Transformation Portfolio Holder, reminded the Committee of the areas covered by his Portfolio and gave a brief description of each of the following services and functions:

- ICT/Information Governance/Reprographics
- Economic Development
- Community Safety & Community Partnerships
- Performance
- Building Control
- Corporate Property

Cllr Dougan responded to questions relating to:

1. Freedom of Information requests -
  - a) the reason for the increase in the number requests;
  - b) the subject areas of enquiries made;
  - c) how the Council would address the resourcing issues should the increase be maintained; and
  - d) where FOI responses were published.

2. The process used to ensure that the Building Control Service were sufficiently rigorous.
3. The factors which determined the length of the leases to Bowls Clubs.
4. The resourcing impact to the Council of the General Data Protection Regulations and the impact of Brexit on this legislation.
5. The number of new businesses attracted by the Open for Business Scheme and how its success was gauged.
6. The number of new retailers brought into the Square and the London Road Block in the last year which were not restaurants and the number expected in the new year.
7. The number of businesses given grants from the Kevin Cantlon Fund.
8. The public consultations which had or would be undertaken to ensure that the public agreed with the Council's self-evaluated reviews.

In a supplementary question Cllr David Allan enquired as to whether it was possible to see all FOI requests received and the responses and Councillor Colin Dougan undertook to respond by email.

(Note: in accordance with the Council's Members' Code of Conduct Cllr Katia Malcaus Cooper declared a non pecuniary interest as the Chairman of the Briars Centre Management Committee.)

## **22/PF Scrutiny of Portfolio Holder - Finance**

Cllr Richard Brooks, the Finance Portfolio Holder, reminded the Committee of the areas covered by his Portfolio and gave a brief description of each of the following services and functions:

- Audit
- Corporate Enforcement
- Finance
- Legal Services
- Procurement
- Revenues and Benefits

Cllr Brooks responded to questions relating to:

1. The impact of the Public Space Protection Orders on the homeless within the Borough and how it made Surrey Heath residents more safe in general terms.
2. The additional expenditure relating to corporate enforcement.

3. The overall Legal Services budget, the number of FTEs and the timing of any service review under the Transformation process.
4. The areas where Surrey County Council had reduced their funding and how it would impact on the Council's service to Borough residents over the next two years.
5. The impact on the Council of the changes announced by the Chancellor in his November Autumn Statement.
6. The number of Borough residents who had, in the last 12 months, received:
  - Attachment of earnings
  - Liability Orders
  - Collection Agents
  - Winding Up Orders
7. The ways in which the Council publicised successful prosecutions for waste related offences.

In relation to the employment of collection agents, Cllr Rodney Bates referred to an initiative by Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council to no longer employ bailiffs to collect on debts. The Committee agreed that the success of this initiative should be monitored.

Cllr Bill Chapman asked for a list of waste related prosecutions, outcomes and dates which Cllr Brooks agreed to supply by email.

Cllr Paul Deach asked that a more proactive approach be taken to identify the owners committing dog fouling offences and that more resources be employed to prosecute offenders. Cllr Richard Brooks indicated that he considered that educating dog owners was crucial to reducing the problem but that he would ask officers to explore options for further action. This would include looking at best practice from other local authorities and any suggestions received from councillors.

## **23/PF Review of Reserves and Provisions**

The Executive considered a report detailing the Council's Reserves and Provisions. At 31 March 2017 the Council had £21.35m in useable reserves which were backed by cash. The report also made an estimate as to the level of reserves as at 31 March 2018 based on current knowledge, together with schedules showing what each reserve was for and the rules regarding expenditure.

Members discussed the Affordable Housing Fund and were advised that no schemes had yet been identified which met the criteria of the fund.

In relation to the Old Dean Toddlers Playground Fund, the Executive Head of Finance agreed to investigate whether the interest had been included.

The Insurance Reserve comprised a sum set aside in connection with the run-down of Municipal Mutual Insurance. Members enquired whether it would be possible to reduce the amount held in this Fund. The Executive Head of Finance advised that the Fund had been used to meet a recent claim. However he would investigate as to whether the fund could be reduced.

**Resolved to note the report.**

**24/PF Treasury Management Annual Report 2016/17 and Mid-year Report for 2017/18**

The Committee received the following reports which

- summarised treasury management performance during 2016/17;
- set out the performance of the Council's investments and borrowing for the first six months of the year; and
- demonstrated compliance with the Prudential Indicators.

Although treasury income returns had decreased slightly in 2016/17, this had been against a backdrop of a continuing low interest rate environment nationally coupled with the redemption of investments to repay borrowing.

As at 30 September 2017, the Council held £111.4m of borrowing, (a decrease of £7.6m on 31/3/2017), which had been used to fund the previous years' capital programmes.

The Council held invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves. During the first half of 2017/18 the Council's investment balance had ranged between £6m and £11 million due to timing differences between income and expenditure.

It was noted that all of the Council's money held in Iceland Banks had now been returned and that the Council had received slightly more than the £4m originally deposited. The Committee congratulated the Finance Team on achieving this successful outcome.

The Executive Head of Finance agreed to respond by email relating to a question from Cllr Robin Perry relating to a breakdown of the percentage returns on investments.

**Resolved to note the report.**

**25/PF The Council's Finances as at 30 September 2017**

The Committee received the second quarter monitoring report against the 2017/18 approved budget, which provided an update on the Revenue, Treasury and Capital budget position as at 30th September 2017.

It was noted that at this halfway stage in the year, it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions as to the year-end outturn.

Members were provided with further information relating to the overspend against the budget on artists fees at the Camberley Theatre.

**Resolved to note the report.**

**26/PF 2017/18 Mid Year Performance Report**

The Committee reviewed a report which summarised the performance of the Council for the first 6 months of the year against the corporate objectives, priorities and success measures laid out in the Annual Plan for 2017/2018.

**Resolved to note the report.**

**27/PF Committee Work Programme 2017/18**

The Committee considered the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 21 March 2017.

**Resolved that the Work Programme, attached as Annex A to the agenda report be agreed.**

**28/PF Exclusion of the Press and Public**

In accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as set out below:

Minute	Paragraph(s)
29/PF	3
30/PF	3

**29/PF Performance of the Major Property Acquisitions**

Members received a report on the performance of the Council's major property acquisitions and noted the position relating to the income received from rents and capital receipts.

The Committee was advised that 2 recent potential acquisitions had not proceeded. It was the nature of property investment that not every property investigated would be purchased as it was necessary to ensure that only those investments which represent good value and a low investment risk were eventually purchased. This did mean however that the Council would incur abortive costs from time to time. Members received information in relation to the amount of those costs occurred to date and were informed that these costs had been netted off against income received.

The Development Agreement in relation to Ashwood House and Pembroke House had now been exchanged with a purchase price which had exceeded the original

estimate. In relation to the amount of anticipated income received for Ashwood House from the Council Tax, Members were informed that the Council would receive an additional £24,000 annually.

It was also noted that more flexible letting conditions on St Georges Industrial Estate had contributed to increased occupancy levels.

Due to new conditions for the payment of the New Homes Bonus, the Committee was informed that the Council would be unlikely to receive any significant amounts in the future.

**Resolved to note the report.**

(Note: in accordance with the Council's Members' Code of Conduct Cllr Paul Deach declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to his social media work for Camberley Town Centre.)

**30/PF Submission of the Task and Finish Group**

The Committee received the report of the Task and Finish Group set up to review the impact of recent government benefit reforms on the Council and its residents, and to consider and recommend changes which could help minimise any negative repercussions.

The Task and Finish Group had met on several occasions and had considered the effect of the benefit changes which had occurred since 2013.

Within the Borough, the impact of the changes had evidenced itself by way of an increase in the number of claimants for the new schemes as the old schemes were closed, the need for additional help with homelessness and a large increase in those suffering from personal indebtedness.

Overall the Group believed that the best way to meet these needs and tackle an increasing problem, was to facilitate a stronger working relationship with specialist local charities. The Borough was fortunate to be located in an area where many of its residents were well educated and relatively affluent, who took an interest in their community and who were willing to volunteer to help the less fortunate. The Group considered that these residents could help provide a cost effective and efficient means of addressing the problems.

The Committee considered the specific proposals recommended by the Task and Finish Group.

**Resolved**

- 1. to recommend to the Executive that**
  - (i) the Department of Works and Pension (DWP) be urged to work more closely with the Council**

- (a) to mitigate the impact of the benefit reforms on the residents of the Borough;
  - (b) to ensure that there is adequate provision of computer facilities internet access and advisors across the Borough to support the wider introduction of Universal Credit and other changes to the welfare system;
- (ii) in relation to computer facilities, internet access, and advisor support, that
- (a) the list of sites with be refreshed, and widely publicised to the relevant audience;
  - (b) this exercise be repeated on a six monthly basis;
  - (c) in the event that this exercise indicates a shortage of available sites and/or personnel, alternative options, including the involvement and closer collaboration with local charities in the relevant sectors to be considered.
- (iii) the work done by the Surrey Credit Union in supporting residents in the Borough be noted and supported;
- (iv) the closer working relationship and joint working initiatives between the Camberley Job Centre and the Council be noted and supported;
- (v) the Local Plan Working Group be asked to take full account of the indicated increased need for one bedroom properties, when developing the plan.
2. that the External Partnership Select Committee be requested to invite Boom and DWP to their future work programme.

(Note: In accordance with the Council's Members' Code of Conduct Cllr Robin Perry declared a non pecuniary interest as the Council's representative and Trustee of the Camberley Citizens Advice Bureau Management Committee.)

### **31/PF Review of Exempt Items**

The Committee reviewed the reports which had been considered at the meeting following the exclusion of members of the press and public, as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information.

#### **Resolved that**

- (i) the report at Agenda Item 15 – Performance of the Major Property Acquisitions - remain exempt but that Minute 29/PF be made public; and**
- (ii) the Notes at Agenda Item 15a - Submission of the Task and Finish Group – remain exempt but that Minute 30/PF be made public.**

Chairman