

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive
held at Surrey Heath House on 12
January 2016**

+ Cllr Moira Gibson (Chairman)

+ Cllr Richard Brooks	+ Cllr Craig Fennell
+ Cllr Mrs Vivienne Chapman	+ Cllr Josephine Hawkins
+ Cllr Colin Dougan	+ Cllr Charlotte Morley

+ Present

In Attendance: Cllr Rodney Bates and Cllr Paul Deach

51/E Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

52/E Revenue Grants 2016/17

The Council funded a number of voluntary organisations which either worked in partnership with the Council or perform functions on the Council's behalf. The allocation of these grants in 2015/16 had been £133,970 for community organisations and £24,900 for leisure organisations, totalling £158,870.

The Executive considered a table providing a breakdown of these organisations' funding requests, together with supporting information. The table compared the funding requested against the grant awarded for 2015/16, the percentage of funding requested against annual running costs and, where appropriate, the in-kind financial support given to the organisations.

Members were also provided with information relating to the achievement of targets contained in each of the Service Level Agreements (SLA).

With regard to Tringhams, West End it was proposed that the grant be reduced to £15,000 as a number of SLA targets had not been met. In addition it was noted that the future viability of the club would continue to be monitored.

An application had been received from the Camberley Central Job Club for the first time. The organisation provided training and support to local people who were unemployed. A grant of £5,000, which would be subject to a SLA, was recommended which would help to fund staff costs.

In relation to the Surrey Heath Sports Council, the Business Portfolio Holder proposed that the grant be reduced to £1,500, in 2016/17, in view of the current level of reserves.

The Executive also noted that the External Partnerships Select Committee would review these grants over the coming year and would report back to the Executive in due course.

Resolved that

- (i) **subject to the delivery of the service level agreements, revenue grants be allocated for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 as follows:**

Organisation	Grant for 2016/17
Surrey Heath Citizens Advice	£80,000 - subject to the Portfolio Holder being asked to monitor the local situation and any potential impact in relation to the Money Advice Service, and other changing trends within local demand and service provision.
Voluntary Support North Surrey	£30,000 - subject to specific terms of the service level agreement to be delegated to the Transformation Portfolio Holder.
Surrey Heath Age Concern	£10,000 - subject to the continued delivery and expansion of the visiting and befriending service provided to combat loneliness in the elderly, and for a clear strategy to be implemented around respite care within Surrey Heath.
Tringhams, West End	£15,000 - with the specific terms of the service level agreement to be delegated to the Transformation Portfolio Holder to focus upon increasing the existing client numbers.
Camberley Central Job Club	£5,000 - subject to monitoring with the specific terms of the service level agreement to be delegated to the Transformation Portfolio Holder.
Basingstoke Canal Authority	£10,000
Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership	£10,000
Surrey Heath Sports Council	£1,500
Surrey Heath Arts Council	£1,400

- (ii) **all of the above organisations be informed that there was no guarantee that the Council would be able to award any grants in 2017/18; and**
- (iii) **the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership be given 12 months formal notice of termination of the current arrangements in order to provide for the cessation or reduction in the grant should this become necessary in the future.**

(Note: In accordance with the Council's Members Code of Conduct, Councillors declared interests as set out below:

- (a) Councillor Rodney Bates, for the record, as a friend was a volunteer at the Camberley Central Job Club;
- (b) Councillor Colin Dougan, for the record, as his daughter was a volunteer at Surrey Heath Age Concern; and
- (c) Councillor Charlotte Morley, a non pecuniary interest as the Secretary and the Council's representative on the Surrey Heath Sports Council.)

53/E Response to Cross Rail 2 Consultation

It was reported that Transport for London had consulted in relation to the proposals for Cross Rail 2. It was considered that the Council should support the proposal of Cross Rail 2 in principle. Cross Rail 2 could deliver further South West Main Line capacity which could deliver released capacity for the Bagshot, Camberley and Frimley route and released capacity at Ash Vale. Both these options would help the Council's ambitions to seek an improved service to Waterloo.

In addition the proposals relating to improvements at Woking Railway station and the possibility to terminate Cross Rail 2 services at Woking were also supported.

Resolved to endorse the response set out in the letter at Annex 1 of the agenda report as the Council's formal response to the Cross Rail 2 consultation.

54/E Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report

The Executive considered the Surrey Heath Authorities Monitoring Report (AMR) which had been produced in line with the requirements set out in the Localism Act 2011, which stated a report must be produced and planning authorities must publish this information direct to the public at least yearly. The AMR monitored the period from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.

The purpose of the AMR was to provide details of the actions which had been taken to implement a Local Development Plan and the Local Development Scheme, to indicate the extent to which policies in the current Surrey Heath Local Plan had been achieved, and to identify any solutions and changes where targets were not being met.

Concern was expressed that, over the plan period to date, around only 5% of completed dwellings had affordable housing, against a Core Strategy and Development Management Policy target of 35%. However it was noted the new policies had only been in place for 3 years and it would take some time for their effects to become fully apparent. In addition a significant quantity of applications had come through as prior notifications for the conversion of offices to residential accommodation which meant that there was no incentive or requirement for developers to provide affordable housing. Furthermore the requirement to provide

SANGs payments affected the financial viability of developers being able to deliver affordable housing in the Borough.

Resolved that the Surrey Heath Local Plan Authorities Monitoring Report be approved for the purpose of making the document publically available at the Council offices and on the Council's website.

55/E The Council Tax Base and the Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Executive received a report on the setting of the Council Tax Base for 2016/17 which reviewed the changes to Council Tax made in 2013/14 and the Local Council Tax Support Scheme introduced in April 2013.

Members noted that there had been an increase in the tax base of 289.70 which would generate an additional income of £61,500 based on the current Band D council tax charge. The Executive received detailed breakdowns of the calculations of the Tax Base for each part of the Borough and a breakdown of the calculation of the Tax Base for the whole area.

Technical changes to Council Tax had been introduced from April 2013 under the Local Government Finance Act 2012 which meant that the Council was empowered to set a number of changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions as well as introduce a premium for long term empty properties.

On 1 April 2013 the Council had introduced a new Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) to replace Council Tax Benefit, for working age claimants. The new scheme operated as a Council Tax discount and the Council was able to vary the value of discount on Council Tax granted to working age claimants. Pensioner claimants were protected and would continue to receive help towards their council tax based on regulations set by Central Government.

The funding given by Government to fund the new scheme was insufficient to pay the full cost of granting all claimants 100% discount. Members had taken the view when setting the scheme in January 2013 that the cost of the LCTSS should not fall on local tax payers and so had set the discount level at 70% for working age claimants, subject to a number of specific exemptions for defined vulnerable groups.

Members had also agreed to put £10,000 into a hardship fund for individual cases for 2015/16. An increasing number of hardship payments had being refused as the current procedural guidance required the applicant to have been in receipt of council tax benefit as at 31 March 2013. It was proposed that the guidance be amended to remove the reference to this requirement.

In 2013/14, a separate grant of £419,000 had been received from the Government to fund the scheme. This however had been included within the overall support grant from 2014/15 onwards and was not separately identifiable. It was anticipated that the loss of income to the Council would amount to £416,000 in 2016/17 as a result of the discount given for the LCTSS. Given that overall government funding was being reduced it was likely that the reduced grant paid

would not meet the cost of the LCTSS. If reductions in funding continued it was likely that the scheme might have to be reviewed in 2016/17 with a view to increasing the amounts claimants paid from the existing 30% to 40%. However this would need to be balanced against claimants' ability to pay any additional council tax.

In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government had launched a review into how local Council Tax support schemes were working across the country. It was recognised that any revisions to the scheme would need to reflect government changes.

For ease of administration it was important that there was alignment in respect of treatment of income and calculation of applicable amounts between housing benefit and the local council tax support scheme. Each year the Government made minor changes to its scheme to reflect uprating of benefits etc. In order that the housing benefit and LCTSS remained aligned, it was proposed that the Executive Head of Finance be authorised to make such minor changes as may be necessary to the LCTSS for all types of claimant.

The introduction of the LCTSS in April 2013 had had the effect of reducing the Council Tax base since it operated as a discount rather than a benefit. In order to recognise the effect that this had on parishes the Government had provided a grant to in 2013/14 to give to parishes to ensure they were no worse off because of the introduction of the LCTSS. This amounted to £22,923. The grant had again been provided in 2014/15 but as it had not been separately identifiable the Council had agreed to reduce the parish element by 13% in line with the overall reduction in funding received by the Council. It was proposed that no reduction be made in the current financial year and that the situation be reviewed again in 2016/17 in the light of further anticipated Government funding reductions. This would also mean that Parishes would not have to increase their precepts in 2016/17 just to cover any grant reduction.

Resolved

- (i) **to note the calculations of the tax base in Annexes A to F summarised below:**

	Band D Equivalent Properties
Bisley	1,513.05
Chobham	1,928.94
Frimley and Camberley	23,382.72
West End	2,013.81
Windlesham	8,051.68
Surrey Heath Borough Council	36,890.20

- (ii) **to note that the changes to Council Tax discounts made by Executive on 7 January 2014 under the freedoms given**

in the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and relevant statutory instruments remain unchanged for 2016/17;

- (iii) that £19,943 be given to Parishes in 2016/17 to offset the effect on the tax base of the Local Council Tax Support scheme; and**
- (iv) that the final setting of the Tax Base be delegated to the Executive Head of Finance.**

Recommended to Full Council that

- (i) the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Surrey Heath, approved by Council on 22 January 2013, be amended to remove the award of a Family Premium for any new claims or new births after 31 March 2016;**
- (ii) the Executive Head of Finance make any further minor changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme so as to ensure that where applicable to income and applicable amount calculation it remains in line with Housing Benefit changes introduced by legislation; and**
- (iii) incomes and applicable amounts and non-dependant deceptions be updated, in line with the percentages and amounts supplied by the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department of Communities and Local Government, and applied to Housing Benefit claims.**

56/E Quarterly Financial Monitoring

The Executive received the second quarter monitoring report against the 2015/16 approved budget, which provided an update on the Revenue, Treasury and Capital budget position as at 30 September 2015 and an early view for the financial year.

Overall services expect to be £250,000 under budget at the end of the year due to £50,000 underspend on the Business portfolio; £280,000 underspend on Community portfolio; and £174,000 additional income in Corporate property. This would be offset by the £250,000 savings target included within the original budget,

Interest on investments was on track to exceed the expected income provided for in the 2015/16 budget.

It was estimated that there would be an underspend of £77k on wages and salaries at the end of the year based on expenditure to date.

The total capital programme for the year was £19.773m. Of this, £17.289m had been spent during the year so far, mainly on property acquisition with other sums being spent on air conditioning, computer software, car parks and disabled facilities grants.

Sundry debts as at 30 September totalled £606k; a small reduction against the £627k outstanding last quarter. Of the total debts due, £218k related to one invoice for Surrey County Council for recycling credits due in year. The second largest element, £80k, related to invoices for temporary housing costs.

At the end of the second quarter Housing Benefit debts was £643k which was an increase of £33k compared to the last quarter. Although £57k had been recovered, a further £139k had been raised in invoices for new overpayments generated by fraud investigation or claimant information.

Resolved to note the Revenue, Treasury and Capital Position for the first half of 2015/16.

57/E Response to consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy

The Executive considered a draft response to the Government's consultations on changes to National Planning Policy.

The proposed changes concerned housing delivery and related specifically to affordable housing, density around commuter hubs, new settlements, starter homes and development on brownfield land and small sites. The consultation also sought views on transitional arrangements for the introduction of changes to policy.

Whilst the principle of increasing the density of development around commuter hubs and supporting sustainable new settlements was generally welcomed, concerns were raised in respect to other elements of the consultation proposals.

Resolved that the response set out at Annex 1 of to the agenda report be the Council's formal response to the Department of Communities and Local Government's consultation on changes to national planning policy.

Chairman