

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive
held on 14 February 2023**

+ Cllr Alan McClafferty (Chairman)

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| - Cllr Sarah Jane Croke | - Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans |
| + Cllr Colin Dougan | - Cllr Adrian Page |
| + Cllr Shaun Garrett | + Cllr Robin Perry |

+ Present

- Apologies for absence presented

In Attendance: Cllr Graham Alleway, Cllr Rodney Bates, Cllr Cliff Betton, Cllr Stuart Black, Cllr Sharon Galliford, Cllr Edward Hawkins, Cllr Josephine Hawkins, Cllr Sashi Mylvaganam, Cllr Morgan Rise, Cllr Pat Tedder, Cllr Victoria Wheeler and Cllr Helen Whitcroft

83/E Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

84/E Questions by Members

Councillor Graham Alleway asked a question about the Executive reviewing the Community Infrastructure Levy policy. It was noted that a motion on this matter had been included on the agenda for the Council meeting on 22 February 2023. The Leader confirmed that he would be happy for the Executive to undertake this review.

In response to a question from Councillor Victoria Wheeler, the Leader undertook to provide an update on the progress of Thames Water attending a meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee.

85/E Annual Plan 2023/24

The Executive considered the proposed Annual Plan for 2022/23, which set out the key projects and performance indicator targets for the next financial year. The Annual Plan was the main delivery vehicle for ensuring that the ambitions in the Five Year Strategy, which had been agreed in October 2021, were delivered. The draft plan had been considered by the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in January and its comments had been incorporated.

RESOLVED that the Annual Plan 2023/24, as attached at Annex A to the agenda report, be agreed, subject to the approval of the annual budget 2023/24 by the Full Council on 22 February 2023.

86/E Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Executive considered a report setting out the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the revenue budgets estimates for the 2023/24 financial year, and the

indicative estimates for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27. The MTFs also incorporated a 4-year capital strategy and programme, plus a Treasury Management Strategy. It was noted that the budget reflected a proposal for the Council's element of the annual council tax precept to be increased by 2.99% across all Council Tax Bands.

Members discussed the interest generated by reserves and it was agreed to ensure that, where required due to the terms of that reserve, the interest generated from a restricted reserve would be added to its funds.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated Revenue Budget Estimates covering the period 2023/24 to 2026/27, as set out at the updated Annex A to the agenda report and its appendices, be approved, including:

- (i) approving the 2023/24 budget estimates giving a net cost of services revenue budget for the Council of £17.468 million as shown in the updated Appendix 1 to the Medium Term Financial Strategy;**
- (ii) approving the unavoidable service pressures and budget growth of £5.210 million shown in Appendix 1 and in more detail in the updated Appendix 1-1 to the Medium Term Financial Strategy;**
- (iii) approving the revenue efficiencies of £2.348 million shown in the updated Appendix 1 and in more detail in Appendix 1-2 to the Medium Term Financial Strategy;**
- (iv) approving the recommendation by the Strategic Director Finance and Customer Services (the Council's Section 151 Officer) that a sum of up to £3.500 million of the interest equalisation earmarked reserve be drawn to support the revenue budget over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and provide a sustainable budget for the Council;**
- (v) that the Surrey Heath Borough Council element of the annual council tax precept be increased by 2.99% across all Council Tax Bands; and**
- (vi) approving the Capital Strategy, Capital programme and Treasury Management Strategy which form part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.**

RESOLVED to note

- (i) the forecast level of reserve balances shown at the updated Appendix 4 to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, subject to confirmation once the outturn position for the current financial year (2022/23) is known, to be reported in the revenue outturn report early in the new financial year;**

- (ii) the Council Tax base for Surrey Heath Borough Council is 39,613.4 as set at Council on 14 December 2022;
- (iii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy contains a savings target of £1.200 million over the period of the strategy which will be achieved through a combination of further services efficiencies, increases in income and potentially service reductions to be identified through a output-based budget review for all services of the Council and subject to a Star Chamber challenge review that will commence in the summer of 2023; there is also a managed vacancy factor (mvf) of £100,000 built into the budgets as part of the pay settlement agreed by Council;
- (iv) the statement of the Chief Financial Officer (Strategic Director Finance and Customer Services) on the robustness of estimates and sustainability of balances;
- (v) the finance settlement from central Government was debated and finalised through the House of Commons on 8 February 2023. Any material changes from the final settlement will be communicated to the Executive at its meeting and if necessary presented with the budget to Council.

87/E 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme

The Executive was informed that, as part of the 2022 Autumn Statement, the Chancellor had announced the 2023 Supporting Small Business (2023 SSBR) scheme. For 2023/24 to 2025/26, the Government would, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in guidance, reimburse Local Authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), to grant 2023 Supporting Small Business relief.

Members were advised that adopting the government guidance would cap bill increases at £600 per year for any business losing eligibility for some or all Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief at the 2023 revaluation. SSB had first been introduced at the 2017 revaluation to support ratepayers facing bill increases greater than the Transitional Relief caps due to loss of Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief. This Council had adopted a local scheme in respect of the 2017 scheme.

As a billing authority, this Council was responsible for administering 2023 SSBR and was required to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under Section 47.

RESOLVED that the 2023 Supporting Small business Relief Scheme, as set out in Annex A to the agenda report, be adopted.

88/E Pre-application charging and fast track service for planning applications

The Executive considered a report setting out proposed changes to Development Management's discretionary services.

A review of the pre-application service had been undertaken and had identified that the Council's current fee for householder pre-application enquiries was below the average fee within Surrey; furthermore, its pre-application service maximum charge for 100+ dwellings was generous and uncapped compared to some authorities, whose fee range or cap was much lower before bespoke fees or Planning Performance Agreements applied.

Members reviewed a revised pre-application service that would also be broader in scope and provide a better service to the public, for example by offering concept only meetings and specialist expert advice. The potential impact of these proposals on individual specialist posts was recognised and the acceptance of their time would need to be on a case-by-case basis and on the discretion of the Development Manager. A revised charging schedule was also noted.

The review of discretionary services also included the introduction of a fast-track planning application service. This service would accelerate the determination of a planning application for a decision to be quicker than the statutory determination date, normally 8 weeks, for an extra fee in addition to the statutory fee. The few authorities offering a fast-tracked service at present typically included a speedier registration of an application, an earlier site visit and an earlier decision date. This was generally reserved for householder planning applications and applications for certificates of lawful development.

Members were advised that a pilot would be undertaken during April and October 2023 and that the availability of fast-track applications would be limited to ensure the continuation of the standard service.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the revised pre-application charging schedule takes effect from 1 April 2023; and**
- (ii) a fast-track planning application service, for householder planning applications and applications for certificates of lawfulness, be piloted from 1 April 2023 – 31 December 2023.**

89/E Local Community Project Fund Bids

In October 2020, the Executive had set up the Local Community Improvement Fund for bids to use local CIL funds for the non-parished wards. The Fund pooled the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy contributions to allow wards that did not deliver new development, but did experience its impact, to have access to CIL funding. It also allowed the community to bid for funding for small scale local capital projects.

The Executive considered two applications that had been received during the round of bids open between 3 and 31 January 2023. These applications related to the installation of an additional lamp and column and replacement of existing lamp heads to LEDs at Southcote Park, Camberley, in Parkside ward and the

resurfacing of damaged tarmac pathways at London Road Recreation Ground in St Michaels ward.

RESOLVED that, in line with the CIL bids detailed in Annex 1 to the agenda report

- (i) £6,410 (net) be awarded to Parkside ward for the installation of an additional lamp and column and to replace the 3 lamp heads on the existing columns to LED at Southcote Park, Camberley; and**
- (ii) £55,000 (net) be awarded to St Michaels ward for the resurfacing of damaged tarmac pathways at London Road Recreation Ground.**

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that

- (i) £6,410 be added to the Council's Capital Programme for the installation of an additional lamp and column and to replace the 3 lamp heads on the existing columns to LED at Southcote Park, Camberley; and**
- (ii) £55,000 be added to the Council's Capital Programme for the resurfacing of damaged tarmac pathways at London Road Recreation Ground.**

Note: it was noted for the record that Councillor Alan McClafferty declared that he lived adjacent to the London Road Recreation Ground.

90/E Deanside Playground Refurbishment

The Executive was reminded that Deanside, Old Dean, Camberley had been built by Surrey Heath Housing Association, now Accent Housing, in 2003. The park and woodland areas had transferred to the Council in around 2008 to maintain, with a maintenance budget of £200,000. The playground had been installed 20 years ago and was now coming to its end of life.

It was proposed to fund the refurbishment of the playground at Deanside from the balance held in the Section 106 reserve, which currently amounted to approximately £94,000. It was estimated that the playground build would cost in the region of £80,000, based on other similar sized playgrounds built within the Borough; a contingency of £14,000 had also been incorporated. Agreement to draw down from the Section 106 reserve was therefore sought.

Members noted that the Section 106 agreement was site specific and could only be spent on this development for the maintenance of the open spaces. Furthermore, there was a covenant in the Section 106 agreement that any unspent money would be returned to Accent Housing after a period of 20 years.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that

- (i) permission be granted to draw down £94,000 from the Section 106 reserve for this development to refurbish the playground at**

Deanside to ensure the local children can continue to play in a safe and secure space;

(ii) these funds be added to the capital programme; and

(iii) authority to spend the contingency budget be delegated to the Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Services.

91/E Coronation Grant Scheme

The Executive considered a report containing proposals for a one-off small grants scheme to support local community-led Coronation activities as part of marking the national Coronation. It was advised that there were sufficient funds available with the Containment Outbreak Management Fund to support a limited number of events across all wards. These funds, suggested to be a maximum of £8,000 total and funded at £250 per event, would allow community groups to receive a small grant to support community picnics. These events would take place on 7 May 2023, in line with national guidance.

It was reported that, as the Council would be in the pre-election period from 22 March 2023, during which time members of the public would be making preparations for celebrations, discussions were underway with a third party, The Rotary Club, to establish whether it would be able to deliver the scheme on the Council's behalf and to award grants against the specified criteria to individuals and groups. Any unspent funds would be returned to the Council.

Members reviewed the draft criteria and it was agreed to add a stipulation that the funding from the Council should not be used for purchasing alcohol. It was also agreed that each event supported would be required to supply photographs of the celebrations.

RESOLVED that

(i) a scheme of small grants (£250 each to a maximum cost to the Council of £8,000) be approved for application to support local communities in marking the Coronation of King Charles III on 7 May 2023;

(ii) the criteria for the award of grants through the Coronation Grant Scheme be adopted as set out in paragraph 3.2, as amended, of the agenda report; and

(iii) any unspent monies not allocated through this small grants scheme be returned to the Council.

It was noted for the record that Councillor Helen Whitcroft declared that the Mayor's Charity could apply for a grant under the scheme.

92/E Public Realm Task & Finish Group report

The Executive received a report from the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee concerning the outcome of its Task & Finish Group's review of the circumstances leading to the increased costs of the Public Realm project in Camberley Town Centre. The Committee had considered the Task & Finish Group's findings at its meeting on 25 January 2023 and had endorsed its recommendations (minute 40/PF refers).

The recommendations for adoption by officers when managing significant contracts and projects were noted and endorsed by the Executive, with clarification that such contracts and projects would be defined as having a value of £1m or more. It was recognised that the review had taken longer than anticipated and a number of the recommendations had already been implemented.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group presented to the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2023 be noted; and**
- (ii) the recommendations set out at section 2 of the agenda report be approved for adoption by officers when managing significant contracts and projects with a value of £1m or more.**

93/E Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, 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 Local Government Act 1972 as set out below:

Minute	Paragraph(s)
94/E	3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
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94/E Executive Working Group notes

The Executive considered the notes of the meetings of Executive Working Groups that had taken place in the previous few months.

RESOLVED that the Working Group notes be received.

95/E Review of Exempt Items

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

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Camberley Town Centre Working Group notes from the meeting on 17 November 2022 remain exempt for the present time;**
- (ii) (the Climate Change Working Group notes from the meetings held on 28 July and 11 October 2022 be made public;**
- (iii) the Community Support Working Group notes from the meeting held on 2 November 2022 be made public;**
- (iv) the Equality Working Group notes from the meeting held on 20 October 2022 be made public;**
- (v) the Local Plan Working Group notes from the meetings held on 2 August, 21 September and 8 November 2022 remain exempt for the present time;**
- (vi) the Property Investment Working Group notes from the meetings held on 7 September, 12 October, 9 November and 7 December 2022 remain exempt for the present time; and**
- (vii) all Working Group notes remaining exempt be periodically reviewed by the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, with a view to making them public when appropriate.**

Chairman