

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Performance  
and Finance Scrutiny Committee held at  
Virtual Meeting on 1 July 2020**

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+ Cllr Sashi Mylvaganam (Chairman)  
+ Cllr Shaun Garrett (Vice Chairman)

+ Cllr Dan Adams	+ Cllr Sharon Galliford
+ Cllr Graham Alleway	+ Cllr Edward Hawkins
+ Cllr Rodney Bates	+ Cllr Darryl Ratiram
+ Cllr Cliff Betton	+ Cllr Graham Tapper
+ Cllr Vivienne Chapman	- Cllr Victoria Wheeler
+ Cllr Sarah Jane Croke	+ Cllr Kristian Wrenn

+ Present  
- Apologies for absence presented

**Non Committee Members in Attendance:**

Cllr Richard Brooks, Cllr Tim FitzGerald, Cllr Robin Perry and Cllr Valerie White,

**Executive Portfolio Holders in Attendance:**

Cllr David Lewis, Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance  
Cllr Alan McClafferty, Leader

**Officers in Attendance:**

Sarah Bainbridge, Senior Organisational Development Advisor  
Adrian Flynn, Chief Accountant  
Daniel Harrison, Executive Head: Business  
Simon Little, Executive Head: Finance  
Louise Livingston, Executive Head; Transformation  
Richard Payne, Executive Head: Corporate  
Tim Pashen, Interim Chief Executive  
Gavin Ramtohal, Head of Legal  
Jenny Rickard, Executive Head: Regulatory

**1/PF Apologies for Absence**

The following substitution was noted:

Councillor Rodney Bates for Councillor Victoria Wheeler

**2/PF Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Adams declared an interest in respect of Item 6: Performance of Major Property Acquisitions as he was a director for a company that rented office space from the Council.

Councillor Deach declared an interest in respect of Item 6: Performance of Major Property Acquisitions as he undertook paid work for the management company of The SQ shopping centre.

### 3/PF Annual Performance Report 2019/20

The Committee considered a report setting out the Council's performance against the targets contained within the Annual Performance Plan for 2019/20. Arising from member's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Keir continued to work with the Council on the regeneration of the London Road Block however the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic would have an influence over the project and these would need to be better understood before the project was progressed. It was agreed that more information would be circulated to members.
- It was confirmed that the Berkley Homes scheme for the old BHS store was progressing and Berkley Homes had now handed back the premises to the Council in line with contractual agreements.
- Surrey County Council (SCC) had identified a need for two additional transit sites for Gypsies and Travellers in Surrey and work to identify suitable sites was currently underway.
- Locally there was an insufficient number of permanent pitches for the number of Gypsies and Travellers currently living in the Borough and the work to identify suitable additional sites not only to meet the current unmet need but also to accommodate projected future need was being progressed through the Local Plan process. It was confirmed that the Council would be consulting the Gypsy and Traveller community over future pitch provisions and the matter would be raised with the County council in respect of transit sites.
- Contractors had continued to work on the construction of the new Arena Leisure centre during the Covid-19 pandemic period and it was expected that the new facility would be delivered on time and within budget.
- It was confirmed that some recycle was sent to Turkey for processing and the Council did receive money from this. Any low grade plastics unsuitable for recycling were removed from the waste stream before the plastics were sent to their end destination thus reducing the risk of contamination and rejected loads.
- Since Surrey Heath became a full Universal Credit area all claims for help with rent were now made as part of a Universal Credit claim by a working age person. The only exceptions to this were claims from working age persons living in bed and breakfast, temporary or supported living accommodation. The complexity of these claims meant that there were occasions when the 20 day target to assess the claim was exceeded.
- The average number of days taken to assess a new housing benefit claim in January was 13.15 days, February 17.13 days and March 24.77. In March the COVID pandemic impacted the assessment process as the Benefits Team were assigned welfare calls.
- This year, to date, officers had investigated the possibility of acquiring five properties. Of these, it had been decided not to proceed with three because they did not fit the Council's strategic objectives, one property in the London Road Block would be revisited at a later date as decided that 3 would not be invest.
- It was confirmed that SCC had assumed responsibility for the SHAPE project and feasibility work on the Land East of Knoll Road project was continuing as SCC looked to rationalise its property portfolio.
- The committee was informed that community engagement would be incorporated into the development of a Corporate Strategy for the Town Centre which would set out the Council's planning, economic, property and investment aspirations for Camberley town centre.

The Committee noted the Annual Performance Plan for the 2019/20 municipal year.

#### **4/PF End of Year Finance report**

The Committee received a report summarising the Council's financial performance during the 2019/20 financial year.

Arising from the Committee's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- The Executive had approved due diligence work on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The subsequent decision on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020 to not proceed had resulted in the -£120,000 variance in the Corporate Management function. Both Executive decisions had been reported to Full Council.
- The -£120,000 variance could be apportioned as follows:
  - Legal Fees - £79,000
  - Structural Survey £22,000
  - Valuation £12,000
  - Financial Advice £7,000
- Camberley Theatre had been set ambitious income targets and had been performing well until the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It had been a Council decision not to increase car park tariffs in line with inflation and consequently tariffs had not increased since 2014/15.
- Corporate Management Team had held initial discussions on a zero based budgeting exercise and it was expected that this work would be developed more over the summer before it was shared with members.
- The -£1.2million variance in the Town Centre investment line represented the difference between the assumptions that had been made when drawing up the budgets in 2018/19 and what had actually happened.
- A Waste Reserve Fund had been set up to meet any unexpected one off costs associated with the 2017 mobilisation of the joint waste contract in Surrey Heath. Due to an oversight, this fund ought to have been included as growth in the 2018/19 accounts and the -£145,000 variance in the waste function reflects a correction of this accounting error.
- The Arena would not be included in the budget until construction had been completed and the new leisure centre re-opened.

The Committee was informed that the Covid-19 pandemic would impact on the Council's budget. It was estimated that the Council would experience a shortfall of £7million in its 2020/21 budget however this figure had been based on a number of assumptions. Whilst the shortfall could be covered, in the short term, through use of the Council's reserves a view would need to be taken on how the reserves would be replenished.

The Committee noted the report.

#### **5/PF Performance of Major Property Acquisitions 2019-20**

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the performance of the Council's major property investments during the 2019/20 financial year.

Arising from the Committee's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- The Council currently received 95% of its expected net rental value from its investment property portfolio.

- In the 2019/20 financial year, the Council had paid Montagu Evans £34,000. It was agreed that details of any fees paid to Montagu Evans through the JPUT would be circulated.
- The marketing of Ashwood House would commence once the public realm works in Princess Way had been completed. The funding for the marketing work had been agreed by the Executive on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020.
- The Council was currently in discussion with an interested party in relation to renting the vacant space in the Theta building however this work had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- There was no set budget for any due diligence work required and any costs incurred were funded from an investment opportunities budget.

It was noted that the Committee's meeting in September would focus on more in depth discussions of the Council's property portfolio.

The Committee noted the report.

## **6/PF Covid-19 Pandemic Response**

The Committee considered a report providing a summary of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report summarised the Council's response, in its capacity as a Category One responder, from both an emergency response perspective and a business continuity perspective and provided an overview of the key findings and learning points that had been identified following debriefing work with those most involved in the Council's response.

During the pandemic a number of actions had been put in place including: the appointment of deputies, remote working and regular and intensive cleaning of Surrey Heath House to increase the resilience of the Council.

Work was also underway to develop a response to any potential local outbreak and business continuity plans were being updated to take into account the potential impacts of Test and Trace on the Council's workforce. It was agreed that these plans would be shared with Councillors.

Arising from the Committee's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- To date, approximately 90% of residents were continuing to pay Council Tax in line with pre-existing arrangements however it was accepted that this situation could change as the furlough scheme was brought to an end and if, as expected, unemployment rates increased.
- Applied Resilience were contracted to provide the Council with an Emergency Response function on an annual rolling contract at a cost of approximately £28,000 a year.
- 80% of the Council's staff had been involved with the Council's response in one form or another with the majority undertaking this work in addition to their normal contracted duties with many teams continuing to provide a normal service to residents.
- Human Resources was working with the Council's Management Team to ensure that if a similar high level of staff input was required for any potential second wave of infection then business could continue as normally as possible.
- Risk assessments had been carried out in Surrey Heath House and work was underway to ensure that social distancing could be maintained as staff returned to work and the building was reopened to visitors.

- A target date of 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 had been set for reopening the building to the public however this would be phased and any visits would be by appointment only.

The Committee expressed their thanks to officers and voluntary groups for the work that they had undertaken to support residents and businesses during the pandemic.

#### **7/PF Work Programme**

The Committee received a report setting out a revised draft work programme for the Committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.

**RESOLVED** that the revised draft work programme be adopted.

#### **8/PF Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee would take place on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

#### **9/PF Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**Chairman**