

## **BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD**

### **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at the New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate on 24 June 2021.

Present: Councillors M. A. Brunt (Leader), T. Schofield (Deputy Leader), R. H. Ashford, R. Biggs, N. J. Bramhall, V. H. Lewanski, C. M. Neame and K. Sachdeva

In attendance: Councillors Blacker, Chandler, Elbourne, Harrison, Humphreys, Sinden, Tary, Torra, Turner (*Clerk's Note: Those Members marked 'In attendance' attended the meeting remotely.*)

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Archer.

Councillor Humphreys joined the meeting remotely so could not vote at the meeting.

#### **2. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting on 25 March 2021 were approved.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

#### **4. REIGATE & BANSTEAD 2025 ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

The Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski, introduced the report which set out the progress made towards the Borough's corporate objectives in 2020/21. Annex 1 set out the success measures that the Council was reported against and Annex 2 set out the progress made towards the Council's Equality Objectives.

Councillor Lewanski explained that obviously the pandemic has had a direct or indirect impact on some areas of the Council's work. However, the reports showed that, as well as the Borough's comprehensive emergency response, it had made good progress on its corporate priorities.

The reports were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their 17 June meeting who made a number of observations to the Executive. These were outlined by Visiting Member and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Councillor

Harrison, at the meeting. These included requesting more current information on environmental sustainability and carbon emissions and the need to assess the value of the actions taken throughout the year, both in terms of value for money, and feedback from residents. The Economic Prosperity budget was around £400k and Members asked for more detail on service spending which was not primarily business as usual or Covid-related. The Committee noted that around a third of residents surveyed had indicated that they did not feel well informed about Council services. O&S Committee Members asked the Executive to seek to understand and improve this figure and to consider new ways to engage with residents.

During the discussion, Visiting Members asked for local Borough information on emissions and the source of the employment sectors set out in contextual indicators which did not include manufacturing in the top 5 employment sectors locally. Written responses would be provided to Members.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Notes the Reigate & Banstead 2025 Annual Report for 2020/21, and
2. Notes the Equality Objectives Progress Reports for 2020/21.

## **5. LOCAL CHARACTER AND DISTINCTIVENESS DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Executive member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Councillor Biggs, set out the background to the planning guidance documents known as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The SPD recommended for adoption at this meeting was the Local Character and Distinctiveness Design Guide SPD.

Councillor Biggs highlighted that:

- The Planning Policy Team had revised the 2004 Local Distinctiveness Design Guide SPG to reflect changes in local planning and national policy.
- The document had been revised to reflect recent development trends and case studies over the past 17 years including in relation to Development in Residential Areas of Special Character (RASCs), importance of good window design, solar and photovoltaic panels, conversion and redevelopment of barns, farms and other buildings in the countryside and green corridors, parkways and soft edges.
- A new chapter on Design Process had been added to help achieve good design in new developments.
- Following Executive approval on 28 January 2021, the draft revised SPD went out for a four-week public consultation in February 2021. Twenty-four responses were received, and these were set out in the SPD's Consultation Statement.
- All Members had had the opportunity to contribute to the document and the final responses from the consultation and the Council's comments had been circulated to Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members.
- The 2004 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) required formal revocation as stipulated by the Local Planning Regulations.

Members welcomed the comprehensive document and thanked the team who had worked on it. The Leader, Councillor Brunt, commented that it gave a good insight into the diversity of the Borough.

Visiting Members asked whether the document would prevent developers from clearing trees from potential development sites. It was noted that this was a matter for the Council's Tree Officer to make sure there was proper protection for trees which contributed to the character of the area.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Adopts the Local Character and Distinctiveness Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
2. Revokes the Local Distinctiveness Design Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 2004.

## **6. FEES AND CHARGES POLICY FOR LICENCED MOBILE HOME SITES**

The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Bramhall, introduced the item: Fees and Charges Policy for Licenced Mobile Home Sites.

Councillor Bramhall highlighted that:

- The policy had been prepared to enable the Council to charge fees in relation to the licensing of mobile home sites, as permitted in law. This covers site licensing fees and also fees for the new Fit and Proper Person test, which comes into effect in July 2021.
- The policy will allow the Council to recover the cost of its work licensing and inspecting these sites, which had previously been done for no charge, as well as the new duty to assess the Fit and Proper Persons which will be a substantial piece of work.
- The site licensing fees proposed included: application for grant of a new mobile home site licence, application to vary an existing mobile home licence, transfer of an existing mobile home site licence, annual fee, and deposit of site rules.
- The revenue income generated will contribute to the existing income budget of the Environmental Health service which had previously expanded in expectation of the introduction of new fees and charges.
- There were some additions to the Officer Scheme of Delegation contained within the Council's Constitution in relation to Section 5 (Housing and other Residential Accommodation).

Visiting Members asked if the Fees and Charges Policy related to Traveller mobile home sites. It was confirmed that this policy did not relate to Gypsy and Traveller sites.

*Clerk's Note: Members were given a follow-up written answer to provide further clarification on this question.*

Members noted that the fees seemed quite low and asked if these would cover costs of the officers' work. It was confirmed that the fees and charges would cover the officer time to administer these new site licence fees. The new Fit and Proper Person test was similar to that for a public house licensee so that this person would

run the site within the rules. This was a positive step forward. Many mobile home sites were well run but some needed extra work and this test would help the Council keep a closer eye on these particular sites. It also gave reassurance to residents living on mobile home parks that the site was being properly assessed.

Members asked how a complaint could be raised against a Fit and Proper Person. Katie Jackson, Environmental Health Manager, said residents had the right to complain if they had complaints about standards of compliance and the Council can take enforcement action. More information would be provided as a written answer.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Approve the Fees and Charges Policy for Licenced Mobile Home Sites provided as Annex 1.
2. Approve the additions to the Officer Scheme of Delegation contained within the Council's Constitution, as set out in Annex 2 in relation to Section 5 (Housing and Other Residential Accommodation) to go to Council.

## **7. APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF THE BANSTEAD COMMON CONSERVATORS**

The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Bramhall, introduced the item to consider appointments to the Board of the Banstead Commons Conservators. The Conservators maintain and protect the integrity of Banstead Commons, a strategic part of the green belt in Reigate and Banstead.

The terms of two Conservators, Mr Broad and Mr Mill, concluded at the end of March 2021 who were both seeking re-appointment. Mr Cassidy and Mr Hatcher were nominating themselves to the vacant positions which were for a period of three years.

The Leader thanked the candidates for their service and for putting themselves forward. Members were grateful for the work that they do to support Banstead Commons.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Appoint Mr Broad and Mr Mill as the two representatives, for the period to May 2024, to fill positions that have come to the end of their term on the Banstead Commons Conservators, after considering their applications under Exempt business.

## **8. QUARTER 4 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski, outlined the Council's performance up to the end of Quarter 4 (January to March 2021).

Councillor Lewanski highlighted that:

- Of the 12 indicators reported on in Q4, all were on target or within the agreed tolerance.

- The Q4 report also included three contextual performance indicators for the Executive's awareness.
- The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021. The Committee made no formal observations or recommendations to the Executive although it asked for more information about definitions of affordable housing and the number of affordable housing completions.

Visiting Member and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Councillor Harrison, noted that affordable housing was considered an important issue for the Committee. One of the areas related to homelessness which had showed a decrease compared to Quarter 3. More information and an update from the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Support, Councillor Neame, had been requested. Councillor Neame confirmed that she would be responding to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Harrison also highlighted that Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members had noted the high number of referrals from the National Fraud Initiative on fraud cases. The Committee had had assurance from the Acting Head of Paid Service that robust action was taken against individuals making fraudulent claims such as claiming for Single Person households for Council Tax rebates.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Governance, Councillor Schofield, outlined the provisional Revenue and Capital budget outturn for last year.

Councillor Schofield highlighted the following points to Executive Members:

- It had been a challenging year as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic which was reflected in the final budget outturn position.
- The impacts of the pandemic had been closely monitored throughout the year and for 2020/21 and 2021/22 they should be contained within the additional funding provided to date the Government. But use of Reserves may yet be necessary to offset future ongoing costs or income losses if additional funding is not provided by the Government over the medium term.
- For Service budgets, the full year outturn was £17.9m against a management budget of £16.0m resulting in an overspend of £1.9m (12%). A key reason for this overspend was the inclusion of income losses as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For Central budgets, the outturn was £6.9m against a management budget of £9.7m resulting in an underspend of £2.8m (29%). This underspend was mainly as a result of an underspend in Treasury Management costs and an underspend against Budget Contingencies.
- The Capital Programme outturn position was £25.8m which was £99.4m (80%) below the approved Programme for the year. The variance was as a result of £98.6m slippage and a net underspend of £0.7m. The slippage will be carried forward to be included in the Programme for 2021/22 onwards.
- Responses to the advance questions from Overview and Scrutiny were circulated before the meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair, Councillor Harrison, recognised that it had been a challenging year but finished better than expected although the Government had not made up all the revenue shortfall. It was noted that the Covid-related costs had been separated out in the budget. Also, the Collection Fund was going to be in

deficit this year due to COVID-19 and the deficit recovery would be spread over three years. The service budgets of ICT and Legal were underspent. The underspend in ICT was due to projects that were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic response with other areas being prioritised. The Committee was interested in the hybrid working project. It was also noted that the Council was proposing to build up Reserves to cover Covid costs in future years. Land at Reading Arch Road had been purchased as part of commercial investments. The summary giving income losses and revenue lost or recovered was welcomed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Notes Key Performance Indicator performance for Q4 2020/21 as detailed in the report and annex 1;
2. Notes the Revenue budget outturn for 2020/21 as detailed in the report and at Annex 2 and approve the recommended budget carry-forwards to 2021/22;
3. Notes the Capital Programme outturn for 2020/21 as detailed in the report and at Annex 3;
4. Notes the forecast year-end Revenue Reserves position; including the new Reserves that have been established to manage COVID-19 funds.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 4 2020/21**

The Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski, updated the Executive on Risk Management in Quarter 4 2020/21. Annex 1 of the report provided an update on all strategic risks, including their rating and a summary of key updates.

Councillor Lewanski highlighted the following:

- No new strategic risks were identified in Quarter 4.
- One strategic risk was recommended for closure which was: SR4 – Partner Public Sector Funding Decisions. This was recommended for closure as the Council's funding reliance on Surrey County Council had reduced, thus reducing the potential impact of any funding or budget decisions that Surrey makes.
- The impacts resulting from partner public sector funding decisions going forwards will be covered in SR2 – Financial Sustainability in the 2021/22 Strategic Risk Register.
- There was one red-rated operational risk and the detail of this was provided in an Exempt Annex.
- This report was considered by the Audit Committee on 10 June 2021. The Committee made no formal observations or recommendations to the Executive.

Visiting Members asked about the Strategic Risk relating to Gatwick Airport and whether the Council had a contingency plan for the anticipated increase in claims for Universal Credit once the furlough scheme came to an end. It was confirmed that the Borough was anticipating a potential increase. The Interim Head of Paid Service, Mari Roberts-Wood, said that the most significant impact would be the

volume of work for staff. The Universal Credit claims that it processed on behalf of the DWP were up quite significantly.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Note the Q4 update on risk management provided by the report and associated annexes
2. Approve the closure of the strategic risk on 'Partner Public Sector Funding Decisions' (SR4) as detailed in the report and in Annex 2.

## **10. STATEMENTS**

There were none.

## **11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

## **12. EXEMPT BUSINESS**

**RESOLVED** that members of the Press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item (s) of business under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that:

- (i) It involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 and Part 7 of Schedule 12A of the Act; and
- (ii) The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Members considered the Exempt annexes to Agenda items 7 and 9.

The Meeting closed at 8.27 pm