

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at the New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate on 24 March 2022.

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

Also present: Councillor Blacker, Councillor Booton

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Humphreys. There were no substitutions.

68. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting on 27 January 2022 were approved.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

70. CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING FOR CHAVECROFT SCHEME

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Support, Councillor Neame, introduced the item: Capital Grant Funding for Chavecroft Scheme.

In June 2021, Planning Committee resolved to grant planning permission to demolish the Chavecroft sheltered housing scheme and deliver 23 new homes subject to the completion of a S106 Agreement.

The Chavecroft Scheme is a new Net Zero Carbon scheme to deliver a flagship Net Zero Carbon project in the borough to provide sustainable, energy efficient, social rented homes for local people on the Council's housing register. It will replace an out of date housing scheme, mainly of studio flats for older people that no longer meets local need. The new scheme will have a mix of 3 bedroom houses and 1 and 2 bedroom flats. It will help 23 local households in need.

Social housing provider, Raven Housing Trust, has made a significant direct investment. It has committed its Recycled Capital Grant Fund receipts. They sought Homes England Funding and as part to a requirement by Homes England, the Council was asked to provide a grant of £500,000.

The Leader, Councillor Brunt, welcomed Alison Bennett, Development Director from Raven Housing Trust, who attended the meeting to answer Member questions as a partner organisation to deliver this social rented housing building project for residents.

Executive Members made no observations.

Visiting Member, Councillor Blacker, asked the Executive about whether the right level of contingencies cost had been set out in the proposed building project.

Alison Bennett, from Raven Housing Trust, confirmed that there was five per cent contingency cost built into this Net Zero Carbon project.

The Leader confirmed that the Council has full nomination rights on all properties.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Approve a capital grant to Raven Housing Trust of £0.500 million as detailed in the exempt report in Part 2 of the agenda for the Chavcroft redevelopment scheme.**

71. HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-2027

The Executive reviewed the Homelessness Review and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027.

Executive Member for Housing & Support, Councillor Neame, introduced the new strategy which the Council is required to publish every five years. The strategy builds on the current activities and support undertaken by the Housing Service and partner organisations to prevent homelessness, support those who are homeless and deliver more housing options. The requirement is set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the subsequent revised legislative framework. This imposed more duties on Councils to support households in need of housing support at an earlier stage than before, and for longer periods of time.

It was noted that strong partnership work with organisations such as housing providers, support services and charities was critical for delivering the right services and suitable housing options. The dedicated work of the Housing Service was highlighted by Councillor Neame.

Visiting Member, Councillor Blacker, observed that the strategy set out the high monthly rental costs in the Borough such as for a room in a House of Multiple Occupation. As the earnings threshold for many households requiring private rentals had increased significantly how was the deficit for a householder covered. Officers confirmed that if an applicant was on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, the applicant had to cover the balance.

The Leader emphasised the importance of early intervention to help avoid evictions which was a key part to avoid a person or family groups becoming homeless. He commended the strategy and action plan for approval by Executive Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Adopt the Homelessness Review and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027.**
- 2. Authorise the Head of Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing to make any necessary minor amendments to the Homelessness Review and Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 prior to implementation.**

72. OWNERSHIP, TENURE AND MANAGEMENT OF WHEATLEY COURT, CROMWELL ROAD

Members considered the report on the Ownership, tenure and management of Wheatley Court, Cromwell Road, Redhill. This building project in the centre of Redhill, consists of 32 one and two bedroom flats and ground floor commercial units. This redevelopment makes a significant contribution to the ongoing regeneration of Redhill town centre.

The Executive Member for Housing & Support, Councillor Neame, set out the options for the future ownership, tenure and management of the scheme which has undergone extensive review and financial modelling. Three options were developed in detail: 1) direct Council ownership of 100% affordable rent homes with management and maintenance by a Registered Provider; 2) ownership by a Council company and the provision of private rented homes 3) open market sale of all homes. This concluded that Option 1) was the preferred option.

The reference to the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-Committee (CVESC) in paragraph 40 of the report was clarified to note that Members of the informal Sub-Committee were consulted on the appropriate decision-making route for this project. Members had advised that this project go back to Executive as with all previous decisions about the scheme.

Leader of the Council, Mark Brunt, told the Committee that Option 1) was the financially viable option and one that best met the Borough Council's Housing Strategy and affordable housing plans for Redhill. This proposal along with the 23 social rented homes at Chavcroft will provide an extra 55 social housing units for rent in the borough.

It was noted that a local registered housing provider would be procured and contracted to maintain the fabric of the building.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Approve Option one: the direct Council ownership of Wheatley Court and provision of the 32 homes as affordable rent tenure.**
- 2. The Head of Housing be authorised, in consultation with the:**
 - Head of Legal and Governance**
 - Head of Finance**
 - Executive Member for Housing & Benefits**

- **Executive Member for Finance & Governance and Deputy Leader**
 - a) **To procure and enter into contract with a selected Registered Provider for the future management and maintenance of the residential units in Wheatley Court.**
 - b) **To procure and enter into contracts to maintain the fabric of the building (capital spend).**

73. IT STRATEGY 2022/3 TO 2026/7

The Executive reviewed the proposals set out in the IT Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 report and Annex 1.

Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski, introduced the item. ICT is critical to the efficient and effective strategy of all Council services. A strategic review had been carried out to undertake a step change in IT provision and meet new challenges to enable Council services to continue to deliver statutory responsibilities and Corporate Plan objectives.

The IT Strategy, reviewed every five years, covered six areas. The highest priority was improvements to disaster recovery capability, improvements to cyber defences and replacement of the Council's telephony infrastructure. One-off project and implementation costs will be funded through the IT Strategy Reserve of £700,000 agreed as part of the Budget-setting process for 2022/23.

It was noted that the Council had received £100,000 Central Government grant to assist with this work. Although RBBC was not a specific target, the recent invasion of Ukraine had accelerated the need to improve cyber-security across local authorities and public sector generally.

The Leader noted that any further expenditure on any other parts of the strategy will be subject to a full business case. The strategy had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 March with no formal observations and recommendations to Executive.

It was agreed that the Strategy go forward to Council for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Endorses the proposals set out in the IT Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 at Annex 1.**
- 2. Recommends the IT Strategy for approval by Council.**

74. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

Executive received reports outlining the Council's performance up to the end of Quarter 3, from October to December 2021, including progress on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), proposed KPIs for the year ahead 2022/23 and the Council's Revenue and Capital Budget position for Quarter 3 to 31 December 2022.

Executive Member for Corporate Policy & Resources, Councillor Lewanski, reported that of the 10 indicators reported on in Q3, seven were on target. There were three red-rated – KPI1 – Council tax collection, KPI2 – Business Rates collection and KPI7 – Affordable housing completions. The pandemic has had an impact on these three KPIs. Measures were in place to improve performance.

Executive Member for Finance & Governance, Councillor Schofield, reported on the Budget Monitoring forecasts for Q3 2021/22 as detailed in the report and Annexes 2 and 3. At Quarter 3, the projected full year outturn of the Revenue Budget was forecast as £17.133m against a management budget of £17.807m. The majority of these income streams are recovering following the pandemic, but the main area of concern remained loss of parking income. All spending on pandemic response were forecast to be funded within available Government grants.

The full year Capital Programme was forecast as £96.95m (68.7% below the approved budget for the year) due to related business cases still to be developed. Allocations to specific projects would be reported when approved.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered these items on 17 March 2022 as set out in the O&S Committee Minutes of that meeting.

There were no further observations from Executive Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Note the Key Performance Indicator performance for Q3 2021/22 as detailed in the report and Annex 1.**
- 2. Approve the Key Performance Indicators to be reported on in 2022/23 as detailed in Annex 1.1.**
- 3. Note the Budget Monitoring forecasts for Q3 2021/22 as detailed in the report and at Annexes 2 and 3.**

75. RISK MANAGEMENT - Q3 2021/22

Members received an update on risk management in Q3 2021/22 from October to December 2021.

Executive Member for Policy & Resources reported that no new strategic risks had been identified and no strategic risks were recommended for closure. There was one red-rated operational risk which had been considered by the Audit Committee on 15 March 2022.

Executive agreed to approve the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Executive note and approve the Q3 2021/22 update on risk management provided by the report and associated annexes.**

76. STRATEGIC RISKS - 2022/23

The Executive received the report on proposed Strategic Risks 2022/23 for the financial year ahead as set out in Annex 1 to the report.

Executive Member and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski, introduced the item. Strategic risks are those risks that have an impact on the medium to long term ambitions and priorities of the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

In proposing the revised risks, the strategic risk register had undergone a thorough review of risks with review owners.

The Audit Committee considered the 2022/23 strategic risks at their meeting on 15 March 2022. The Committee made observations on two risks: Economic prosperity and reliance on the welfare system and the Ukrainian refugee crisis. The title of the new risk on economic prosperity was changed to 'Challenging economic conditions for residents and businesses.' The Ukrainian refugee crisis would be closely monitored as more information became available.

These changes were noted by the Executive.

Visiting Member, Councillor Booton, queried the risk description on climate change. It was proposed that the risk title for SR12 in 2022/23 be amended to 'Climate change impact'. This was agreed by Executive.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Approve the strategic risks for 2022/23 as detailed in Annex 1, subject to the minor amendments set out by the Portfolio Holder in their introduction.**

77. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Executive received the Overview and Scrutiny Committee annual Work Programme 2022/23 which was considered and agreed at its meeting the previous week on 17 March 2022.

The item was deferred to enable further consultation with the Leader and Executive on the additional scrutiny topics suggested by O&S Members (set out in Annex 1 to the report). These would be discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of O&S before Council on 7 April 2022.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the proposed Work Programme for 2022/23 as set out at Annex 1 and detailed in the report be deferred for further consultation with the Leader and the Executive.**

78. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022/23

The Executive considered the Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23.

The purpose of the Strategy is to guide all Treasury Management activity for the coming financial year. The adoption of the updated Treasury Strategy by Council ensures compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Code of Practice on Treasury Management and Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

The report noted the Treasury Management Indicators including the Capital Prudential Indicators confirming the financial implications of the Council's capital expenditure plans, borrowing to fund and manage capital projects and investment. It noted the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, including the potential impact of the proposed changes in 2023/24.

The report also acknowledged that this was a period of considerable change for local authority treasury activities with a summary of the key changes and timescales.

Members of Audit Committee with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Harrison, were consulted and met with the Treasury advisors, Link, in early March.

The Audit Committee met on 15 March 2022 to consider the Strategy and noted the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022/23 and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 as set out in the reports.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

- 1. Considered the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022/23 set out in the report; and**
- 2. Considered the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 as set out in the report; and**

RECOMMENDED their approval to Council.

79. BAD DEBT WRITE OFF 2021/22

The Executive received the Debt Write Off & Recovery 2021/22 report which set out the action and reasons for recommending debts proposed for write-off during the previous year 2021/22 as part of the annual accounting process.

These 13 debts related to non-payment of National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR or Business Rates), Council Tax, Benefit overpayments and sundry debts, totalling £148,119.89 (set out in Annex 1).

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance noted that all possible action had been taken to recover these debts by the Council. If further information was received or the circumstances surrounding a debt change then debt recovery can be pursued again. The write-offs in the previous year represented less than one per cent of the Council's annual budget.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive approve:

- 1. That thirteen irrecoverable debts totalling £148,119.89 (Annex 1) be written out of the Council's accounts.**

80. APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS (2022)

Banstead Commons Conservators maintain and protect the integrity of the Banstead Commons. The terms of two Conservators concluded at the end of March 2022. There was also a term of 1 landowner representative which was due to conclude at the end of March 2022.

The nominations for the vacancies and their CVs were considered in private session.

Having considered under Exempt business the applications it was Agreed that:

RESOLVED:

- 1. To appoint Councillor Nadean Moses as a landowner representative for the period March 2022 to March 2025 or until they no longer serve as Councillor.**
- 2. To confirm Councillor Peter Harp's appointment in 2020 to the Banstead Commons Conservators as one of the two landowner representatives.**
- 3. To defer appointment of two conservators to the Board of Banstead Commons Conservators.**

81. STATEMENTS

Two Statements were made to Executive – 1. Funding secured from health partners for community development 2. Support for Ukrainian refugees.

- 1. The Executive Member for Community Partnerships, Councillor Ashford, made a statement on a successful external funding bid from health partners for community development work within the borough. This followed the close joint working with health partners during the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Ashford reported that there was confirmation from East Surrey (Surrey Heartlands CCG) of £538,000 of funding to support the benefit of the health and well-being of residents working jointly with East Surrey health partners and Tandridge DC. Councillor Ashford thanked**

officers and the community partnerships team for their hard work in securing this funding.

2. The Leader, Councillor Brunt, made a statement on the situation in Ukraine and support for Ukrainian refugees as they flee conflict in their country. He confirmed that the Council providing support for Ukrainian refugees in the borough who are arriving in England under the Home Office/UK Visas and Immigration Ukraine Family Scheme. The Leader had met representatives of the Ukrainian community to offer support. The Council was fortunate to have a well-respected team who have worked with Syrian refugee families and supporting recent refugee families fleeing Afghanistan. The Leader asked residents who had offered to host families to get in touch with the refugee resettlement team. The Council is providing this service on behalf of Mole Valley and Tandridge district councils.

82. EXEMPT BUSINESS

It was **AGREED** that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business under section 100a(4) of the local government act 1972 on the grounds that:

- 1) It involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of schedule 12a of the Act: and paragraph 7 of part 1 of schedule 12a of the Act.

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

83. CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING FOR CHAVECROFT SCHEME - EXEMPT

The Exempt report was noted by Executive Members.

84. OWNERSHIP, TENURE AND MANAGEMENT OF WHEATLEY COURT, CROMWELL ROAD - EXEMPT

The Exempt Part 2 report to Executive was noted.

85. APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS (2022) - EXEMPT

The applications and CVs of the candidates were discussed in Exempt Part 2 (private session).

86. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no other urgent business discussed.

The Meeting closed at 8.38 pm