

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 7.30 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors E. Humphreys (Mayor) and R. Biggs (Leader); J. Baker (Deputy Mayor), V. H. Lewanski (Deputy Leader), G. Adamson, R. H. Ashford, H. Avery, M. S. Blacker, J. Booton, J. S. Bray, G. Buttironi, P. Chandler, V. Chester, Z. Cooper, J. Dwight, J. C. S. Essex, K. Fairhurst, B. Green, P. Harp, N. D. Harrison, G. Hinton, J. Hudson, F. Kelly, S. Khan, A. King, J. P. King, S. A. Kulka, S. McKenna, R. Michalowski, N. C. Moses, C. M. Neame, S. Parnall, A. Proudfoot, R. Ritter, S. Sinden, M. Smith, C. Stevens, M. Tary, C. Thompson, D. Torra and S. T. Walsh



**51 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 30 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

**52 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elbourne, Harper, Sachdeva, and Thorne.

**53 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

**54 Urgent business**

There was none.

**55 Petition: Reinstate Monitored CCTV Cameras in our Town Centres**

The lead petitioner, Mr Liam Castles, introduced the petition:

- When gathering signatures, it became apparent that there was anger that CCTV cameras had been decommissioned. An apology to residents was needed for changing the policy without their consent.
- The petition called for CCTV cameras to be reinstated in the Borough's Town Centres, for Surrey police to reinstate regular patrols around Town Centres and for the Council to work with local stakeholders to set-up and operate a *ShopWatch* scheme. These were basic necessities and would ensure Town Centres were

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safer and free from crime. The Council was called on to explain why it thought the decision to decommission CCTV had been rational.

- The decommissioning of CCTV cameras had put residents at greater risk of crime. 54.7% of reported crimes in Redhill Town Centre over the last three years had not resulted in a prosecution. It was questioned if this had been a financial decision and if that was appropriate.
  - The removal of CCTV had put the protection of local businesses in the hands of small business owners who lacked the financial capacity and time to install and monitor cameras. They felt that they had not been listened to and that the Council did not care about their situation.
  - New developments in the Redhill night-time economy were also being put at jeopardy. Residents, staff and patrons would feel unsafe meaning that customer would go elsewhere.
  - The report on the petition put emphasis on the financial implications of reinstating CCTV cameras without putting forward any alternative solution. The Conservative led Council was called on to use its influence with the Conservative Police and Crime Commissioner to increase patrols in Town Centres.
  - The Council was called on to be much stronger on crime by supporting the petition.
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- Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council, provided the response to the petition:
  - The petition states that the decision made in December 2020 to decommission monitored CCTV was made based on data relating to the period of the COVID pandemic. This was incorrect. The decision was made following extensive discussions with the police and based on data which predated the pandemic.
  - The police had confirmed that CCTV in the public realm continued to be largely unused for the detection of crime.
  - The Council had invested in CCTV in the Borough's three largest parks and in its two multi-storey car parks in Bancroft Road and Clarendon Road. This was based on there being evidence of the value of CCTV in these spaces.
  - The impact of privately owned CCTV cameras both static and mobile was emphasised. A review of Town Centres in late 2023 confirmed that these were covered by 450 privately owned cameras, all with some coverage of public spaces. The police had invested in a reporting system which allowed residents and businesses to quickly, easily and safely upload footage for review to help maintain the public realm.
  - The action being requested by the petition would incur a significant cost for the Council of around £500K. This was 3% of the Council's budget which would require additional funding to be identified if this cost were going to be met.
  - Decisions about the operation of the police were not within the gift of the Police & Crime Commissioner. Rather these were determined by the Chief Constable with the Council pleased to leave these decisions in his very capable hands.
  - The Council worked extensively with local businesses to support them. It would willingly consider potential schemes such as *ShopWatch*.

Up to four Members were able to speak on the petition. Three had registered by the deadline. Councillor Blacker made the following comments:

- Caution was expressed over the extensive use of CCTV cameras. It was questioned if it was desirable that so much recording was happening.
- It was highlighted that there were 39 new CCTV cameras in the Borough with a local recording facility. These were in the Bancroft and Clarendon Road car parks, and Priory, Memorial and Lady Neville parks.

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- The lead petitioner was called on to suggest any other particular spots where CCTV should be considered.

Councillor Smith made the following comments:

- Removing monitored CCTV from Town Centres was contrary to being aware of what was happening and addressing any problems in the Borough's communities.
- Rather than focusing on the financial implications of the CCTV decisions, the focus should be on the effects of rising levels of crime in the Borough's Town Centres. Examples were given. One shop worker had organised to leave work with colleagues so they did not feel unsafe. Another shop owner organises taxis to take staff to the local car park at the end of their shifts. Businesses had recorded and uploaded evidence of crime as had been requested but they still had no evidence that any action had been taken as a result. One resident had been run over but as there was no recording of the incident she had been told by the police that it could not be pursued as there was no proof.
- Oxted was highlighted as an authority which had installed a new CCTV system to improve resident safety. The Council was called on to engage and learn from Oxted's experience.
- Clarity was requested on the impact of the partial closure of the Reigate Police Station due to Reinforce Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) being identified in the building.

Councillor Kulka made the following comments:

- Reported that he had tried to follow-up on an incident that he had witnessed in Redhill Town Centre but had been told that recording only started when a camera had been focused on a specific spot.
- Had consulted with residents, the vast majority of whom knew nothing about the petition but had thought CCTV would support the work of Police and Community Support Officers.
- Called for residents to be encouraged to make their private CCTV footage available for use in crime detection.

Councillor Essex requested to speak on the petition. However, it was established that he had not registered in accordance with the Procedure Note distributed to all Members in advance of the meeting and therefore his request was declined by Mister Mayor.

Councillor Biggs was given the opportunity to respond to the petition debate:

- Acknowledged that it was important to review decisions such as the one to decommission CCTV made in December 2020 because of all that had happened since.
- Noted that not all CCTV had been decommissioned as a result of the decision in December 2020. Some had continued with this only ceasing when the police station had been closed due to RAAC. As a result, the Council had immediately taken steps to introduce local recording of town centre cameras, with recorded footage being retained for 14 days.
- A solution to those town centre cameras that were not working was being explored to see if they could be brought back into operation without major expense.
- Acknowledged that residents were not well informed about some Council decisions. Called on all Councillors to help with dissemination.
- Oxted's decision to install a new CCTV system was not funded by the Parish or District Council. It was important to consider what was best to do with residents' money.

Councillor Biggs proposed and Councillor Lewanski seconded a motion to refer the petition for further consideration to the Executive.

**RESOLVED** that Council refer the petition for further consideration to the Executive

**56 Interim Polling Place and District Review 2023/24**

The Managing Director introduced the report. It was explained that following a review of Parliamentary boundaries by the Boundary Commission for England, the interim review sought to ensure that all electors had reasonable facilities for voting at the forthcoming Borough Council, Police & Crime Commissioner and Parliamentary elections in 2024.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation to designate the polling places for polling districts as outlined in the officer's report and addendum be approved.

**57 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances for 2024/25**

The Managing Director introduced the report. It was explained that this set out the Members' Allowances scheme for 2024/25 following a review by the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). There were eight recommendations for Council to consider as detailed in Annex 1 to the report to apply from 1 April 2024.

Councillor Lewanski moved two amendments to the recommendations, that:

1. The Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Leader of the Council increase to £19,000 for 2024-25 rather than £15,800 as recommended by the IRP; and
2. The Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Leader of the largest Opposition Party increase to £3,800 rather than £3,310 as recommended by the IRP.

Councillor Lewanski put forward the following rationale for his amendments:

- Good candidates to the position of Leader should not be discouraged on the grounds of financial pressures.
- Not all Councillors were retired and many worked at the same time as carrying out their Councillor duties. Whilst the role was demanding, the Leader was only able to commit to allocating one day a week to being in the Council in person. This was a new approach and allowed face-to-face meetings with residents, officers and Members. However, these were time restricted. An increase in the Leader's Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) would allow work commitments to be reduced and more time given to Council responsibilities.
- Under this Leader, there had been a reduction in the number of Executive Members, requiring him to take a more hands-on approach with elements of various portfolios. This reflected a saving of around £10K well in excess of the additional £3,200 being recommended was added to the Leader's SRA.
- Previous IRP recommendations that the Leader's SRA should be increased had not been accepted and this would bring parity with the previous recommendations.
- Whilst it was not a requirement that the Leader of the Opposition's SRA be fixed at 20% of that paid to the Leader, it was being recommended that this be increased in line with that of the Leader as part of the motion.

Councillor Neame seconded the amendments proposed by Councillor Lewanski.

Mister Mayor invited other Members to speak on the item.

Councillor Booton spoke to the item making the following comments:

- The amendments to the recommendations made by the IRP were difficult to accept.
- The IRP had consulted with Group Leaders. It was therefore assumed that the suggestion of a larger increase in the SRA for the Leader had been made. The IRP would have considered this as part of its review but had decided not to have increased the Leader's SRA further.
- As detailed in the terms of reference for the IRP, it had taken into consideration the difference in responsibilities and the time commitment of various roles when making its recommendations.

Councillor Harrison spoke in favour of supporting the amendments to the recommendations.

**RESOLVED** to accept the amended recommends as detailed in the officer's report.

The meeting finished at 8.10 pm