

## **BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD**

### **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at the New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate on 18 November 2021 at 7.30 pm.

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

Also present: Councillors R. Biggs, J. Booton, P. Chandler, J. C. S. Essex, P. Harp, N. D. Harrison, S. A. Kulka and S. Sinden.

#### **35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sachdeva. Councillor Biggs attended the meeting remotely and did not vote.

#### **36. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 September 2021 be approved.

#### **37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bramhall declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6, Draft Horley Business Park Supplementary Planning Document for Consultation, by virtue of her position as the Cabinet Member for Property at Surrey County Council, which was a landowner.

Councillor Biggs declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6, Draft Horley Business Park Supplementary Planning Document for Consultation, due to the proximity of the site to his residence.

#### **38. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski, introduced the report which provided an update on the Council's progress in delivering the Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy and proposed new actions to include in the Council's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

In line with the first area of focus in the Sustainability Strategy; change within the Council, the Council had:

- Switched energy tariffs so more electricity came from renewable sources and offset the remaining purchased energy emissions
- Continued to replace aging fleet vehicles with local carbon electric alternatives
- Purchased green products, reduced printing and single use plastics, and provided training and advice to staff and members, to tackle the Council's indirect environmental impact.

The next step was to develop and implement plans to improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings and introduce on-site renewable technologies.

In line with the second area of focus in the Strategy; to support residents and businesses to move towards a more sustainable borough and work to the national target of net zero by 2050, the Council had:

- Adopted new planning guidance to help make new developments more sustainable
- Continued to work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the borough and provided information to residents about how to make their homes more sustainable
- Provided advice and run workshops to help communities plant trees in their local areas, and planted trees and native plants on Council land.
- Installed new electric vehicle charging points in Horley and Banstead
- Provided advice and information to local businesses, including the Reigate Business Guild.

These actions were on top of the day to day work undertaken by the Waste & Recycling team to educate and improve recycling and the Environmental Health team in relation to air quality and privately rented housing.

Councillor Lewanski explained that it was proposed to introduce new actions in the Council's Action Plan covering topics like domestic retrofit, climate change adaptation and carbon dioxide emissions. In addition, working with partner organisations would put the Council in the best position to make a positive difference.

The annexes to the report had been considered by the Cross Party Member Sustainability Group and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Lewanski explained that he would be happy to incorporate suggestions from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee into the Council's future area of work.

Councillor Harrison, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, reported that the Committee had considered the progress update at the Committee's meeting on 21 October. The Committee focused on the improvements needed to Council assets and had requested supplementary information on the Council's carbon offsetting measures. The Committee also considered engagement with young people, publicising the Action Plan and planting new forestry, and requested a future update on the comments made by the Committee. The Committee were supportive of the work that had been undertaken.

In response to questions from Visiting Members, it was confirmed that:

- The Council would continue to work with Surrey County Council and Action Surrey as they rolled out energy efficiency programs in relation to retrofitting of homes, and would continue to work to bring local businesses together to identify new opportunities.
- The Action Plan would be updated to identify key actions, in line with the comments received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To agree the annual Environmental Sustainability progress report (Annex 1) for publication on the Council website.
2. To agree the proposed additions to the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (Annex 2)

3. To reassert the Executive's commitment to working in partnership with Surrey County Council and other Surrey districts and boroughs to achieve county-wide climate objectives.

### **39. MERSTHAM RECREATION GROUND REFURBISHMENT**

The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services explained that the report was seeking approval to bring forward the Council's ambitions for the refurbishment of Merstham Recreation Ground.

A thorough process of engagement with residents and stakeholders had taken place. This included public events, newsletters, online engagement and a focus group. The Council had developed a Master Plan for the recreation ground based on the engagement process. The Master Plan had received strong public support. The next step was to submit a planning application and appoint a contractor to bring forward the improvements.

Councillor Bramhall explained that the Master Plan would be delivered over time, as and when funding was secured. Phase 1 would include a new pavilion, new footpaths, a play area, youth area, outdoor gym and planted trees, woodland, and orchard. Councillor Bramhall explained the Council was working with Surrey County Council as the local drainage authority as the refurbishment was seen as an exemplar project on how to deliver and manage sustainable drainage. The Council was also working with local community groups to identify community funding opportunities for smaller components.

The refurbishment would meet a key objective of the Council's Reigate & Banstead 2025 Plan to invest in Council owned parks and recreational facilities, as well as improving the lives of those who live in Merstham.

In response to questions from Visiting Members it was confirmed that:

- An integrated approach was planned for the provision of equipment which would allow further upgrades in time once funding was available.
- Security would be achieved by design principles such as wide-open views and lighting, along with increased activity.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. Approve the Merstham Recreation Ground Master Plan as set out in Annex 1 of the report.
2. Approve the phased implementation of the refurbishment as set out in the report.
3. Authorise the Head of Finance to make the necessary arrangements to allocate funds to the first phase of the project in accordance with the exempt information outlined in the report and the approved Capital Programme.
4. Authorise the Head of Place Delivery in consultation with the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and the Executive Member for Planning and Place Delivery to make a Planning Application for the refurbishment of

Merstham Recreation Ground and any other planning applications on other sites that may be required to bring the project forward as necessary.

5. Authorise the Head of Place Delivery in consultation with the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and the Executive Member for Planning and Place Delivery to procure and make any necessary consultancy and contractor appointments for the project, to prepare the necessary documentation and to obtain competitive tenders for the design and build as set out in the report.
6. Authorise the Head of Place Delivery in consultation with the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and the Executive Member for Planning and Place Delivery to award, finalise, agree, sign and execute construction contracts relating to the project.
7. Authorise the Head of Place Delivery in consultation with the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and the Executive Member for Planning and Place Delivery to alter the scope of works as necessary, should further project funding be secured or if necessary, to ensure that expenditure remains within the budget set out in the exempt part of the report.

#### **40. DRAFT HORLEY BUSINESS PARK SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT FOR CONSULTATION**

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Councillor Biggs, introduced the report by explaining that the Executive was asked to approve the draft Horley Business Park Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for consultation. Following consultation, the draft SPD would be updated, and the responses received summarised in the final Consultation Statement. The Executive would be asked to adopt the final SPD following this process.

Councillors Biggs explained that the Development Management Plan (DMP), adopted in September 2019, allocated this site for development with complementary uses to serve the business park, and a large new public open space of at least 5 hectares. The DMP required the Borough Council to have prepared an SPD to assist with the proper planning and on-going functioning of the site. Once adopted, the site promoter would use the SPD to inform its masterplan which it must prepare in consultation with the Council as local planning authority. That masterplan must be submitted alongside the outline planning application which needs to align with the masterplan. The SPD would also help other interested organisations and consultees to have a comprehensive appreciation of the issues.

The draft SPD:

- provided guidance, to assist the planning, delivery, and function of the Horley Strategic Business Park.
- had been informed by desktop analysis of the site, its surrounding context, and relevant issues, as well as by correspondence and a series of workshops with representatives of interested organisations.
- had also been informed by two key consultants studies commissioned by the Planning Policy team and completed this year and was also discussed at a meeting of DMAG and been updated to reflect the points raised.
- addressed issues as summarised in the initial Consultation Statement.

In response to questions from a Visiting Member it was confirmed:

- That the wording in paragraph 1.21 of the draft SPD would be amended prior to consultation to reflect the need for all relevant elements of the Climate Change and Sustainable Construction SPD to be complied with.
- That the draft SPD would set ambitious targets for sustainable travel, with specifics dependent on schemes brought forward in the future.
- That a Tree Protection Order (TPO) had been issued to protect the trees around the boundary of the site following felling of woodland in 2020.
- That the draft SPD needed to be clear around the need for replacement tree planting in response to the woodland removed before the TPO had been issued.

Following discussion, the Executive **RESOLVED to DEFER** approval for the SPD for public consultation to allow further consideration as to how the SPD would relate to existing and future development on the site.

#### **41. SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING 2022/23**

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Governance introduced a report setting out the service and financial planning proposals for 2022/23.

Councillor Schofield explained that preparation for the proposals had presented challenges and difficult decisions in relation to cost savings and some discretionary support offerings because of the pandemic. Councillor Schofield expressed his appreciation for the hard work undertaken by officers and members during the development of the proposals.

The revenue budget for 2022/23 was based on a full and robust assessment of what the Council does and how it does it. The Council was mindful of potential impacts and would consult widely on the proposals in the report before making a final decision in January.

There had been significant drops in income as a legacy of the pandemic. Shortfalls would have to be filled from Reserves, savings, or new sources of income. It was forecast that over £700,000 would be drawn from Reserves to balance the budget. In addition, there was a requirement to invest in IT resilience and, if no further equivalent savings were found, the forecast budget gap would total £0.987 million in 2022/23.

Councillor Schofield explained that an amendment to the report and an additional recommendation had been published as an addendum as a result of identifying the required IT investment.

The final budget position would depend on the outcome of the Spending Review and the Provisional Local Government Settlement and would be confirmed in the next two months. Despite the continued impacts of the pandemic, the Revenue budget remained sound due to substantial Reserves, the Council's Financial Sustainability Plan and the Commercial Strategy.

In terms of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, Councillor Schofield explained that the report included updated five-year forecasts to reflect work that had been undertaken

to map the potential impact of increased costs and reductions in government funding. The Plan provided a solid framework for future financial planning.

The Revenue Reserves remained sufficient to support the budget and mitigate post-pandemic risks. Approval was sought for the Reserves Policy.

Councillor Schofield explained that the proposal was to increase the Council's element of the average Band D charge by 9.5p a week, subject to confirmation of the Government's referendum limit in December and approval at Council in February.

Councillor Schofield explained that the report did not propose changes to the approved Capital Programme. Significant increases had been made in 2020/21 and therefore 2022/23 would continue the subsequent period of consolidation where focus would remain of the delivery of schemes that were in progress.

It was recommended that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme be reviewed in 2022/23. This would ensure that the Scheme remained up to date and would continue to support households who need assistance in paying council tax bills.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt, expressed his thanks to members and officers for the hard work undertaken to reduce the budget gap.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Harrison, reported that the proposals were going to the Budget Scrutiny Review Panel. In response to a question from Councillor Harrison, Councillor Schofield confirmed that the IT strategy and commercial strategy would be consolidated into the budget prior to the final proposals being put before Council in February.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the national and local policy context (Annex 1) and significant financial uncertainties at this stage in the budget-setting process be noted.
2. That the service proposals set out in the report which seek to respond to this context and deliver our corporate priorities, be endorsed.
3. That the draft service business plans for 2022/23 to 2024/25 be approved, and that Heads of Service be authorised to finalise the plans for their service areas, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders.
4. That the following be approved for consultation under the Council's budget and policy framework:
  - a) Medium Term Financial Plan Summary (Annex 2);
  - b) Revenue Budget Savings and Additional Income proposals totalling £0.566 million (Annex 3);
  - c) Revenue Budget Growth proposals totalling £0.567 million (Annex 3) ;
  - d) Forecast ongoing income budget pressures in 2022/23 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic totalling £1.300 million (Annex 2);
  - e) Revenue Reserve Balances at 1 April 2021 of £41.738 million (Annex 6.1);

- f) A forecast Revenue budget gap for 2022/23 of £0.718 million after taking account of the Service and Central budget growth and savings proposals in this report, plus the additional requirement to invest £0.269 million in IT Resilience, resulting in a total forecast gap at this point in the budget-setting process of 0.987 million for 2022/23.

5. That the Fees & Charges Policy (Annex 5) be approved.
6. That the Reserves Policy (Annex 6.2) be approved.
7. That the Medium Term Financial Plan forecast for 2023/24 onwards (Annex 2) and proposed actions to address the forecast revenue budget gap be noted.
8. That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme be reviewed during 2022/23 and the outcome reported as part of Service & Financial Planning for 2023/24.

**42. APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF THE BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS (CASUAL VACANCY)**

The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Bramhall, introduced the report by explaining that the Banstead Common Conservators maintained and protected the integrity of the Banstead Commons, a strategic part of the green belt in Reigate and Banstead. Following the resignation of one Conservator, Dr Bellenger, a vacancy existed on the Board.

Expressions of interest to fill the vacancy were received from Mr Mockford and Mr Mollett and were set out in the exempt information of the agenda pack.

**RESOLVED** that Mr Mockford be appointed as the representative, for the period until March 2022, to fill the vacant position on the Banstead Commons Conservators, after consideration of the applications under exempt business.

**43. STATEMENTS**

There were none.

**44. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

**45. EXEMPT BUSINESS - ITEM 5 - MERSTHAM RECREATION GROUND REFURBISHMENT**

The Executive considered Merstham Recreation Ground Refurbishment in open session (minute 39 refers).

**46. EXEMPT BUSINESS - ITEM 8 - APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF THE BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS (CASUAL VACANCY)**

**RESOLVED** that members of the Press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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 of Schedule 12A of the Act; and

- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Executive considered the exempt annexe to agenda item 8.

The Meeting closed at 8.47 pm