

**Minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
8 September 2025**

Present:

Councillor J.R. Sexton (Chair)
Councillor C. Bateson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	R.V. Geach	M.J. Lee
M. Beecher	M. Gibson	S.C. Mooney
D.C. Clarke	K.M. Grant	L. E. Nichols
S.M. Doran	K. Howkins	H.R.D. Williams

78/25 Apologies and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillor Boughtflower and Councillor Button. Councillor Beatty attended as Councillor Button's substitute.

79/25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

80/25 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell, Mooney, and Sexton declared they were also Surrey County Councillors.

Councillor Nichols declared he sat on the Board of Directors for Knowle Green Estates.

81/25 Questions from members of the Public

In accordance with Standing Order 40, three questions were received from members of the public.

Question one from Nigel Rowe of Riverside Residents Coalition, as follows:

Context: The findings of independent research by Royal Holloway, University of London, into groundwater flood risk in Staines were first published in June 2024 and presented subsequently to the full Council. The research revealed

1) the scale and complexity of flood risk from groundwater in Staines (greater than that from both fluvial and surface water run-off) and b) the threat of increased flood risk for existing properties and public spaces from the below-ground structures of new developments. The Council chose to ignore the findings pending a peer review. The findings, unchanged, acquired peer review validation in March 2025, and were re-presented to and discussed with the full Council in early June 2025. The findings were presented to and discussed at length with delegations from Surrey County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority) and the Environment Agency earlier this month. As we understand it, both Spelthorne and Runnymede Borough Councils were invited to participate, and Spelthorne sent an observer.

There has been no challenge to the research findings from any quarter. Repeated requests to the Council's leadership from the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition since the summer of 2024 to accept an obligation to protect residents from the inherent threat set out above have been rebuffed or ignored. Given that the absence of such protection could have generational consequences, not just in relation to the cost or even availability of home insurance but also the trauma of being flooded, we ask the Committee to consider all of the above in answering the questions.

Question: "Does the Committee agree that the Council should have clear, robust and enforceable policy directives and processes in place that will get as close as is possible to a guarantee that no new development in Staines will increase flood risk for other properties and public spaces?"

Councillor Sexton, Chair of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, responded as follows:

"Our residents can be assured that the Group Administration will do everything it can to ensure that no new development will increase flood risk for other properties and public spaces. The Council is working with Surrey County Council, the Environment Agency and Dr Paul on developing a guidance note on how to deal with groundwater issues. Moving forward, the Council will explore and assess potential for taking into account Dr Paul's finding within the emerging Local Plan and legal opinion is being sought on this point. An update will be provided in due course."

Question two from Kath Sanders, as follows:

Context - As a resident, I appreciate that the Best Value Commissioners are committed to the Intervention being carried out in a transparent manner and that the Commissioners' fees and expenses were published on 14th August for the first 3 months of the Intervention.

However, at the time of writing, there is not full transparency.

Meetings do not detail which members of the commissioners' team (and senior officers) actually attended those meetings - the attendance details list those "expected" but do not appear to be updated as a matter of course for officers. However, I believe it would be useful, in the interests of transparency,

for interested parties to see which officers have attended (either in person or online).

The published fees and expenses schedule lists the fees and expenses of the four commissioners but does not include all associated costs, such as those for the Commissioners' Chief of Staff. However, I believe it would be useful, again in the interests of transparency, for interested parties to see the full costs of the Intervention.

Question: "In the interests of transparency, will the Chair of CP&R undertake to show on relevant meeting details which officers were in attendance, including those from the Commissioners' Team, either in person or online?"

The Chair responded as follows:

"Thank you for your question and I can advise you that I have asked Committee Services to ensure that, going forward all attendees at meetings are included in the minutes. These will include all members, officers and commissioners."

Question three from Kath Sanders, as follows:

"In the interests of transparency, will the Chair of CP&R undertake for council reports to make clear the full cost of the Best Value Intervention on a quarterly basis?"

The Chair responded as follows:

"The direct fee payments and expenses paid to the Commissioners by the Council are published on the Council's website: [Commissioners' Fees and Expenses - Spelthorne Borough Council](#) and currently include data for May, June and July 2025. The details will continue to be updated on a quarterly basis.

The Quarterly Revenue Monitoring reports coming to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee will now include a section highlighting both direct Commissioners fees and expenses and additional expenditure associated with the Improvement and Recovery Plan on consultants and specialist advice etc."

82/25 Corporate Risk Management

The Committee received the Corporate Risk Management report from the Deputy Chief Executive, as recommended by the Audit Committee. The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted there had been no changes to scores or ratings since last presented. The Committee were advised of anticipated amendments to future versions of the report which included a "Contract Management" risk category, and a change of focus to a governance assurance approach to risk management.

The Committee explored the ratings on individual items, and suggested the consideration for additional risks to be added to the register. Members also noted the risk related to Local Government Reorganisation and expressed concern over the impact on current staff resourcing, and requested a regular update on this be brought to Committee in future.

The Committee **resolved** to note the significant strategic risks and issues highlighted in the report.

83/25 Q1 Capital Monitoring Report

The Committee considered the Quarter One Capital Monitoring report from the Interim Chief Accountant. The report advised of significant changes to the Capital Programme, mainly related to delayed projects and the cancellation of the Solar Canopy project, which required approval by Council. The revision would reduce financing pressure and assist in managing borrowing costs. Project priorities would continue to be assessed to align with affordability and the Council's long-term objectives.

The Committee explored the reasons behind the expenditure related to the Eclipse Leisure Centre, the cancellation of the Solar Canopy project, and raised concerns regarding the Sunbury Leisure Centre de-carbonization project.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend to Council that it approves

1. Increases to the approved Capital Programme for 2025/26 of £1.13 million mostly relating to slippage from 2024/25
2. The project cancellation of the solar canopy project £1.3m
3. Removal of capital resources that are no longer required of £1.0 million as set out in the report
4. A net overspend of £0.3 million
5. A supplementary capital estimate for the Eclipse Leisure Centre Phase 2 of £50k for walkways

84/25 Q1 Revenue Monitoring Report

The Committee considered the Quarter One Revenue Monitoring report from the Interim Chief Accountant. The Council was forecasted to overspend its current 2025/26 budget by £1.9 million based on figures through 30th June 2025. This was mainly due to shortfall in forecasted property income, expenses related to government-appointed commissioners and expenses required for the Improvement and Recovery Plan. Officers had initiated mitigation measures to address the forecasted deficit which included freezing and reviewing non-essential spending, and reviewing vacant posts, as well as accelerating income initiatives and exploring grant opportunities. The Medium-Term Financial Plan would also be reviewed. The Interim Chief Accountant assured the Committee with the current implementations, the future revenue monitoring reports should reflect a different position.

The Chair and Vice-Chair made the following statements and asked the following questions:

“This is a very worrying financial position to be in so early into the financial year. Can you give me further assurance on the mitigations set out in paragraph 3.4 and explain how they will realistically bring the budget into balance?”

Specific Questions on Mitigations

- a) Spending Controls (Freezing non-essential spend, review of vacant posts)
 - What specific controls have been put in place?
 - What progress has been made beyond what is already reported?
 - Can you give examples of non-essential spending that has been stopped?
- b) Acceleration of income collection, grant opportunities
 - What initiatives are being pursued this year?
 - Why were these not considered earlier?
- c) Reviews of High Cost Services
 - Which services are under review?
 - How confident are you that savings can be achieved, particularly given we are halfway through the year?
- d) Refurbishment at 3 Roundwood Avenue?
 - When will a decision be made on this?
 - If refurbishment is not undertaken, what impact will this have on income projections?
- e) Reprioritisation of the Savings Programme
 - Does this mean bringing 2026/27 savings forward?
 - If so, which savings, how much, and with what implications?
- f) Rent restructuring and adjusting rent levels
 - Has this been agreed with the Assets team and reported to the Commercial Assets Sub-Committee?
 - What is the expected timescale for implementation?
 - Will it deliver any income in the current year, given reduced asset values and existing tenants?
- g) Reducing Void Times
 - Are we already performing effectively in this area?
 - If not, what further gains could be achieved, and when?
- h) Operational Efficiency Through Technology
 - What does this mean in practice?
 - What financial impact will it have, and over what timeframe?

Regarding Salary Monitoring in Paragraph 5, the report states we are on track to achieve the £1m target. However, given that nearly £720k of posts still need to be deleted to achieve this:

- Which areas are these posts expected to come from?
- What impact will these deletions have on service performance?

Regarding Lessons Learned from the Best Value Inspection Report, the Best Value Inspection Report was highly critical of in-year budget monitoring, citing poor governance and lack of transparency. Based on the current report, there appears to be little improvement.

- How are you addressing the specific criticisms in paragraphs 4.66 and 4.79 of the Best Value Inspection Report?
- How will you ensure clearer, timelier, and more transparent financial reporting going forward?"

The Interim Chief Accountant would provide an in-depth narrative and answers to the queries to the Committee outside the meeting.

The Committee expressed concern over possible cuts to discretionary services provided by the Council, as well as the costs related to the Commissioners being appointed to the Council. Some members of the Committee also felt that the concerns related to Assets needed to be explored more in-depth. The Committee also expressed concern regarding the sinking fund, and were advised this was being examined as part of work on the Improvement and Recovery Plan.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forecast Revenue Budget overspend of £1.9 million for the financial year 2025-26 based on expenditure to 30th June 2025.

85/25 Nomination to Outside Body

The Committee considered a nomination for Councillor J Turner to serve as a member representative on the Thames Landscape Strategy Partnership Review Board for the remainder of the 2025-2026 municipal year.

Resolved that Councillor J Turner be appointed as member representative to the Thames Landscape Strategy Partnership Review Board for the remainder of the 2025-2026 municipal year.

86/25 Forward Plan

Resolved: That the Committee noted the contents of the Forward Plan.

87/25 Urgent Actions

No urgent actions had been taken since the last meeting.

88/25 Exclusion of Public & Press (Exempt Business)

The Committee **resolved** to move the exclusion of the Press/Public for the following item as the report contains exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local

Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006 Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because, disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in any lease, contract or other type of negotiation with the tenant or developer, who could then know the position of the Council.

89/25 Sunbury Site

Committee agreed to make a recommendation to Council to:

1. Agree to revise the purchase price for the sale of the Sunbury Site as set out in Appendix 1; and
2. Delegate authority to the Group Head Assets in consultation with the Chair of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to agree to any minor variations to the Terms of Sale as set out in Appendix 1.