

## **Minutes of Cabinet**

**15 April 2014**

### **Present:**

Councillor R.L. Watts, Leader of the Council, Chairman of the Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Human Resources  
Councillor P. Forbes-Forsyth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Young People, Leisure and Culture  
Councillor N. Gething, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Fixed Assets  
Councillor V.J. Leighton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Corporate Development  
Councillor T. Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Environment  
Councillor J. Sexton, Cabinet Member for Communications and Procurement

### **Apologies for absence:**

Councillor T.J.M. Evans, Cabinet Member for Finance  
Councillor D. Patel, Cabinet Member for Parking services and ICT  
Councillor J.M. Pinkerton OBE, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Independent Living

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Councillor C.A. Davis  
Councillor M.W. Rough  
Councillor D. Saliagopoulos  
Councillor A.E. Friday

### **2054. Minutes**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

### **2055. Disclosures of Interest**

There were none.

### **2056. Petition on the flooding of the River Ash**

Cabinet received and noted a petition on the flooding of the River Ash. Mr. Martin Cherrett spoke on behalf of the petitioners.

The Leader of the Council and Councillors Davis, Forbes-Forsyth, Leighton, Mitchell and Saliagopoulos expressed their heartfelt sympathy and support for all those affected by the recent flooding. The Leader also mentioned the specially arranged Community Flood meeting to be held on 5 June 2014 at the Leisure Centre, Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames (see further details below under the Leader's announcements).

The Leader summed up the discussion as follows:

We appreciate the concerns of residents in relation to flooding from the River Ash, due to the sudden and unexpected nature of the flooding, and we feel for those whose homes were subsequently flooded.

The Council has written to Thames Water and the Environment Agency requesting a full response on the reasons for the flooding.

As you are aware, we have received a response from both bodies, but appreciate this does not answer all the questions. So it is timely that the Chair of the Local Committee has also written to both organisations to press for a further explanation of what occurred, both in terms of operation of the sluice gates on the River Ash and control of flows in the aqueduct.

We note your petition and will continue to press the relevant bodies for answers but we expect them to attend our meeting on 5 June, which will give residents the opportunity to ask questions directly of Thames Water and the Environment Agency.

### **2057. Petition on the pilot introduction of cows to Sunbury Park**

Cabinet received and noted a petition on the pilot introduction of cows to Sunbury Park. Ms. Catherine Wheatley and Ms. Sophie Langella spoke on behalf of the petitioners, and Ms. Langella also read out statements on behalf of the Association of Professional Dog Walkers and the Kennel Club.

The Leader summed up the discussion as follows:

We appreciate that some residents do have concerns about cattle grazing in Sunbury Park and thank you for coming to express those views this evening.

The Cabinet report on the issues refers to cows grazing in other parts of the Borough where dogs are walked, and across the county in other boroughs such as Epsom and Ewell, Elmbridge and Surrey Heath. In these neighbouring boroughs, on Council-owned land, cattle and dog walkers interact safely. In the case of Sunbury Park, the cows would only be present for a few months at most. The cows we are introducing are a well-known breed used in parks, the Belted Galloways. Please be reassured that Belted Galloways have not been identified as a dangerous breed.

There has been a long-standing interest in enhancing the wildlife in, and recreational value of, Sunbury Park, which is why the Council produced a management plan for the park in 2008 and has recently updated it. The updated plan recommends cattle grazing as part of improvements to the biodiversity of the site. Due to its historic nature and previous use the site has considerable wildlife value which is of interest to many residents. In order to maintain the wildlife value of the park, the Council needs to use certain methods to manage it. These methods will add value to the status of the park and meet the current and future budgetary constraints of the Council.

Friends of Sunbury Park, a group established over 12 years ago to represent the community interest in the park, are supportive of a pilot to introduce cows in the park.

We have clearly noted the many points made by the Sunbury Park action group but equally we have noted the points of view from others who think that the cows would enhance the park and provide an educational tool, perhaps encouraging visitors.

As we have competing views, the Council is willing to undertake a pilot on grazing cows in the park to determine interactions and to see them in operation. The Council, along with the local community, can then review the scheme to determine long-term options.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet agrees to the introduction of a group of grazing cows in Sunbury Park, as a pilot, to assist in park maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity. The pilot will be reviewed after six months.

### **2058. Park Properties**

Cabinet considered a report on a request to approve the use of Long Lane Recreation flat and Staines Park Pavilion flat as temporary accommodation.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- Approves the use of Long Lane Recreation flat and Staines Park Pavilion flat as temporary accommodation.
- Approves a supplementary capital estimate of £38,450 for work to be carried out to ensure the facilities are fit for purpose.
- Agrees a contingency fund of £5,000 per year for maintenance including any new tenancy handover.
- Authorises Assistant Chief Executive Liz Borthwick, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to approve any issues to enable the flats to be occupied.
- Agrees that the two flats are to be managed, at cost, on behalf of Spelthorne Council either by A2Dominion or a suitable, alternative social housing provider.

**Reason for the decision:** Cabinet noted the shortage of temporary accommodation for homeless families.

### **2059. External financial provision for Disabled Facilities Grants, Home Improvement Agencies, and Handy Person Services**

Cabinet considered a report on a proposal to enter into a contract with Surrey County Council for the management of the Home Improvement Agency Service and Handy Person Service contracts on Surrey County Council's behalf.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- Agrees to the proposal to enter into a contract with Surrey County Council for the management of the Home Improvement Agency Service and Handy Person Service contracts on Surrey County Council's behalf.
- Agrees to waive the requirement, under Contract Standing Orders, to go out to tender.

**Reason for the decision:**

Cabinet noted that this proposal will allow for a more joined-up delivery of service and a better understanding of the inter-connection between the three services.

### **2060. Leader's announcements**

The Leader made the following announcements:

#### **Community Flood meeting**

There will be a meeting on Thursday 5 June at Spelthorne Leisure Centre, Knowle Green about the recent flooding in the Borough and the long-term implications.

The meeting will consist of two parts:

5pm to 7pm market place

7pm to 9pm presentation and questions and answers session.

During the course of the evening, you will be able to speak to people from key organisations such as the Environment Agency, Surrey Fire and Rescue, and Thames Water.

You will also be able to explore the causes of the flooding and plans for the future.

We were the first Council in Surrey to make the decision to hold such a meeting and we hope that other Surrey authorities will follow the same model.

### **Council Service updates**

- At its meeting on 12 March, the Planning Committee granted planning permission for a Costco cash and carry/retail store at Hanworth Road in Sunbury. The development will bring 250 new jobs to the area
- Spelthorne's Licensing team participated in a joint enforcement operation with Surrey Police at Notcutts Garden Centre on Thursday 27 March. Other agencies included VOSA, Customs & Excise, Environment Agency and Surrey County Council
- The Charities Commission has removed two charities from their register following investigations by Spelthorne's Licensing team into a charity which applied for a street collection permit
- The Community Safety team staged the first ever Senior Citizen Safety Day on Wednesday 9 April at the British Airways Learning Centre. Twenty residents took part in five interactive health and safety related sets provided by Surrey Trading Standards, NW Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue and British Airways
- Chestnut Court extra care housing (part of Stanwell New Start) is now 75% occupied and should be full by the end of the year
- New, improved A-Z booklets for Independent Living have been printed and are being distributed to local GPs, libraries and hospitals in Spelthorne
- Free dementia training for community groups and organisations is being offered in Spelthorne on Wednesday 4 June at St Martin's Court in Ashford
- At a recent event co-hosted by Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Google came to meet local businesses to help them develop e-skills. The workshop provided valuable online digital advice to small and large companies
- HR has introduced electronic P60s for staff and councillors, reducing cost of envelopes, special format printing and postage
- The trade refuse contract for Knowle Green has been re-negotiated resulting in a saving of £500 per month
- 95.5% of Council Tax has been collected despite the introduction of the Council Tax Support scheme
- 98.7% of Business Rates have been collected – down 0.1% on last year but high in the light of many recent legislative changes
- Housing Benefits are going to receive an additional subsidy payment of £18,506 in April from central government to help with the administration costs associated with the welfare reforms
- Five audits have been completed this month with support from colleagues at Elmbridge Council, demonstrating the increased resilience associated with partnership working

- Following an Audit investigation, Spelthorne will be cancelling eight Council Tax benefit claims where properties occupied by students have been given 100% exemptions
- The Communications team is continuing to facilitate the Brooklands Radio interviews involving key Cabinet members. Work is also underway to promote Spelthorne as a business location with various publicity materials including a brochure and website. The team is also starting to publicise the community flood meeting which is being held in June
- Since the retendering of the Staines market contract in late 2013, there has been an increase in stalls within the market. Current stalls include hot food, computer repairs, phone repairs, jet washers, picture framing, fruit and vegetables, flowers, jewellery, clothing and make-up
- Dramatize, an organisation which took over the lease of the Pavilion in Ashford Park in August 2013, has held a launch event to celebrate the opening of their new facility. The organisation, which provides theatrical workshops and programmes for adults with learning difficulties, received a grant of £11,000 from Surrey Community Improvements fund to renovate the building
- Staines Community Centre arranged a successful outing to the Royal Albert Hall for its members on 3 April
- Leisure Services hosted a free cycling festival in the Lammas Park on 8 April which included guided bike rides, bike maintenance and security marking, adapted bicycles for the disabled and a smoothie bike.

#### **2061. Issues for Future Meetings**

There were none.

#### **2062. Urgent Items**

##### **Proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (HC and PH) Licence Fees for 2014-2015.**

Cabinet considered an urgent report on the proposed level of licence fees for hackney carriages and private hire, following receipt of objections as a result of consultation on the proposed increases in fees.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet approves the proposed set of fees for the HC and PH licences for 2014/2015 set out in **Appendix A** of the report of the Assistant Chief Executive.

##### **Reason for the decision:**

Cabinet noted that if the HC and PH licence fees were not increased, the costs of providing this service would not be recovered.

##### **Reason for the report being taken as an urgent item:**

On 27 February 2014, the Council approved a range of fees and charges for services throughout the Council for 2014-2015. These included the proposed increased fees for HC and PH licences as shown in **Appendix A** of the report. The Council subsequently consulted on the proposed increases.

Therefore, it was necessary to give due consideration to any objections received following the consultation at the earliest opportunity to enable a decision to be made without delay.

**NOTES:-**

- (1) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are reminded that under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule, the “call-in” procedure shall not apply to recommendations the Cabinet makes to the Council. The matters on which recommendations have been made to the Council, if any, are identified with an asterisk [\*] in the above Minutes.**
- (2) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are entitled to call in decisions taken by the Cabinet for scrutiny before they are implemented, other than any recommendations covered under (1) above.**
- (3) Within three working days of the date on which a decision of the Cabinet or a Cabinet Member is published, not less than three members [one of whom must be the Chairman] of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are able to "call in" a decision;**
- (4) To avoid delay in considering an item "called in", an extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be convened within seven days of a "call in" being received if an ordinary meeting is not scheduled in that period;**
- (5) When calling in a Cabinet decision for review the members doing so should in their notice of "call in":-**  
**Outline their reasons for requiring a review;**

  - Indicate any further information they consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to have before it in order to conduct a review in addition to the written report made by officers to the Cabinet;**
  - Indicate whether, where the decision was taken collectively by the Cabinet, they wish the Leader or his nominee (who should normally be the Cabinet Member) or where the decision was taken by a Cabinet Member, the member of the Cabinet making the decision, to attend the committee meeting; and**
  - Indicate whether the officer making the report to the Cabinet or the Cabinet Member taking the decision or his/her representative should attend the meeting.**
- (6) The deadline of three working days for "call in" by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the above decisions by the Cabinet is the close of business on 24 April 2014**