

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2008**

**BOROUGH OF SPELTHORNE**

**AT THE MEETING OF THE SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN THE  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, KNOWLE GREEN, STAINES ON  
THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER AT 7.30PM**

|                       |                       |                                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ayers F.              | Forsbrey G.E.         | Pinkerton Mrs J.M.                    |
| Beardsmore I.J.       | Grant Mrs D.L.        | Pinkerton Jack .D.                    |
| Bell Mrs E.           | Hirst A.P.            | Rough Mrs M.W.                        |
| Bhadye S. (Mayor)     | Hyams Ms N.A.         | Rough S.J.                            |
| Broom Ms P.A.         | Kuun C.D.G.           | Royer M.T.                            |
| Budd S.E.W.           | Leighton Mrs V.J.     | Sider R.W.                            |
| Chouhan K.            | McShane D.L.          | Smith-Ainsley R.A. (Deputy<br>Leader) |
| Colison-Crawford R.B. | Napper Mrs I.         | Spencer Mrs C.L. (Deputy Mayor)       |
| Collis M.J.           | Nichols Mrs C.E.      | Strong C.V.                           |
| Crabb T.W.            | Nichols L.E.          | Thomson H.A.                          |
| Davis C.A.            | O'Hara E.             | Trussler G.F.                         |
| Dunn Mrs S.A.         | Packman J.D. (Leader) |                                       |
| Flurry K.E.           |                       |                                       |

Miss Sue Faulkner – Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee

Councillor S. Bhadye, The Mayor, in the Chair

**389/08 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss M.M. Bain, M.L. Bouquet, H.R. Jaffer and Mr M. Litvak.

**390/08 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2008 were approved as a correct record.

**391/08 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR**

**(1) Planned Mayoral Events**

The Mayor reminded Members of the following forthcoming Mayoral events:-

- Weybridge Male Voice Choir – 24 January 2009;
- Mayor's Charity Valentines Ball – 14 February 2009; and
- St. George's Day Charity Lunch – 23 April 2009.

**(2) The Great Tree Race**

The Mayor reported on the successful outcome of the Great Tree Race held on 29 November 2008 in Sunbury with the winners being the Council's Environment Services Team. The Mayor went on to express his thanks and appreciation to Councillor M.T. Royer who had paid for over 500 trees to be planted.

### **392/08 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chief Executive reported on the recent changes to the fire evacuation procedures for Councillors attending Council, Executive and Committee meetings in the various meeting rooms on the second floor of Knowle Green council offices which had been identified as Fire Zone 10.

### **393/08 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

#### **(1) Budget Update**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, gave a verbal update on the Council's budget. He reported that this was one of the most challenging budgets this Council had faced particular in light of the current financial downturn and the fact that the Government had only increased its general grant support to the Council by ½%. Currently due to the hard work of the Officers and the Executive the forecast for balancing the budget for 2009/2010 was looking good with Fees and Charges being set at a reasonable level. The Executive at its meeting in January 2009 would be considering the matter further.

#### **(2) VAT savings**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, reported that the Council had matched the savings from the reduction in the VAT of £11,000. This funding totalling £22,000 had enabled much needed funding to be made available immediately to the Voluntary Sector of the Community and included CAB receiving £12,000, Relate and Age Concern each receiving £2500 and Cross Roads receiving £1500.

#### **(3) Airtrack**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, reported on the meeting held with BAA on 17 December 2008 when concerns had been raised at the lack of information publicly available on the Airtrack scheme. At the meeting particular concern was expressed at the loss of the new High Street Station which was seen as being a benefit to the Borough. He went on to report that further meetings would be held with the first of such meetings being held in the new year with Colin Matthews the Chief Executive at BAA.

#### **(4) Rotary Clubs – Usborne Illustrated Dictionary**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, placed on record his thanks and appreciation to the Rotary Clubs of Ashford, Shepperton, Shepperton Aurora and Staines who had provided by way of a gift a copy of the Usborne Illustrated Dictionary to all Year 5 pupils in the Borough Schools. He placed on record the Council's special thanks to the Mayor, Councillor Simon Bhadye, Councillor H.R. Jaffer and Councillor Robin Sider who had been instrumental in bringing about the excellent initiative between the Rotary Clubs and the Borough Schools.

**394/08 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**Outline Budget – 2009/2010 – 2012/2013**

The Council considered the recommendation of the Executive on the Outline Budget – 2009/2010 – 2012/2013.

**RESOLVED:-**

1. That the net budgeted expenditure for 2009/2010 be set at a maximum level of £14.446m.
2. That, in order to reach this level, the Management Team identifies a package of options by which the budget can be balanced both in 2009/2010 and over the next 3 years of the outline period.
3. That, subject to the assumptions in the report of the Chief Finance Officer to the Executive meeting of 18 November 2008, being valid, a guideline Council Tax increase be set close to the maximum allowed by the Government whilst having regard to the level set by other authorities in Surrey. For the purposes of the Outline Budget an annual increase of 4% has been assumed.
4. That the Council's use of reserves policy be reviewed with the aim of the council seeking to maximise the level of its reserves whilst taking account of the reduced potential for capital receipts and the need to maintain a capital programme.
5. That an agreed total reserves target minimum level (as measured on 31<sup>st</sup> March each year) be set at a level of £20m for 31/3/10.
6. That financial health indicators be set, subject to the future financial climate as follows:
  - i Revenue outturn against original budget target: +/- 1.5%
  - ii Capital outturn against original budget target: +/- 10%
  - iii Council Tax collection target: 98.7%
  - iv Business rates collection target: 98.0%
  - v Sundry debts aged more than 90 days overdue no more than 15% of total debts
  - vi Payment of creditors within 30 days target: 97.5%

In light of the developing economic situation, the financial health indicators will be kept under regular review in case they are required to be revised.

**395/08 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, presented his report, which outlined the various matters the Executive had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

**396/08 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee, Councillor M.T. Royer, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

**397/08 LICENSING COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor R.W. Sider, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Sider placed on record his thanks and appreciation to the Officers and members of the committee for their assistance and support in dealing with numerous licensing applications over the last twelve months.

**398/08 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Performance Management and Review Committee, Councillor Ms P.A. Broom, presented her report, which outlined the matters the Committee had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

**399/08 PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor E. O'Hara, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

**400/08 QUESTIONS ON WARD ISSUES**

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor I.J. Beardsmore asked the following question:**

“What is happening with the Area Investment Programme particularly in respect of the Sunbury Cross Project?”

**The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Councillor Colin A. Davis responded as follows:**

“Thank you Councillor Beardsmore for the question.

Following the decision of the Executive to approve this programme, initial feedback was taken earlier this year. In all three areas, plans will be put in place to consult with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the Council has a range of views which represent the different needs of residents, businesses and shoppers.

We are currently establishing project teams for Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury, which will consist of a lead officer, an Executive Councillor and a local ward Councillor in each of the three areas. In January, the Executive will announce the framework for managing these projects by a Programme Board.

I think this is a real opportunity, during these difficult financial times, for the Council to invest in these area programmes and I am confident that any changes made over the three year programme will benefit our residents. However, I would ask all Councillors not to raise residents' expectations beyond what we hope to achieve with limited funding."

Councillor Beardsmore thanked the Portfolio Holder for his response and confirmed he would look forward to receiving the consultation information that would be sent to the local residents.

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor T.W. Crabb asked the following question:**

"What particular benefit to the residents of Sunbury East is envisaged by the proposed twinning of Spelthorne with the Grand Port/ Savanne District Council in Mauritius, and how much officer time and its value will be required to progress and service the new proposed twinning link for the year 2009/10?"

**The Portfolio Holder for Communications and Engagement, Councillor Andrew Hirst, responded as follows:**

"The report to the Executive identified themes for the proposed link with Grand Port/Savanne District Council in Mauritius based on the exchange of knowledge, information and ideas around:-

- democracy
- economic development
- waste management and links between schools

We hope that this will for example, lead to exchanges of best practice in service delivery that could benefit the whole Borough, and a greater understanding by young people of another country's way of life.

It is not expected that this link will incur significant costs; where possible we will seek sponsorship for any travel and hospitality that will be necessary over the years.

There will clearly be a need for some staff time to be spent on establishing this new link, but whilst this may be intensive in the first months of the relationship we expect that it should reduce considerably in the longer term.

We will use the opportunity of the new link to review the condition, location and wording of the "Welcome to Spelthorne" signs, again exploring possibilities for Sponsorship."

Councillor Hirst responded to a supplementary question from Councillor Crabb to advise that at this stage it was too early in the exploration to give costings and officer time needed, but referred councillor Crabb to the report that was considered by the

Executive on 9 December 2008 and confirmed that members would be kept informed of progress.

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor L.E. Nichols asked the following question:**

“Both Runnymede and Mole Valley Councils are supporting residents in their vigorous opposition to the proposed thermal waste disposal sites in their Boroughs. At the Surrey Waste Plan examination hearing Spelthorne’s position was stated as being not against incineration in principle at the Charlton site, provided it was not visually intrusive and did not generate significant additional traffic.

Does this remain the Council’s position or, should Charlton be chosen, will it oppose the principle of the use of the site for incineration or other thermal treatment?”

**The Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Councillor G.E. Forbsrey, responded as follows:**

“This issue was previously raised in a question at Full Council in July last year and it was confirmed that a report had been agreed by Executive on 18 July 2006 which set out the Council’s concerns about the submitted Surrey Waste Plan 2006. For the record, this Council had objected to the ‘soundness’ of the Plan on a number of matters.

The County Council’s draft Waste Plan did not expressly propose an incinerator at Charlton Lane, but they did refer to ‘thermal treatment’ which encompasses a range of technologies.

We objected to any large scale facility at Charlton Lane because of its significant potential adverse impact on landscape, amenity and traffic. We also objected that the draft plan failed to assess the impact of smaller scale facilities and their suitability, or otherwise, at any of the sites identified in the plan – including Charlton Lane and the lack of acknowledgement in the plan of the constraints each site has.

We made it clear that any proposal at Charlton Lane, was likely to give rise to landscape, amenity and traffic impacts greater than the existing development. This would not be acceptable to the Council.

The Waste Plan was adopted on 6 May 2008 in accordance with the Inspectors’ binding report. It identifies Charlton Lane as a potential site for the thermal treatment of waste, subject to any proposal having to demonstrate “very special circumstances” because of the Green Belt location and to satisfy other criteria including to landscape and traffic impacts. The Inspector took the view that, due to a number of factors, the scope to locate a large scale thermal treatment facility at Charlton Lane was more limited.

Therefore, the Council’s position with regard to the thermal treatment of waste remains unaltered, but our view on any detailed proposal coming forward at Charlton Lane would need to be formulated in the light of the policies and proposals in the adopted Waste Plan and a careful assessment of the likely impact of any specific proposals”.

Councillor Forsbrey in response to a supplementary question from Councillor L.E. Nichols confirmed that the Council's position with regard to the thermal treatment of waste remains unaltered, but our view on any detailed proposal coming forward at Charlton Lane would need to be formulated in the light of the policies and proposals in the adopted Waste Plan and a careful assessment of the likely impact of any specific proposals.

**401/08 GENERAL QUESTIONS**

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs I. Napper asked the following question:**

"Following the Government's u-turn on the future of the Post Office Card Account it would appear that part of the rationale for closing many of this country's Post Offices is void.

Would the Leader therefore agree with me that the case for closing the Post Office's in Spelthorne, which are not particularly strong in any case, is now significantly weaker?

Furthermore, would he also write to the Minister and to the Royal Mail asking them to reconsider their closure programme?"

**The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, responded as follows:**

"The Post Office decisions for closure are based on Government criteria which includes:

- the population within a three mile radius
- the population within deprived areas within on 1 mile radius.

The Post Office 'state' that they also include the availability of public transport, local demographics and the impact on local economies.

You will be aware that we have previously responded in a robust manner to any consultation which has led to the removal of any Post Office. We have also acted behind the scenes to establish the Ashford Post Office once again. In addition you will be aware that residents' pressure groups, including the local Conservative Party, have organised petitions to be presented to the Post Office and the Government.

I think the case for closures was always very weak, and I would be happy to also write to the Post Office Programme Director asking them to reconsider the closures which have taken place in Spelthorne, such as that at Woodthorpe Road, Ashford".

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor I.J. Beardsmore asked the following question:**

"Between 2001 and 2006 Spelthorne had a target set by government of building 860 new dwellings. Spelthorne actually built 1292. 432 or one third too many.

Between 2006 and 2026 Spelthorne has to build 3320 new dwellings. Spelthorne is already a year in front of that target and is predicting a total over build of more than 1000 dwellings between 2006 and 2026.

In the 25 years from 2001 to 2026 Spelthorne's over build is 1500 dwellings.

Why is Spelthorne building 30% more houses than the government wants?"

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley, responded as follows:**

"Spelthorne has a need for more housing and previously the Surrey Structure Plan, and now the South East Plan, set us specific targets.

The Surrey Structure Plan (2004) set a target for the period 2001 to 2016 of 2580 dwellings. By 2006 we had built 1292 – around half. We had always expected to build more in the first half of the period and that any surplus would contribute to the requirement overall.

Unfortunately, the South East Plan has now set us a new target for 2006 to 2026 of 3320 dwellings. The Plan does not allow Councils to take account of house building progress prior to 2006. For the purposes of our LDF we have to show we have what is called 'flexibility' to meet the target in case any identified sites do not come forward. The Government has imposed this upon us.

I can confirm, however, that, contrary to what the Member has stated in his question, we are not already one year ahead of the South East Plan requirements. It requires an average of 166 a year and after two years we are only 36 ahead. Whilst our officers' technical work for the Local Development Framework has shown a potential capacity or 'flexibility' of some 1000 over our target that is not the same as saying 1000 extra houses will actually be built.

Some sites might not come forward and all of us are aware of the current serious down turn in the housing market. However, I welcome the fact that this flexibility will ensure that we do not have to build in the Green Belt, and, I trust, you too Councillor Beradsmore would support us in our continued determination to protect our Green Belt?"

Councillor Beardsmore responded by confirming his endorsement of the Council's position in protecting the Green Belt but expressed concerns that the Local Development Framework identified the building of more dwelling than was required by the government. . Councillor R.A. Smith Ainsley advised that there was a need to await the full report from the Inspectorate on the Local Development Framework.

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor L.E. Nichols asked the following question:**

"Circumstances in the housing market have depressed prices to the extent that the affordable housing contributions from smaller developments have effectively reduced to nothing. Planning applications that only a year ago would have made a significant financial contribution, are now being assessed as not reaching the threshold of profitability needed to trigger a payment under the current method of calculation.



Given the shortfall in affordable housing stretching back over a number of years, this is a highly undesirable situation.

Developers who obtain permission under current circumstances are not obliged to develop for up to three years and can therefore wait until market conditions improve before building. It is likely that when sold these developments will yield higher prices than those assessed for S106 purposes.

Does the Council accept that the current method of contribution assessment is likely to result in an undesirable loss of contribution to affordable housing? Will the Council give urgent consideration to changing the basis of developer contribution to one that assesses profitability on the basis of final selling price?"

**The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, responded as follows:**

"Securing affordable housing from private housing developments has always involved tough negotiations and firm grasp of the economics of each development. I am pleased that this Council has a good track record in securing a higher proportion of affordable housing than most authorities, particularly in Surrey.

However, we cannot avoid the impacts of the current recession and officers are already looking at how to maximise affordable housing contributions in these very difficult times. Their work may have prompted this question. However, I can confirm no options have been ruled out at this stage and that I, as the Leader of the Council, have already raised this subject with senior officers and requested a report to be presented to the Executive in the New Year."

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor T.W. Crabb asked the following question:**

"Most Surrey Boroughs and districts are successfully claiming the Planning Infrastructure Contribution. Those Boroughs and Districts are between them gaining hundreds of thousands of pounds to help their residents.

Why isn't Spelthorne raising funds in a similar manner to help its residents?"

**The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor John O'Hara, responded as follows:**

"Spelthorne has secured significant sums of money by way of section 106 agreements and through the Local Development Framework [LDF] policies will continue to do so. This will fund infrastructure needed as a result of development including highway improvements, provision of open space and various environmental and community needs.

Over the last 10 or so years more than £2 million has been secured and already spent in the Borough and a further £3.5 million has been agreed and will be paid to the Council on commencement of the respective developments.

This adds up to £5.5 million, which is in addition to 208 affordable dwellings built on private housing sites and given over to Registered Social Landlords [RSL's], plus a further 68 affordable units which had planning permission as at 1 April 2008. The affordable housing has secured a value in the tens of millions.

Whilst Councillor Crabb refers to other Surrey Districts claiming hundreds of thousands, I am delighted to confirm that Spelthorne can count its contributions in millions”

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor C.V. Strong asked the following question:**

“Following a recent meeting with officers I am concerned that there appears to be no progress on the issue of providing a community facility as part of the Stanwell New Start regeneration project.

Could the Portfolio Holder please outline his thinking on this very important issue.

Could he also provide the likely timetable for this Council, A2 Housing and other partners to reach a final decision both on the community facility and on the overall project?”

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Independent Living, Councillor Mrs V.J. Leighton responded as follows:**

“The issue of a community facility is part of the Stanwell agenda and is viewed as very important. However the exact location/nature of the facility depends to some extent on the final agreed location of the extra care facilities within the scheme. It has been agreed following a Steering Board meeting held on 9 December 2008 that the issue of both extra care and provision of community facilities will be discussed in a meeting with A2Dominion in January 2009. These will then be incorporated into the planning application for later phases. The community facility was never intended to be provided in the first phase of work, which phase is, by the way, expected to go to Planning Committee in February 2009.

It is anticipated that the community facility will be available for the local people, and the Officers will be working hard with the local community to ensure that it is sustainable.

With regard the timetable, the Council has received the outline planning application for the whole scheme and now it is anticipated that this will go to Planning Committee in February/March. However, much depends on information currently being sought from the District Valuer regarding disposal of open spaces and on comments to the application being received by external bodies. Thereafter, the Council is, to a large extent, dependent on A2Dominion for submitting detailed planning applications for each of the remaining three phases.

Furthermore the current economic climate will also have a bearing on A2Dominion's ability to deliver each of the phases, although at this stage they are confident that they can complete all four phases.

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor R.B. Colison-Crawford asked the following question:**

“The Capital Monitoring Report for September indicated that the criteria for eligibility for Home Repair Assistance Grants had been too tightly drawn and very little grant had been awarded so far.

What progress has the Head of Service made in revising the criteria and how much grant is now expected to be given out this financial year?

If the budget will not all be spent this year, will the balance be carried forward and added to next year's grant fund?"

**The Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley, responded as follows:**

"This year Spelthorne has been offering a Decent Homes Grant which replaced our previous Renewal Grant which was based on the old fitness standard. Our Decent Homes Grant is designed to enable Spelthorne to assist vulnerable people to bring their properties up to the Decent Homes Standard. In introducing this new grant it was important to ensure that the grant would be attractive to applicants in most need of assistance in improving their homes, whilst at the same time, ensuring that we operate within our existing budget and do not overload the work of the Environmental Health team.

Having operated these grants for around six months of this year it was apparent that many people were falling just outside the grant criteria, although they clearly needed assistance with improvements to bring their properties up to the Decent Home Standard. In September 2008 the Executive agreed to modify the scheme to improve matters and the decent homes grant criteria was therefore modified to try to enable more people to qualify for the grant. The Environmental Health team is working hard to try and progress some of these grants. As it can take several months to progress a grant from application to completion, some grants approved over the next few months may not be completed in this financial year. It is currently estimated that the total spend from the Decent Homes Grant budget will be around £75,000 for this financial year. Any housing grant budgets which are under spent are not normally carried over into the next financial year.

The Head of Environmental Health and Building Control will continue to monitor uptake of these grants and further modifications to our eligibility criteria may be necessary. He is, however, confident that once the grant criteria is pitched at the right level the decent homes grant budget will be fully utilised in future years."

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs S.A. Dunn asked the following question:**

"The Revenue Accounts published for September show significant staff under spends, due to vacancies, in Environmental Services Administration and Environmental Health and Building Control. What impact has this had on service provision to date, what impact is expected over the full financial year and what expectation is there of filling the outstanding vacancies?"

**The Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Councillor G.E. Forsbrey, responded as follows:**

The reasons for the significant underspend in this year's salaries budget for the Environmental Health and Building Control Service are twofold. Firstly there was delay of around four months in recruiting a vacant Environmental Health Manager post whilst a review was undertaken to assess whether any changes should be made to the management structure of the service. Secondly, a number of vacant part-time posts have been held open pending completion of the Service's Business Improvement Programme review.

Whilst we recruited a new Environmental Health Manager, the work of this post was covered by the Head of Environmental Health and Building Control, with assistance from another one of the service's managers. This impacted more on the workload of the Head of Service than the rest of the team. The replacement Environmental Health Manager started work with Spelthorne at the end of September 2008.

The vacant posts within the Service which are currently under review are two part-time Environmental Health Officer posts and one part time administration post within the Building Control Team.

It was essential to leave these vacancies open during the Business Improvement Programme review in order to consider whether any changes were needed to these posts and to assess whether any savings could be made. In order to minimise the effects of these vacancies whilst the review is completed, consultants and temporary staff have been employed to cover some of the work of these posts.

This review is now nearing completion. Although improvements have been made to the way the environmental health team works, the high volume of service requests and other work received by environmental health has caused some difficulties for the Service this year. The Head of Environmental Health and Building Control is therefore currently in the process of deciding the best way of providing additional resources for the team, using the vacant part-time Environmental Health Officer posts to create a new full-time officer post at reduced costs. An administration review is also being undertaken at this time. It is envisaged that both of these reviews will be completed by the end of January 2009."

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs C.E. Nichols asked the following question:**

"The draft strategy for Older People's Services (Growing Older in Spelthorne) restricts itself to commenting on the next four years (2008 -2012). Included in the section 'Housing and Home' is a reference to increasing extra-care housing over the next ten years. No other detail is provided except reference to the two agreed schemes in Sunbury and Stanwell which fall within the four years to 2012.

Four hundred extra-care homes are envisaged in the new Spelthorne Development Plan. This would require as many as nine or ten separate schemes. Bearing in mind that large sites are at a premium, what is the Council doing to identify and secure appropriate sites and how many schemes are expected to come forward for development in the next ten years?"

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Independent Living, Councillor Mrs V.J. Leighton, responded as follows:**

"As Councillor Mrs. Nichols rightly observes, we have a 20-year strategy in the new Spelthorne Development Plan to provide 400 extra care houses. This will be secured by negotiating for such schemes on all appropriate sites as they become available. The two new schemes referred to mean we are in fact slightly ahead of where we need to be at the moment, but I am certainly not complacent about the continued efforts needed in making this important contribution to the needs of elderly residents in the Borough.

Surrey County Council will also be an important partner, in securing provision for Extra-care housing as it is a key priority for them too and they are also landowners in Spelthorne.

The Older Peoples Strategy makes reference to the intentions of the Development Plan but the purpose of that document is the equally important task of providing appropriate support services for the elderly, these being services for which we as a Borough Council are all entitled to be very proud.”

Councillor Mrs Leighton in response to a supplementary question from Councillor Mrs Nichols advising that the Executive had identified Stanwell and Ashford as priority areas. Currently Stanwell was being dealt with and once resources were available would set out to achieve the regeneration of Ashford and that all members would be advised at the appropriate time.

**Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs E. Bell asked the following question:**

“I understood that audio recording of council meetings was to be introduced commencing with the last planning meeting, however I understand that no announcement was made at the meeting. As it would be unethical to record a meeting without external speakers being made aware, can I assume that the meeting wasn't recorded, and if so can you give me a timetable for when these recordings will be made and when they will be available on the council website for residents to hear?”

**The Portfolio Holder for Communication and Engagement, Councillor A.P. Hirst, responded as follows:**

“As stated at the last Council Meeting on 30 October 2008, we are currently looking at the feasibility of giving greater access to a wider audience to Committee meetings, possibly by providing web casting which will enable Members of the public to view and hear Committee meetings via our web site. Investigations are still at the preliminary stage and we are in the process of looking at the various packages available on the market and associated costs of these. If this formally is adopted, then we will, of course, have to inform people attending the meetings that they are being recorded. Obviously, we would not want to spend much money on the recording process as the interest may be of course limited, so we are investigating the most cost effective way of doing this.

You will be aware that we, inadvertently, have a very limited recording facility through our camera system used at the Planning Committee meetings. However, a quality reproduction of the Planning Committee meeting did not take place and we will, of course, be making an appropriate announcement before the relevant Committee, should we find a cost effective way of doing this in the near future.

**SEASON'S GREETINGS**

The Mayor, Councillor Simon Bhadye, wished those present at the meeting a Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.