

MINUTES OF THE SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting of Spelthorne Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames on Thursday, 18 October 2018 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillors:

C. Barnard	Q.R. Edgington	A.J. Mitchell
R.O. Barratt	M.P.C. Francis	S.C. Mooney
I.J. Beardsmore	A.E. Friday	D. Patel
J.R. Boughtflower	N.J. Gething	O. Rybinski
S.J. Burkmar	A.C. Harman	D. Saliagopoulos
S. Capes	I.T.E. Harvey	A. Sapunovas
R. Chandler	N. Islam	R.W. Sider BEM
C.A. Davis	A.T. Jones	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
S.M. Doran	J.G. Kavanagh	H.A. Thomson
S.A. Dunn	M.J. Madams Deputy Mayor	

Councillor J.M. Pinkerton OBE, The Mayor, in the Chair

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors M.M. Attewell, P.C. Edgington, T.J.M. Evans, A.L. Griffiths, V.J. Leighton, J.R. Sexton and B.B. Spoor.

229/18 Presentations

The Mayor welcomed Sergeant Amy Lee, from 195 Staines Detachment of the Army Cadet Force, to the meeting and invited her to give a presentation on the 'Diana Award'. Sergeant Lee was presented with the 'Diana Award' because of her selfless commitment and dedication at her detachment and her charity work.

The Council joined the Mayor in commending Sergeant Lee for her inspiring charity work and congratulated her on achieving this wonderful award.

The Mayor welcomed the following members of the Neighbourhood Services, Parks Team to the Council in recognition of their hard work and dedication which had resulted in the Sunbury Walled Garden and Staines Cemetery being awarded Green Flag status:

Dennis Codd; Terry Davies; Dan Habicht; Cliff Hillman; Richard Hogg; Derek James; Derek Johnston; Tom Smith-Clark; Steve Webster and Shane Webster.

The Council had also received awards in the South and South East in Bloom campaign achieving:

Silver Gilt awards for Sunbury Walled Garden, Stanwell Burial Ground and Sunbury Cemetery, and a Gold award for Staines Cemetery which also won overall winner in the Cemetery category.

The Mayor acknowledged the huge amount of work which goes into the upkeep and maintenance of the Council's parks and open spaces and said these awards were a tribute to the dedication of everyone involved.

The Council joined the Mayor in congratulating the Neighbourhood Services staff who received the awards from the Mayor on behalf of all their colleagues in the Parks and Cemeteries Teams and joined her for a photo.

230/18 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

231/18 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

232/18 Announcements from the Mayor

Details of the Mayor's upcoming events were circulated to all councillors at the meeting. She thanked Councillor Harman for organising her last event, a Jazz evening which had been a huge success. She also thanked all the Councillors who supported it. Upcoming events included:

Friday 26 October – An evening with the Rat Pack, Greeno Centre
Saturday 10 November – "The Armed Man" Concert, Staines Methodist
Sunday 11 November – Remembrance day
Tuesday 13 November – Christmas buffet, The Orangery, Squires Garden Centre
Sunday 18 November – Santa Fun Run, Elmsleigh Centre
Thursday 15 November – Bingo, Greeno Centre
Sunday 9 December – Sunday lunch at Bella Napoli

For information or to book tickets, contact the Mayor's Secretary.

233/18 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

"On Friday 28th September, Cllr Francis, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cllr Williams, Portfolio Holder for Finance and I handed over the keys to three new

tenants of our newly built homes at Churchill Way, Sunbury. These residents had been living in temporary accommodation out of Borough and it is a great pleasure to help improve their quality of life.

This was also very exciting as it marked the beginning of our program of delivering homes to Spelthorne residents and a fruit of our property investment strategy. Up until now we have had to concentrate on rebuilding our financial foundations to ensure we are financially sound and stable. We are now in a position to deliver real additional benefits to our residents.

We will shortly be delivering more homes, with the completion in the New Year of 8 homes at Bugle House in Halliford and commencing the construction of 28 affordable homes, and a 20 plus single person hostel in partnership with the Salvation Army at the White House site at Fordbridge. In total we are aiming to deliver over 600 homes for residents in the next 5 years.

Madam Mayor, there has already been an announcement of the 100th anniversary ceremony that we are holding here on 9th November. Also, as part of our commemoration we have commissioned a Centenary Plantation where 100 trees will shortly be planted in Laleham Park as an ongoing focus of remembrance. 725 residents of what is now Spelthorne gave their lives fighting in World War One and we will be planting 725 trees in total to recognize their sacrifice. We will be consulting on the location of the remainder shortly.

As Members are aware this Council Means Business and whilst our shopping areas are in a strong position compared to others we are determined to do all we can to support them. I am therefore pleased to announce that for the three late night shopping Thursdays of December our Spelthorne owned Staines centre car parks will be free of charge from 4pm. Whilst this is a modest step it is indicative of our strong support for local businesses. In the New Year we will take stock and consider whether to continue this. I would like to encourage all Councillors and residents to support this initiative.

Finally, I am pleased to report that engaging with local residents has crystallized our desire to protect Staines Park in perpetuity through a Fields in Trust designation.”

234/18 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive gave the following announcement:

“The Council supports over 1,200 people with alarms or telecare equipment fitted in their homes and for many people this equipment is a lifeline in case of emergencies.

Following a power outage in Shepperton earlier this month, where up to 700 properties lost electricity, the Spelthorne Borough Council’s Personal Alarm Network Team acted quickly to identify clients who may have been affected. Working with the emergency planning team, Surrey County Council and

Surrey Fire & Rescue, vulnerable clients were visited to check whether they were able to keep warm and had food and lighting.

I should like to place on record my thanks to the SPAN Team and indeed to our partners for responding so quickly to make sure that the most vulnerable people in our communities were safe and well.”

235/18 Questions from members of the public

The Mayor reported that, under Standing Order 14, three questions had been received from members of the public. The questions asked, and responses given by the Leader were as follows:

1. Question from Mr G. Gravett of Staines-upon-Thames

“Legislation in the EU and UK requires that all livestock are stunned before slaughter. However European law does have an exemption, which the UK implements, for animals that are slaughtered for food intended for the consumption of Jewish and Muslim communities. Some of these communities allow stunning before slaughter, others do not. In circumstances where stunning is not permitted, this is known as ‘non-stun slaughter.’

Does the council purchase, supply or serve through any of its departments, subsidiary organisations or sub-contractors any meat or meat derived products where the method of non-stun slaughter has been used, for consumption by any persons other than the religious groups referred to above?”

Response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey:

“Thank you for your question Mr. Gravett.
We have contacted our suppliers of ready-made meals and raw meats used in both our Community Centres and delivered through our Meals on Wheels service. We have been told that no supplier used by the Council employs non-stun methods of animal slaughter. The exception is the provision of meats for consumption by certain religious communities which is predominantly supplied to them on request as part of the Meals on Wheels service.”

Question from Mr A. McLuskey of Stanwell:

“Successive authoritative reports (including from the Department of Transport) have indicated that IF airport expansion is required it should be at Gatwick rather than Heathrow.

Why, therefore, in their recent press release, does the Council seem to be conceding Heathrow’s wish for its 3rd runway project to go ahead?”

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Harvey

“Thank you for your question Mr. McLuskey.

Spelthorne gave its formal support to the principle of a third runway at Heathrow back in 2008 in order to ensure it maintained its hub status, securing Britain's aviation industry and supporting UK Plc. The airport brings significant economic benefits to the borough, 7% of our workforce are employed there and for every ten direct jobs, 26 are created in the supply chain. However our support then, and now, has not been unequivocal - far from it. Back in 2008 we said that any expansion needs to ensure compliance with EU air quality limits, result in no increased noise, requires surface access improvements and ensures market value compensation for loss of property.

As Heathrow's expansion plans have progressed we have scrutinised them very carefully, and I can assure you and the locally affected communities that we will continue to do so. You will know that back in March of this year we set out our list of ten requirements that Heathrow Airport Limited need to meet. We have also set out very clearly how our communities up in Stanwell Moor and Stanwell will be newly impacted by the expansion plans, and have been pressing Heathrow Airport Limited hard on extending their Wider Property Offer Zone. We want Heathrow to be successful, but we also want to protect and enhance the quality of life for our local communities."

Question from Mr M. Jones on behalf of Staines Bowling Club

"In the light of the Council's statement in August that it will no longer develop on Staines Park or the Bowls Club grounds, will the Council now categorically confirm that they will NOT be issuing a lease termination notice in April 2019 and that Staines Bowling Club can stay on the site for the remainder of their lease?"

Response from the Leader, Councillor I.T.E. Harvey

"Thank you for your question Mr. Jones. The Council has already been clear that it will not seek to develop a new Leisure Centre on Staines Park. It follows that there are no plans to terminate your lease in April 2019.

The Council expects both parties to honour the commitments made in the Lease and does not intend to re-negotiate the terms. This was confirmed to the Club in a letter dated 1 October this year."

At the Mayor's discretion, Councillor Saliagopoulos asked the Leader for his assurance that there would be no increase in the Bowls Club rent.

She also asked the Leader to reiterate that no decision would be made regarding the Park and Bowls Club that did not honour his promise that he would not allow any development in the Park.

The Leader stated that he could not make any commitment on behalf of a future administration, however, he had made it clear that under his administration no development would take place on Staines Park. In relation to the Bowls Club rent, he referred everyone to the letter received from the

Club on 25 September asking that the Council make variations to the lease and the Council's response of 1 October that made clear it would not be changing the terms of the lease, including the rent of £1 per year.

236/18 Petitions

There were none.

237/18 The White House Hostel Design Team Fees - Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet seeking approval of the budget for the design phase of a proposed hostel for the homeless on the White House site. Redevelopment of the site would provide much needed hostel accommodation and assist the Council in meeting its statutory obligations under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.

Resolved to approve the budget for the full design phase of a proposed new hostel for the homeless on the White House site.

238/18 Redevelopment of Harper House - Key Decision

Council considered the recommendation of Cabinet on the redevelopment of Harper House. The proposed demolition and rebuilding of Harper House would enable the Council to take advantage of a time-limited grant funding programme and improve the quality of emergency accommodation within the Borough for vulnerable homeless households. It would also minimise risk of financial losses, legal challenge or reputational damage should the condition of the current building deteriorate.

Resolved to:

1. Approve the supplementary capital programme provision of £2.6m for the full demolition and rebuild costs for Harper House; and
2. Authorise the Chief Financial Officer to make prudent financing arrangements for the transaction.

239/18 Report from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor I.T.E. Harvey, presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 26 September 2018, which outlined the matters the Cabinet had decided since the last Council meeting.

240/18 Report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee

The Chairman of the Audit Committee, Councillor M.J. Madams, presented her report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Q.R. Edgington asked for assurance that the level of risk on the Corporate Risk Register for Brexit be examined carefully to reflect the major effect it was likely to have. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the potential risks of Brexit were being taken seriously, that a report on this topic would be before the Committee at its next meeting and the Corporate Risk Register was being updated in terms of the impact of Brexit. The Chairman,

Councillor Madams, invited Councillor Edgington to submit requests for items for any future Audit Committee in advance of the meeting.

241/18 Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor S.C. Mooney, presented her report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

242/18 Report from the Chairman of the Planning Committee

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley, presented his reports which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

243/18 Motions

No Motions had been received.

244/18 Questions on Ward Issues

There were no questions on Ward issues.

245/18 General questions

The Mayor reported that three general questions had been received in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillors Q.R. Edgington and D. Saliagopoulos.

1. Question from Councillor Quentin Edgington:

"Of the quoted fifty possible sites which have been identified for a new Leisure Centre can you please tell me how many are in each respective area of the Borough? i.e. ten in Stanwell, four in Staines etc."

Response from the Leader:

"Thank you for your question Councillor Edgington.

As stated in our press release of 20 September 2018 and my email to your Group member Cllr Sexton on 8 October, we have yet to identify any specific alternative site for a new Leisure Centre but we are continuing to assess over 50 potential locations across the borough for their suitability.

At this stage it would be inappropriate to release details on where all these sites are as this could lead to unnecessary speculation and concern amongst local residents. The assessment process will take a number of months to complete and, once we have narrowed down our options, further proposals will be issued for consultation."

In accordance with Standing Order 15.2 Councillor Edgington asked the following supplementary question:

"In the light of the appalling consultation process can you give assurance that Keeble Brown will not be used in any future consultation on the Leisure Centre?"

The Leader responded: "No".

2. Question from Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos:

"Would the Leader kindly confirm to Council how much his administration have borrowed up to date from the Public Loans Board, to add to the portfolio of assets? What assurances can the Leader give our residents that the strict criteria that has been applied is 100 percent bullet proof. Would he clarify that this debt is a local taxpayers' debt? He may also be aware that the Prime Minister recently announced that councils would be given permission to carry on borrowing to add to their assets. What other acquisitions are in the immediate pipeline please? "

Response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey:

"Thank you for your question Councillor Saliagopoulos.

Total borrowing undertaken by the Council from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) since September 2016 is £1.017 billion, of which £1.008 billion is outstanding. The Council has adopted a prudent approach to borrowing, fixing the rates of interest at extremely low levels and ensuring that it is repaying all its loans on an annual basis. This debt is covered by high quality fixed assets with strongly performing rental covenants.

Rather like the maxim "there is no such thing as a free lunch" nothing is "100% bullet proof" but we apply very strict assessment and underwriting criteria to all proposed acquisitions.

The Council in its commercial acquisitions only selects best in class assets, and has a very robust due diligence process which evaluates quality of the asset, and the financial strength of the tenants. We have strengthened our internal team bringing in people with significant commercial experience and we work with top quality external advisers. The Council models future liabilities of potential assets over 50 years to ensure that it set asides from the net rental income sufficient funds to cover future refurbishments or rent free periods. This approach ensures that our revenue budget and council taxpayers are protected.

The Chief Finance Officer and the Portfolio Holder have previously briefed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on our robust approach to risk management on asset acquisitions. I attended the 11th September Overview & Scrutiny meeting and spoke and answered questions on our property

investment policy and it is notable that you were not present. Officers are currently drafting the Capital Strategy document which is a new requirement for all Councils which will clearly articulate our rationale for making acquisitions and how we manage risk. This strategy will be discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will come to Council in December for approval.

Through our acquisition programme we are now generating net additional income of approximately £10m (after paying interest, loan repayments covering supervision costs, and setting aside provision to cover future refurbishment costs etc). This is enabling the Council to maintain and improve the services for its residents and to deliver a range of much needed housing accommodation for our residents across the Borough.

The additional income has enabled the Council to offset the impact of the removal of our Revenue Support Grant, the significant reduction of New Homes Bonus Grant, to withstand the impacts to date of knock on cuts from Surrey County Council's funding position, to increase the amount we spend on maintaining all our operational assets providing services for our residents. If under my leadership we had not gone down the path of generating robust long term income streams the consequences for our residents' services would have been dire. For example our ability to maintain our day centres and independent living services, which are discretionary would have been very much in doubt

Our focus has shifted from acquiring assets to offset the revenue budget gaps to delivering housing which meets the needs of our residents. Having said that I do need to emphasise that as a borough council we continue to face a challenging financial future with more funding reductions likely in the future and uncertainties as to further impacts from County's financial difficulties."

3. Question from Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos:

"In the interests of openness to our residents, can the Leader please inform Council within the last 5 years who has been to the Queen's Garden Party, representing the Council? Can he also confirm which members of this Council have attended the Garden Parties on more than one occasion in their capacity as a Councillor or Mayor within the last 5 years and who is intended to represent the Council this year please?"

Response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey:

"Thank you for your question Councillor Saliagopoulos.

Spelthorne Borough Council is allocated 4 tickets for the Royal Garden Parties and nominates two main guests who should each be accompanied.

In the last 5 years the following people have attended the Queen's Garden Party to represent the Council:

Councillor Maureen Attewell and Mr Stephen Attewell
Councillor Colin Barnard and Mrs Barbara Barnard
Mr Mike Brennan and Miss Lisa Rollin
Councillor Alfred Friday and Mrs Kaye Friday
Councillor Ian Harvey and Mrs Helen Harvey
Councillor Mark Francis and Mrs Catherine Francis
Councillor Philippa Broom and Miss Louise Barron
Councillor Tony Harman and Mrs Daphne Harman
Councillor Suzy Webb and Miss Claudia Webb

No one has attended a Garden Party on more than one occasion in their capacity as a Councillor or Mayor. We have not yet chosen our nominations to attend the Garden Party in 2019.”

In accordance with Standing Order 15.2, Councillor Saliagopoulos asked the following supplementary question:

“Can you tell the Council why the leader of the Conservative Political Association, who has no connection with the Council, has attended the Garden Party when long serving members of the Council have never been to one?”

The Leader of the Council responded at the meeting, and subsequently in writing, as follows:

“I cannot recall the rationale behind that decision. However, I know that Councillor Leighton was nominated as it was during her Mayoral Year, but because she had attended previously was not permitted to go. By the time we were advised of this it was not possible to nominate any other Councillor to attend in her place. The nomination of attendees is within my remit so if you or any other opposition Group would like to put forward somebody, I and my Group would be happy to consider them.”

246/18 Appointment of a representative to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel

It was moved by Councillor I.T.E. Harvey, seconded by Councillor A.C. Harman and

Resolved to appoint Councillor Daxa Patel as the Council’s representative on the Surrey Police and Crime Panel, until May 2019.