

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, 27 February 2020 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillors:

C.F. Barnard (Deputy Mayor)	S.M. Doran	V.J. Leighton
C. Bateson	R.D. Dunn	L. E. Nichols
I.J. Beardsmore	S.A. Dunn	O. Rybinski
J.R. Boughtflower	T. Fidler	D. Saliagopoulos
A. Brar	K.M. Grant	J.R. Sexton
S. Buttar	A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader)	R.W. Sider BEM
N.L. Cornes	H. Harvey	V. Siva
J.H.J. Doerfel	I.T.E. Harvey (Leader)	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
J.T.F. Doran	T. Lagden	B.B. Spoor

In Attendance: Murray Litvak, Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee

The Deputy Mayor was in the Chair

Apologies:

The Mayor, Councillor M.J. Madams and Councillors M.M. Attewell, C.L. Barratt, R.O. Barratt, R. Chandler, M. Gibson, N. Islam, M.J. Madams, J. McIlroy, A.J. Mitchell, R.J. Noble and J. Vinson

44/20 Minute's Silence

The Deputy Mayor invited all those present to stand in a minute's silence as a mark of respect and in memory of former Mayor, Denise Grant and also Mrs Joan Paterson-Borland, past Mayoress, who both passed away in January 2020.

45/20 Application of six-months' rule to Councillor M. Madams

The Council considered a report on the application of the six month's rule, as set out in Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to Councillor M. Madams, the Mayor.

Resolved to approve Councillor Madams' absence from attendance at meetings from 25 October 2019 until the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21 May 2020.

46/20 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

47/20 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor T. Fidler disclosed a conflict of interest in item 10c Pay Policy Statement as a family member works for the Council and would be impacted by the decision. He would not take part in the decision on this matter.

48/20 Announcements from the Mayor

The Deputy Mayor circulated a list of past and forthcoming events, he had attended or would be attending on behalf of the Mayor, for councillors' information.

49/20 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

"You may have read in the press that the Council recently purchased the Elmsleigh Centre in the heart of Staines-upon-Thames which provides around one third of all the retail space in the town. This purchase is a major step forward in Spelthorne Council's wider plan to regenerate Staines-upon-Thames. Along with our other recent acquisitions which include the Oast House, Communications House, Thameside House and Hanover House, the Council is now firmly in the driving seat to deliver the revitalisation of Staines-upon-Thames.

I am pleased to announce that we have launched a four week consultation for a new leisure centre which will run from 28 February – 27 March. We are inviting residents to come along to the public exhibition events we are holding at the current Leisure Centre on 28 and 29 February to give them the opportunity to find out more. As well as being online, consultation documents are also available at the Council offices, at the leisure centres and in local libraries. To feedback their views, residents can come along to the public event, complete our online survey, email or write to us. Paper copies of the questionnaire are also available.

Local businesses are the lifeblood of our Borough and I am looking forward to recognising their achievements at this year's Spelthorne Means Business Awards. We have award categories to suit all businesses - large or small - so if you are proud of your company's achievements, let us know! Entries open on 4 March.

It was a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Boris Johnson and MP Kwasi Kwarteng to the Charter Building in Uxbridge in January. Spelthorne

purchased the Charter Building as an investment in August 2018 and it is now home to a community of local, national and global businesses. The PM said he was impressed with our investment and was very interested to hear about the Council's commercial strategy.

Spelthorne Council held a special memorial event on 27 January to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The commemoration began with a flag raising ceremony during the day and continued in the evening with music, poems, readings and a heartfelt account from Holocaust survivor Marion Strehlow who witnessed the horrors first-hand. Representatives from six religions lit candles to show unity in keeping with this year's theme, 'Stand Together'.

The Council has fulfilled its commitment to plant a tree in memory of every local soldier killed during the First World War. The commitment was made in 2018 as part of the centenary commemoration events, with the first 100 trees being planted at the Centenary Wood by Laleham Park. Since then, the planting has continued and all 851 trees – one for every soldier lost – have now been planted as a tribute to the fallen.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The commemorations for VE Day on 8 May and VJ Day on 15 August are significant milestones and provide an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifice of millions of people. Friday 8 May has been designated a national Bank Holiday and a special ceremony will be held at the War Memorial in Market Square in Staines. On Saturday 9 May, the Council and Staines BID will also be hosting a Picnic in the Park in the Memorial Gardens in Staines with live music, food and entertainment. Concluding the weekend on Sunday 10 May, services will be held at St Hilda's Church in Ashford and St Mary's Church in Sunbury.

You will all be aware of the decision issued by the Court of Appeal earlier today on the third runway at Heathrow. It failed because the government had not taken into account the commitment given under the 2015 Paris Agreement to reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change.

This Council has always been consistently clear that expansion cannot be at the expense of local communities or the environment. We do not intend to change from this stance. Our environment and our communities, and particularly Stanwell Moor and Stanwell Village, will be adversely affected by the expansion as currently proposed. We made it very clear in our response to Heathrow's consultation last summer that 16 requirements needed to be met for any scheme to be acceptable.

One of these was that the scheme must comply with the 2019 Committee on Climate Change Further Ambitions Scenario (in order to deliver a reduction to 30 million tonnes CO₂ in 2050). In calling for this, the Council has already said that any development must go above and beyond the Paris Agreement. We are saying that Heathrow expansion must deliver a scheme which will limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degree C, not just simply hold global rises to well below 2 degrees C.

The Court of Appeal decision today vindicates our long held position in ensuring that our environment (and our communities) are safeguarded and protected. Our stringent stance on climate change is being borne out by reality.

Finally Members, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to mention our Local Plan, and in particular Green Belt. This will feature later in Questions and, of course, the petition. I have two updates.

Following our engagement with the ministry, our MP Kwasi Kwarteng met with the Housing Minister, Robert Jenrick. He did this on Tuesday of this week. I spoke directly to Kwasi earlier this afternoon and he tells me his meeting with the Minister was positive and constructive. It appears that they are expecting the whole matter to be reviewed after the Budget on 11th March. I am pleased that Kwasi took the time to have the meeting and to brief me. We will continue to press for a reduction. Any tangible change will be immediately factored into our emerging Local Plan, with hopefully a reduced allocation.

Secondly, our focus for any developments will be brownfield sites. However where we are challenged by developers targeting our green belt, we will robustly defend these. So good are our finances that Cabinet have agreed to ring fence at least £900,000 towards this. We will be issuing further details in due course, and Cllr Beardsmore, our Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder will be addressing this also later this evening.”

50/20 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive, Daniel Mouawad, recorded his appreciation to the IT team for minimising the impact of a significant power outage at the Council offices on Sunday 16 February. To restore power, a generator was brought on site and the IT team worked late into Sunday night to restore the Council’s servers to maintain business continuity. He thanked the IT team for their continued commitment in supporting a first class public service provision that supports our communities.

51/20 Questions from members of the public

The Mayor reported that, under Standing Order 14, questions had been received from ten members of the public.

1. Question from Andrew McLuskey

“Given the recent report by the British Heart Foundation indicating that Spelthorne suffers from 11.08 micrograms of ‘particulates’ per cubic metre in its air will the Council reciprocate by -

- a) Bringing in, as a matter of urgency, a Clean Air Zone for the Borough.
- b) Opposing Heathrow’s potentially immensely polluting 3rd runway plan?”

Response from the Deputy Leader, Councillor Tony Harman

“Thank you for your question, Mr McLuskey. The air quality level quoted in the question is taken from central Government modelling. Measured levels at monitors in Oaks Road, Stanwell and Sunbury Cross in 2018 were lower and below the World Health Organisation’s guideline. Full details will be provided in the written response.

A Clean Air Zone defines an area where targeted action is taken to improve air quality to deliver health benefits whilst supporting economic growth. Action includes access restrictions to encourage cleaner vehicles and a particular focus on measures to accelerate the transition to a low emission economy. There can be two categories:

1. Non-charging Clean Air Zones: Which are defined geographic areas used as a focus for action to improve air quality; and
2. Charging Clean Air Zones: Where in addition to the above, vehicle owners are required to pay a charge to enter, or move within a zone if their vehicle does not meet specified emissions standards.
Implementation of such zones require at least a three to five year lead-in to allow businesses and individuals to adjust.

Spelthorne is not able to establish a Charging Clean Air Zone as the power to introduce such a zone rests with Surrey County Council as the Highways Authority. In addition, Spelthorne already has a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area which has a similar function to a Non-Charging Clean Air Zone. Details of progress with air quality actions can be found in our 2019 Annual Status Report to Defra, which is available on our website (link provided in written response): <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/17839/Air-quality-reports>

The Council is currently participating in a joint project with Surrey County Council to pilot electric vehicle charging infrastructure at 20 on-street parking bays across the Borough and we are currently recruiting a temporary Air Quality Officer to develop the Council’s new Air Quality Action Plan.

The Council’s position on Heathrow Expansion was recently decided at the Full Council meeting of 24 October 2019 (Item 276/19). A motion was put forward and carried that:

“This Council caveats its support for a third runway and appropriate and proportionate expansion, subject to Heathrow meeting:
a) the 16 requirements as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its extraordinary meeting on 3 September 2019; and
b) our demands that our impacted communities be properly compensated via the Wider Property Offer Zone scheme.”

Our demands include requirements in respect of air quality impacts and impacts on other environmental issues and these can be viewed in the minutes of the Council meeting, on our website.”

Further information provided in written response

“The figure referred to in the question is modelled background pollution data prepared by Defra for 2018 ⁽ⁱ⁾ – 11.08 ug/m³ is the modelled estimate of population-weighted annual average PM2.5 concentration as a Borough average for Spelthorne. The Council is the only authority in Surrey to monitor levels of PM2.5. At Oaks Road, Stanwell, a background location near Heathrow Airport, the annual mean level of PM2.5 for 2018 was measured at 9.11 ug/m³. At Sunbury Cross the measured annual mean for PM2.5 for 2018 was 9.19 ug/m³. The results for both of these locations were below the WHO recommended guideline of 10 ug/m³. At Haslett Road, Upper Halliford a third monitoring station operated on behalf of Suez recorded a 2018 annual mean for PM2.5 of 11.4 ug/m³.”

2. Question from Anthony Woodward

“When will Spelthorne Council follow the lead of Parliament, Surrey County Council and numerous other local authorities in declaring a climate emergency and ensure that future decisions and actions of the Council are subject to environmental impact assessments and are in line with reducing carbon emissions and the impacts of climate change?”

Response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey.

“Thank you for your question, Mr Woodward. This Council strongly believes that climate change urgently needs addressing but we do not feel that we must declare a climate emergency in order to deliver meaningful action. We believe in action not words. In October 2019, the Council committed to establishing a Leader’s Climate Change Working Group, which has been tasked to deliver a strategy this year outlining how we plan to deliver the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, in line with current Government policy. This Working Group will report back to Cabinet regularly on proposed actions on climate change, and will monitor delivery to ensure we are hitting our targets. If we can deliver those targets sooner than 2050 we will of course do so and any objectives we do have will also be continually reviewed and amended in line with changes in Government policy.

Environmental impact assessments are an important tool in helping ensure that our decisions and actions will deliver benefits to communities and the zero carbon target. All future decisions of the Council will consider all environmental and sustainability issues, as such decisions will influence our ability to meet net zero emissions by 2050 or earlier in line with Government Targets.”

3. Question from Thomas Bailie

“As a pupil at Thamesmead School I am seeing disposable plastic bottles and all sorts of single use plastics ending up in bins or even on the floor after only being used once. This goes on every day in schools across the local area,

and on a large scale is not only very harmful for wildlife, but also unnecessary when they could be replaced by reusable bottles.

I would like to ask the question “what is the council doing to counteract the unnecessary plastic waste in local schools?”

Response from the Deputy Leader, Councillor Tony Harman

“Thank you for your question Mr Bailie. Spelthorne Borough Council supports our schools in the management and disposal of their waste. We advise on what can and can't be recycled (including food waste), how best to dispose of waste generated and we provide information and bins adequate for the school's needs.

We also visit schools to talk to pupils about sustainability, waste reduction and the correct and responsible disposal of rubbish.

This Council has a Single Use Plastic policy and action plan and we promote the reduction in single use items as part of our sustainability and waste management campaigns. As Surrey County Council has overall responsibility for education it is important that they help in implementing these policies and actions within schools.”

4. Question from Caroline Nichols

“Lord Porter is Spokesperson on building safety at the Local Government Association. On 26th January, the eve of phase 2 of the Grenfell Enquiry, he spoke to Radio 4's Broadcasting House programme of his concern that many high-rise buildings across the UK are still grossly inadequate with regards to fire safety.

Lord Porter says that ACM cladding as used on the Grenfell building is not the only problem. He believes that the cladding material HPL (high pressure laminate) will be a bigger problem to eliminate and only 99 high rise blocks with HPL have been identified so far. In his view, the UK is suffering a legacy of bad construction since the 1960s and a relaxation of building regulations by all political parties in this century. He urges that all high-rise buildings are looked at across the country for fire safety as a matter of urgency, and that people with complicated needs are only housed in buildings which can be evacuated quickly.

Can the Council provide a progress report for Spelthorne residents to confirm that -

- 1) That there are no buildings (publicly or privately owned) of 11 metres or more in Spelthorne and properties owned by Spelthorne in other boroughs, that have petroleum-based cladding whether this is ACM or HPL. 11 metres is the height standard operating in Scotland, which is more stringent than in England.
- 2) That all buildings of 11 metres or more in Spelthorne and in Spelthorne-owned properties have passed stringent safety tests including the ability to evacuate them quickly and safely.”

The Deputy Mayor advised that as she was not able to attend the meeting, Mrs Nichols had agreed to receive a written response.

Written response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey

“Thank you for your question Mrs Nichols.

On the morning of the tragic events at Grenfell my first action was to meet with officers to request an immediate audit to identify all high-rise buildings in the Borough which could be of a similar construction to Grenfell Tower or at risk.

Our officers have subsequently been working to identify residential buildings and hotels in the Borough that are 18m or above, to review their cladding in line with Government requirements. This has included making enquiries into the presence and type of any cladding on these buildings. No buildings of 18m or above have required intervention.

The Council is aware that new Building Regulation controls may be introduced in England in relation to materials used on high rise buildings, to include lower level buildings above a height of 11m. As these proposed changes have yet to be implemented we have not commenced reviewing high rise buildings between 11m and 18m, but will extend our investigations to include any additional buildings or cladding products necessary to meet any future safety standards specified by the Government.

Additionally, our assets team are also ensuring the safety, type and presence of cladding associated with buildings owned by Spelthorne within and outside of the Borough.”

5. Question from Chris Hyde

“At the Cabinet meeting on 29 January, the response to petitions submitted by residents from Charlton Village, Shepperton, Sunbury and Stanwell, which raised issues about the Local Plan Green Belt proposals, was to note the petitions and ask the Local Plan Working Party to review the matters they had raised. Also, in responding to these petitions, Councillor Beardsmore said he could not answer the petitions specifically because more analysis was needed. When will the Local Plan Working Party report back to the petitioners and when will local residents see the results of the analysis of the submissions?”

Response from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder

“It is hoped that recommendations from the Local Plan Working Party will be taken to Cabinet on 25 March. That is a tight deadline, but those recommendations will be a public document. All representations received to the Local Plan preferred options consultation are currently being reviewed by officers and will be made publicly available in due course. The Council will also produce a response document responding to the main issues raised in the consultation and will publish this on our website.

Briefly:

There were 1987 representations from 1,032 people or organisations
370 comments were made on policies. 1617 on sites.

These ranged from a single sentence, to 350 pages from professional planners.

Many of the professional representations were uploaded as PDFs. At the moment they are being treated as single submissions and single comments. Every representation will be read. When they have all been read they will be published online along with comments from officers about the issues raised. The numbers do not include petitions and some people signing petitions will also have made individual comments.”

6. In her absence from the meeting the Deputy Mayor read the questions from Margaret Mulowska.

Question 1

“Spelthorne came bottom of the Friends of the Earth rankings of every single council in the country for your environmental record - what are you going to do to take action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency?”

Response from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder

“This Council strongly refutes a number of key points in the research undertaken by Friends of the Earth which led to the publication of the report you refer to. It was evident that the methodology used, and data drawn from it, were nearly a decade old. It did not take into account the fact that the energy efficiency of housing in the borough has improved significantly since that time and they used generalised tree cover estimates that did not take into account the fact that much of the Borough is covered in water. On publication of the figures we contacted Friends of the Earth and they apologised for the misinformation and agreed the data was “old” and out of date, but offered to work with us going forward.

In October 2019, this Council resolved to work closely with the Government, the Environment Agency, our County colleagues, local businesses, residents and other partners to deliver carbon neutrality by 2050. I personally ordered the setting up of a Leader’s Climate Change Working Group to explore ways to cut our carbon and other harmful emissions,. A key task of that group, will be to update our climate change and sustainability strategy in 2020 to ensure that we can deliver this target. It is worth highlighting, however, that this Council has been proactively reducing carbon emissions on our estate for a number of years, resulting in a 38% reduction in emissions since 2009.”

Question 2

“There is a legal obligation on pension fund managers to get the highest returns, so now that fossil fuel investments have been shown to perform poorly against non-fossil fuel investments, what action will Spelthorne and Surrey councils be taking to divest their £150 000 000 of fossil fuel investments away from fossil fuels? Both in the interests of financial sense

and to avoid making already dire Climate and Ecological Emergency even worse.”

Response from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder

“Surrey Pension Fund understands and recognises the severity of Climate Change as an environmental and financial risk, however it chooses to engage and not divest. Some key actions the Fund has taken recently include;

- Holding an Indexed Low Carbon Fund with Legal & General valued £391.2m as at 31 December 2019 and also making a 40m Euro commitment to Glennmont Clean Energy Infrastructure Fund in December 2018.
- Becoming a supporter of the Taskforce for Climate Related Financial Disclosures, where the Fund will report against Climate Related Financial Disclosures in its 2019/20 Annual Report (link provided in the written response) <https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s62861/Report.pdf>

The Climate Action 100+ Report reported 2018 Green House Gas emissions, based on information submitted to the Carbon Disclosure Project per sector. It shows that approximately 70% of total reported emissions in 2018 were from sectors outside of Oil and Gas. (link provided in the written response) <https://climateaction100.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/progressreport2019.pdf>

Divesting as a sector-wide strategy is therefore seen as more of a symbolic move as opposed to making a tangible difference in reducing the world’s carbon emissions. It ignores the importance all sectors play. Engaging with high emitting industries reliant on fossil fuels, in order to influence and change their behaviour is equally as important as engaging with the suppliers. Further information is provided in the written response.”

Further information provided in the written response:

“They are the companies who drive energy demand. Consequently, engagement is required with regulators, governments and across industries, as well as with individual companies who all need to move forward in the transition to a low carbon economy. This view is backed by industry experts such as Robeco: “Divestment simply transfers a problem, and an investor cannot sell out of an entire sector if they want to make a long-term impact... Divesting an entire sector may lower the carbon footprint of a portfolio, but it makes absolutely no impact on the environment.

<https://www.robeco.com/uk/insights/2017/12/we-need-decarbonization-not-divestment.html> “

Question 3

“Will you work in partnership with Extinction Rebellion to secure a just transition into a zero carbon future, as Wakefield council recently decided to? Please give reasons for your answer.”

Response from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder

“In addressing climate change the Leader’s Climate Change Working Group will consult and work with a wide range of organisations, including public sector partners, businesses and other community stakeholders, with the aim of encouraging our whole community to work with us in moving to a zero carbon economy. We recognise that this transition will mean that we will all need to do things differently, as carbon intensive jobs are replaced with low and zero carbon employment, but with the support of everyone working together we believe that this can be achieved whilst maintaining this Borough’s thriving economy.”

7. Questions from Udo Kleinitz

“Thank you for the opportunity to submit questions to Spelthorne Borough Council. I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss the following areas regarding proposed release of green belt areas in SBC:

1. What is the council doing to actively encourage developers to offset negative environmental impact or build with a positive environmental impact?
2. When assessing and identifying areas for development, what environmental impact assessment criteria does the Council apply?
3. Specific to the 19 green belt areas proposed for release, what action does the council propose in order so the awarding is based on the application of environmental and sustainability criteria such as Life Cycle Assessment/Circular Economy recyclability of components, and offsetting lost habitat on site (such as vegetated roof areas) and carbon neutral performance?

These questions are in anticipation of:

- carbon neutrality becoming the prerequisite for continuous economic growth and job creation in the area,
- an increasing responsibility and accountability towards the public to meet real and significant commitment towards greenhouse gas reductions and maintaining biodiversity.”

Responses from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder.

1. “In terms of the potential allocation of sites, a Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken for every site to identify possible negative impacts and mitigation measures. Developers will be expected to have regard to these as allocations are included in the Plan and planning applications are submitted. The new Local Plan also includes draft policies on E4: Blue and Green Infrastructure’ ‘E3: Environmental Protection’ and ‘DS2: Sustainable Design and Renewable/Low Carbon Energy’. In addition policy ‘requires all planning applications to achieve a net gain in biodiversity. All developers will need to

follow these policies to overcome environmental issues and make a positive impact on the Borough.”

2. “Sustainability Appraisal work is undertaken to assess sites against the Sustainability Framework. This identifies any potentially adverse impacts (social, environmentally and economically) and seeks to minimise them. Our Site Selection Methodology document also included sections on biodiversity, flood risk, contamination and landscape to name a few.”

3. “The Sustainability Appraisal is a key mechanism in the Local Plan process to spot potentially adverse impacts and identify ways of overcoming them. This is an important consideration in determining which sites to take forward”

“I would hope very much to see planning policies being brought in to enforce carbon neutral planning. Unfortunately I am less convinced than some by the government’s commitment to Carbon Neutrality especially as they would have to reconcile it with their driving policy of forcing councils to consume Green Belt for Housing.”

Finally for the record, the government wrote to the Council on 14 February 2020 and stated: ‘..the government intends to increase the thresholds for the presumption in favour of sustainable development early next year to drive up delivery.’ So from next year they are going to increase sustainability and increase quantity of new build...”

Evidence provided in written response

“Draft Policy ‘DS2: Sustainable Design and Renewable/Low Carbon Energy Generation’ requires developers to integrate sustainable design and construction. This includes maximising energy efficiency and integrating renewable and low carbon energy. This policy also supports sustainable construction to assist with a cost-effective transition to a low carbon economy.

In terms of lost habitats,

Draft policy ‘E4: Green and Blue Infrastructure’ expects development to contribute to biodiversity through securing biodiversity net gain. This approach aims to leave the natural environment in a better state than beforehand.

The Sustainability Appraisal framework used to assess sites is available on page 10, Appendix 1 of the following document:

https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/media/19049/Sustainability-Appraisal-Issues-and-Options-Final-Report/pdf/Sustainability_Appraisal.pdf?m=637044049597100000 “

8. Question from Siobhan Molloy

“As one of the 5,000 people who signed the recent petition that demanded that Spelthorne Borough council not build on green belt sites, I understand that the initiators of the petition have asked the council (as is their right under the Council's own policy on petitions) to call a public meeting to discuss this issue. When does the SBC plan to hold this public meeting?”

Response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey

"The petition is on the agenda for debate immediately after the public questions tonight, in a few minutes. Your question will be responded to when we discuss the call for a public meeting during that item."

9. Question from Malcolm Beecher

"In response to Surrey County Council's commitment to plant 1,200,000 new trees across the county to mitigate increasing carbon dioxide levels, Spelthorne borough would be expected to accommodate planting approximately 109,000 trees over and above any commitments by Spelthorne Borough Council to plant and replace trees associated with developments and ash die-back. This new commitment will require at least 40 hectares of land and maybe even 100 hectares depending on the species to be planted.

"In light of this, please can you confirm how engaged the council is with this pledge and what target Spelthorne Borough Council is proposing for planting of new trees in the borough, both in terms of land area and numbers of trees to be planted:

A) In total?

B) What land has already been identified to the council's knowledge, including any land that is owned, leased or managed by the council?

C) Alongside the budget set aside by Surrey County Council what budget and/or other resources has Spelthorne Borough Council allocated to this?"

Response from the Leader, Councillor Ian Harvey

"Thank you for your question Mr Beecher. In May 2020, Surrey County Council will be launching its New Trees and Climate Change strategies, but at present we have no further details on their plans. This Council fully understands the important role trees play in mitigating carbon dioxide levels, and over the last two winters we have planted 851 trees in our parks.

Once the County Council's tree strategy is made publicly available we will consider what additional budget and other resources we can provide to help deliver the project aims.

In identifying new locations for trees we will, however, have to consider both the status of the land and its biodiversity value before any additional planting is undertaken."

10. Questions from Kath Sanders

Question 1

"Re: Local Plan proposals to release some of Spelthorne's Green Belt for housing & economic development

I support all work being done to reduce the proposed housing requirement of 603 homes per annum to a much more manageable and sustainable level. However, my concerns for Spelthorne's Green Belt remain.

Spelthorne Borough Council stated in its consultation document, that only 1.6% of Spelthorne's Green Belt would be required to be released under current proposals. Please could the Council give an estimate of what percentage of remaining "potentially developable" Green Belt land this represents? Please exclude all waterbodies, flood zone 3b ("1 in 20 year event") land, any other non-developable land AND land previously developed or with planning consent under "very special circumstances" e.g. schools, Spelthorne Gym & Shepperton Studios."

Response from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder.

"Thank you I think this question is very important as it hits the nail on the head and recognises the unique land use geography of Spelthorne that most people miss and which for us produces a very unique set of issues and constraints. Some know our MP is due to see the minister at some point on our behalf. I know this is part of his briefing because I co-wrote it.

I can report that this meeting actually took place yesterday (26 February) and we will now have to wait for government announcements after the budget

The total area of water features, flood zone 3b, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Common Land, all within the Green Belt, amounts to approximately 1665 hectares (50% of total Green Belt). We do not hold the data for previously developed land area in the Green Belt but we do have information on current planning permissions. Approximately 70 hectares of land has permission (either recently completed, under construction or extant) for development. All of this is previously developed land with the exception of part of the Shepperton Studios site (totalling 52% of Green Belt). A table summarising this will be provided in the written response."

Question 2

"Also, please could the Council clarify which additional Green Belt sites the Council has identified in its latest SLAA as likely to be "susceptible to acquisition" by Heathrow expansion. It seems to state in its Local Plan document that this piece of work had been done (see SLAA, July 2019, section 2.10) and it would be good to have an understanding of the likely extent of these.

My overriding concern is for the sustainability of current proposals and I believe answers to the above would help inform residents and other stakeholders as to the most likely current threats to Spelthorne's Green Belt. It would also give a more realistic picture overall of the challenges facing the borough, especially if the likely effects of Heathrow expansion on the transport

network and air pollution were to be taken into account - I don't think this has been done in the latest published Strategic Highway Assessment.”

Response from Councillor Ian Beardsmore, Strategic Planning portfolio holder.

“Many would have heard the news on Heathrow, I am one of the minority on this council who welcomes it. So hopefully the details below are now unnecessary. The latest masterplan for the Heathrow Airport expansion is available online and a link will be provided in the written response.

A map showing the preferred masterplan is available on page 53 of Heathrow’s document. This shows the Development Consent Order boundary and which sites are likely to fall within the application area.

Zones H (page 97), J (page 101) and U (page 141) fall into Spelthorne and information is available on the potential uses for these areas.

The Strategic Highway Assessment looks at committed developments (Do Minimum Scenario A) as well as other scenarios which include sites identified through the Local Plan (scenarios B, C and D).

More work on the transport impacts will be undertaken for Regulation 19 consultation once we have finalised our site allocations.

Further traffic modelling from Heathrow Airport Ltd is expected to be released into the public domain at their focused consultation beginning in April 2020. However, Spelthorne Borough Council and Surrey County Council officers have been involved with the impacts on the transport network and air quality through their engagement with Heathrow on the expansion proposals.”

Evidence and link provided in written response.

Area	Size (ha)	Comments
Total Spelthorne Green Belt	3324	
Reservoirs, Flood zone 3b, SSSI, SPA, Common Land	1665	Included within GB
Land with Planning permission (extant; under construction; or recently completed)	70	Commercial – 61.88 (all PDL except part of Shepperton Studios) Residential – 7.60
Preferred allocation sites	53	

PDL = Previously Developed land

Masterplan for the Heathrow Airport expansion at:

<https://aec.heathrowconsultation.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/06/Preferred-Masterplan-Hi-Res.pdf>

52/20 Petitions

The Council had received a petition with 5,270 signatories requesting that Spelthorne Borough Council did not release 19 Green Belt areas currently identified in the Local Plan for building or other commercial purposes and to protect the entire existing Green Belt in Spelthorne for generations to come.

The following statement accompanied the petition:

“Green Belt land fulfils important functions. Its fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open - and Spelthorne’s Green Belt boundaries have remained largely unchanged since WW2. Nonetheless, as part of its New Local Plan consultation, Spelthorne Borough Council is putting forward 19 Green Belt sites across the whole of Spelthorne for building/housing and commercial purposes. [1] This would mean a loss of 53ha of Green Belt with a risk of further erosion of our Green Belt in the future. It will result in smaller remaining Green Belt sites which will be weakened as a result and – in turn – become vulnerable to development.

Even though Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where “exceptional circumstances” are fully evidenced and justified and where strictly necessary, the Council has decided to reject 29 urban (brownfield) sites for development opting for Green Belt sites instead which are strongly preferred by developers and Green Belt owners as these greatly maximise profit margins. Once stripped of Green Belt status, the value of land can raise 2500 fold (250,000%) and more. The release of the Green Belt will lead to significant changes to the character of the areas where they are located and will have a significant impact on local residents as these plots of land have an amenity, biodiversity value, a visual benefit and/or carbon capture value – which is now more important than ever during a time of Climate Emergency when more (not fewer) green spaces and re-wooded areas are required to counteract carbon emissions.”

In accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme, the matter was referred to Council for consideration and a response.

Malcolm Beecher presented the petition to the Council referring to the effects of destroying forest and woodland on climate change and the part the Green Belt plays not only in preventing urban sprawl but as a vital carbon sink. He stated that the health of the Borough’s residents was as important as their need for housing and claimed that with the use of innovative design the Council could deliver the homes it needed by developing the brownfield sites in the Borough. He also stated that Local Authorities had responsibility for assessing the number of homes they needed, not the government, whose targets were not mandatory.

Councillor I.J. Beardsmore responded to the petition as follows:

“Firstly I believe residents deserve more than a series of facts when it comes to answers, so with this in mind I will split my response in two - the answer itself which I shall provide now and an evidence base to sustain that answer

which will be provided following the meeting. Otherwise we are going to be here an awfully long time.

With this petition and with other responses tonight I need to clear up some misconceptions from the start.

- 1) Apart from two small sites, Spelthorne do not own any of these sites
- 2) Spelthorne will not be building on any of those other sites
- 3) Spelthorne will not be making any sort of profit from those sites

Spelthorne is required to do a call for sites. We are required to seriously consider every site submitted. Whether we like it or not.

What about the two small sites Spelthorne own?

Firstly if we hadn't considered them, it would simply leave a gap that needs to be filled by other site/s.

Secondly it would leave us open to a charge of bias if we did not include our own sites that also did less well under the review.

Difficult where to start with this petition. Given so much of it, and the so called information around it, is misleading, wrong or down right false.

It is implied that there is no proper evidence base. **False**. Firstly all the Green Belt sites submitted for possible re-zoning as housing were strongly evidenced. For the overwhelming number of the sites the evidence was that they should remain Green Belt. The sites which might be removed from Green Belt were the handful that did not do so well. That is what the evidence revealed. For the record 92% of the Green Belt area submitted - was rejected

The selection and assessment methodology is available on line and noted in the evidence base attached to these minutes.

It is claimed that we did not consider such things as biodiversity in the analysis. **False**. Whilst this is not a function of the Green Belt, we considered this and other non-Green Belt functions as far as possible through the sustainability appraisal. All of which is in the sustainability appraisal included in the evidence base attached to these minutes.

It is claimed that 29 Brownfield sites were rejected. Despite being repeatedly told this was wrong the proponents of this petition refused to change this. It is **False**. All the 29 sites are included in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. (SLAA) and are included within our supply. This consultation was about moving them from that 'pot' of sites to the allocations pot. We have not suggested this as there is less certainty about when they will become available.

It is claimed that only 2947 homes were allocated on brownfield sites. **False** The number is 7103 made up of the 2671 Urban sites + 1997 SLAA sites +1600 Staines sites + 835 windfall.

This also shows that the claim, 'plus other sites that might arise' is **False**. We have already included 835 windfall dwellings.

In Sum up the claims of:

No evidence base	- False
Not considered other sustainability issues	- False
Did not include 29 brownfield sites	- False
Did not include many brownfield sites	- False
Did not include windfall provision	- False

Given the dishonesty with which this petition was presented, it would be all too easy - and in many ways justified, to dismiss it entirely. But actually I think that would be missing the point. I am sure many of the signatures of the petition represent people who are as genuinely concerned about Green belt as I am. Simply dismissing them because of the actions of a few is I think wrong. We are very aware of how strongly people feel on this matter and this is part of that, so when considering what to do with this petition I would ask members to keep in mind the fears and concerns it actually represents.”

Councillor Smith-Ainsley moved that the Council notes the petition and keeps the matter under review. The proposal was seconded by Councillor V.J. Leighton.

Councillor L.E. Nichols called for a recorded vote.

Councillor D. Saliagopoulos was not present in the Chamber at the time the vote was called.

The vote was as follows:

FOR (13)	Councillors I.T.E. Harvey (Leader); A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader); C. Barnard; I.J. Beardsmore; J. Boughtflower; A. Brar; S. Buttar; H. Harvey; V.J. Leighton; O. Rybinski; J. Sexton; R.W. Sider; R.A. Smith-Ainsley;
AGAINST (13)	Councillors C.L. Bateson; N. Cornes; J.H.J. Doerfel; J.T.F. Doran; S. Doran; R. Dunn; S.A. Dunn; T. Fidler; K. Grant; T. Lagden; L.E. Nichols; V. Siva; B.B. Spoor

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor C. Barnard exercised his casting vote and voted **for** the motion. The motion was therefore carried.

The Deputy Mayor adjourned the meeting for 5 minutes to allow the public to leave.

53/20 Treasury Management Strategy Statement

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21.

The proposed Strategy represented an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness.

Resolved to approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21.

54/20 Housing Strategy 2020/2025

Council considered the recommendation of Cabinet to approve the Housing Strategy for 2020/2025.

The Housing Strategy sets out how the Council will ensure that local residents have an affordable range of housing options to meet their needs. The strategy sets out the key areas of focus, and is based upon the findings of an independent review of the Council's performance in affordable housing delivery.

Resolved to approve the Housing Strategy 2020/2025.

55/20 Pay Policy Statement 2020/21

Council considered a recommendation from Cabinet to approve the pay policy statement for 2020/21. Pay Policy statements must be agreed by full Council and published by 31 March each year to apply to pay decisions during the next financial year.

Resolved to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21.

56/20 Capital Strategy 2020/2025

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on a Capital Strategy for the period 2020 to 2025.

The 2020 Strategy is a refreshed and revised version of the first Capital Strategy adopted in 2019, taking account of activity in the last year, and reflecting the Council's greater emphasis on the performance of the investment portfolio, refined and improved governance arrangements and the need to embed sustainability.

Resolved to approve the Capital Strategy for 2020-2025.

57/20 Capital programme 2020/21 to 2023/24

Cabinet considered the recommendation of Cabinet on the Capital Programme for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 in the light of the available resources and the corporate priorities.

The potential cost of the schemes proposed in the 2020/21 programme totalled £65,636,700. All bids on the Capital Programme were critically assessed and reviewed by Management Team and Cabinet to reflect the level of capital resources now available to finance future capital expenditure.

Resolved to:

1. Approve the Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24
2. Approve the Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 to 2023/24.

58/20 Pay Award 2020/21

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Pay Award 2020/21.

The proposed pay award of 2.5% to all staff, including those on protected salaries, personal salaries and apprentices had been subject to consultation and negotiation with Unison and was made to help attract and retain staff.

Resolved to approve the 2020/21 pay award of 2.5% to all staff.

59/20 Members' Allowances Scheme 2020/21

Council considered the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members Allowance Scheme for 2020/21.

Resolved to approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2020-2021, as set out below and in the Approved Duties list attached to these minutes:

Allowance	Current amount	Number	Recommended Allowance for 2020/2021¹
Basic:	£6200	39	£6355
Special Responsibility:			
Leader of the Council	£14259	1	£14616
Deputy Leader	£9412	1	£9647
Cabinet Members	£7130	7²	£7308
Cabinet member for Strategic Planning	N/A	-	£5846
Spelthorne Joint Committee Chairman/Vice-Chairman	£4999	1	£5124
Planning Committee Chairman	£5703	1	£5846

Licensing Committee Chairman	£4991	1	£5116
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman	£4991	1	£5116
Audit Committee Chairman	£3566	1	£3654
Opposition Group Leader	£3322	1	£3405
Co-Optees' Allowance	£1000 (Chair) £500 (Vice-Chair)	1 1	£1500 (Chair) £750 (Vice-Chair)
Total Budget	£346,735		£359,621

¹ On an assumption of a 2.5% staff pay award

² Based on the existing Cabinet and excluding the Leader, Deputy Leader and Strategic Planning Portfolio

Allowance for expenditure incurred in relation to Approved Duties (Schedule 1 to Scheme)	Unchanged allowances for 2020/21
Dependants' Carer's Allowance	Reimbursement of actual costs incurred

Travelling and Subsistence Allowances	
Motor Mileage Allowance (per mile)	
Cars	Up to 999cc – 46.9p 1000cc – 1199cc – 52.2p 1200cc and over – 65p
Motorcycles	24p
Cycle	Nil
Day Subsistence Allowance	Reimbursement of actual costs incurred

60/20 Detailed Revenue Budget 2020/21

The Council considered the recommendation of Cabinet on the detailed Revenue Budget for 2020-21 and the proposed Council Tax for 2020-21. The Mayor referred councillors to the Budget Book (green cover) reflecting the decisions and recommendations made by Cabinet on 26 February 2020, including the precepts being levied by Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police.

It was moved, seconded and

Resolved to agree that in accordance with Standing Order 20.4, the respective Budget speeches of the Group Leaders may each exceed 10 minutes in length if necessary.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor I.T.E. Harvey made a statement on the Budget and the Council Tax and moved the recommendations on the detailed Budget for 2020-21 as set out in the report circulated in the Budget Book. The Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group, Councillor S. Dunn then made a statement.

A copy of Councillors Harvey's and Dunn's speeches are attached to these minutes as **Appendices A and B** respectively.

During the debate on this item, it was moved, seconded and

Resolved to suspend Standing Order 5, Duration of Meeting, to allow the meeting to continue until the completion of this item of business.

At the conclusion of the debate on the Revenue Budget, the Mayor explained it was a legal requirement to record in the minutes of the proceedings the names of the persons who cast a vote for the decision or who abstained from voting.

Councillor J. Boughtflower left the meeting before the vote was called.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (13)	Councillors I.T.E. Harvey (Leader); A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader); C. Barnard; I.J. Beardsmore; A. Brar; S. Buttar; H. Harvey; V.J. Leighton; O. Rybinski; D. Saliagopoulos; J. Sexton; R.W. Sider; R.A. Smith-Ainsley;
AGAINST (8)	Councillors N. Cornes; R. Dunn; S.A. Dunn; T. Fidler; K. Grant; T. Lagden; L.E. Nichols; B.B. Spoor
ABSTAIN (5)	Councillors C.L. Bateson; J.H.J. Doerfel; J.T.F. Doran; S. Doran; V. Siva.

The motion was carried.

Resolved to:

1. Continue the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme with the current rules and regulations;
2. Continue the complete disregard of war pension / armed forces pension income from benefit calculations;
3. Agree the growth and savings items as set out in the report's appendices;
4. Note the Chief Finance Officer's commentary in section 4 of the report on the robustness of budget estimates and levels of reserves under sections 25 and 26 of the Local Government Act 2003;
5. Agree the Council Tax Base for the whole council area for 2020/21. [Item T in the formula in Section 31b(3) of the local government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "act")] should be 40,085.00 band D equivalent dwellings and calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purpose for 2020/21 is £205.05 Per Band D equivalent dwelling;
6. Approve a 1.29% increase on Band D in the Spelthorne Borough Council element of the Council Tax for 2020/21. Moreover:
 - a) The revenue estimates as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
 - b) No Money, as set out in this report is appropriated from General Reserves in support of Spelthorne's local Council tax for 2020/21.
 - c) Agree that the Council Tax base for the year 2020/21 is 40,085.00 band D equivalent dwellings calculated in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council tax base) Regulations 1992, as amended, made under Section 35(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
7. Agree that the following sums be now calculated by the Council for the year 2019/20 in accordance with Section 31 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992:

A	104,518,000	Being the aggregate of the amount which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
B	96,298,500	Being the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act
C	8,219,500	Being the amount by which the aggregate at (A) above exceeds the aggregate at (B) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year

D	205.05	Being the amount at (C) above divided by the amount at 5c (above), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts)
E	0	Being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
F	205.05	Being the amount at (D) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (E) above by the amount at 5c (above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings on those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

8. Agree that the following amounts be calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011:

A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
136.70	159.48	182.27	205.05	250.62	296.18	341.75	410.10

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (F) above by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the sum which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band 'D', calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different band.

9. Agree to note that for the year 2020/21 Surrey County Council and Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to Spelthorne Borough Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Precepts issued to the Council

	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
Surrey County Council	1,007.64	1,175.58	1,343.52	1,511.46	1,847.34	2,183.22	2,519.10	3,022.92
Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner	180.38	210.44	240.51	270.57	330.70	390.82	450.95	541.14

10. Agree that, having calculated the aggregate in each case above, the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, hereby sets the amounts as the amounts of Council tax for the year 2020/21.

The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2020/21 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

As the billing authority, the council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2020/21 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.

At the conclusion of this item, the Deputy Mayor adjourned the meeting and the remaining items of business would be deferred until the next ordinary meeting of the Council on 30 April 2020.

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Evidence Base to Councillor I.J. Beardsmore's response

Site Selection and Assessment methodology: https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/media/20058/Site-Selection-Methodology-February-2019/pdf/Site_Selection_Methodology_-_February_2019.pdf?m=636872898829130000

Sustainability appraisal: See individual site assessments for detailed assessments.
https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/media/21630/Preferred-Site-Allocations-Officer-Site-Assessments/pdf/Preferred_Officer_assessments_document.pdf?m=637081247708430000

The SA framework used to assess sites is available on page 10, Appendix 1 of the following document: https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/media/19049/Sustainability-Appraisal-Issues-and-Options-Final-Report/pdf/Sustainability_Appraisal.pdf?m=637044049597100000

Table of supply: Page 3 - https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/media/21636/Spelthorne-Local-Plan-Preferred-Options-Consultation-Site-Allocations-document/pdf/Allocations_Document_-_Preferred_Options_Oct_191.pdf?m=637084757818500000

Please note this table in the link is a year old. Below is a more thorough and up to date version.

	2019-2035 (16 years)	2020-2035 (15 years)
Windfall - small sites (37 per annum)	592	555
Windfall - PDO (6-10: 37 per annum; 11-15: 19 per annum)	299	280
SLAA windfall sites (urban not allocated)	1997	1997
under construction	1012	405
Green Belt	1649	1649
Urban	2671	2671
Staines	1600	1600
Total	9820	9156.8
5% discount (all)	9424	8761
Delivery per year	589	584
5% discount	9720	9057
Delivery per year	608	604

Green Belt tests NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)**134. Green Belt serves five purposes:**

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;**
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;**
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;**
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and**
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.**

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Members' Allowances Scheme 2020/2021

List of Approved Duties

When a member uses his or her own home to undertake representative duties on behalf of the Council (e.g. to see constituents), that home becomes their place of work and an allowance can be paid for travel between home and the Council Offices for approved duties, but not for ordinary visits to the Council.

Meetings:

The activities that shall be approved duties include:

- meetings of the Council, Cabinet and committees including Task Groups and Panels.
- deputations, delegations or other representation at meetings with a government department or another local authority.
- training seminars organised by the Council, including members' inductions.
- presentations to councillors by government departments, statutory undertakers, utility or private companies, in respect of proposals in or affecting the Borough, as well as meetings of the organisations external to the Council listed below.
- opening of tenders where Standing Orders require one or more members to be present.
- Visits to sites for which a Planning application is due to come before Planning Committee, by members of the Planning Committee.
- Meetings with Council partners and other Leaders where such meetings take place outside the Borough of Spelthorne.

To qualify as an approved duty, such meetings, seminars and presentations need to be authorised by the Council, Cabinet or a Committee and representatives of more than one political group must be invited, except in the case where the Leader is invited

Meetings with organisations

Meetings of the following organisations **have been approved** by the Council or Cabinet for travel/expenses claims:

- Armed Forces Covenant
- Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Enterprise M3 (where held outside Spelthorne)
- Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee (HACC)
- Heathrow Local Focus Forum (BAA)
- Heathrow Airport Ltd - Annual Meeting with Spelthorne Borough Council
- Heathrow Community Noise Forum
- Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (where held outside Spelthorne)
- Local Authority Aircraft Noise Council (LAANC)
- Management Committee of Mediation North Surrey
- On-street Parking Partnership (OSPP) Joint Task Group
- Surrey Police and Crime Panel
- River Thames Alliance

- South East Employers (SEE)
- South West Middlesex Crematorium Board
- Spelthorne Mental Health Association Management Committee - Trustee
- Spelthorne Safer, Stronger Partnership Board
- Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG)
- Surrey Waste Partnership
- Surrey Leaders' Group
- Surrey Museums Consultative Committee
- Surrey Traveller Community Relations Forum
- (NHS) Sustainability and Transformation Plan Stakeholder Reference Group
- The Traffic Penalty Tribunal

List of authorised conferences:

The following have been prescribed under Section 175 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the payment of travel and expenses claims:

- Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
- Institute of Building Control
- Institute of Waste Management
- Local Government Association Annual Conference
- Local Government Association Annual Housing Conference
- National Housing and Town Planning Conference
- Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)
- South East Employers (SEE)
- Surrey Heritage Strategy Annual Conference

List of duties not approved:

The following is a list of those organisations external to the Council to which the Council makes appointments, but which **do not qualify** for any travel or expenses allowances:

- A2 Dominion Customer Insight Panel
- Spelthorne Business Forum

The following duties have **not** been approved by the Council:

Social occasions, receptions, official openings, sporting occasions, visits by members to the Council offices to meet with staff outside of formal meetings; and ward surgeries.

Councillor Ian Harvey
COUNCIL TAX SPEECH 2020

Mister Deputy Mayor – I am pleased to present, on behalf of this Conservative administration, the Budget Report for the Municipal Year 2020- 21. For the fourth year running **we have set a below inflation council tax increase** whilst delivering a balanced budget without the use of reserves, cuts to services or sale of assets. Not only this but for the first time in living memory, on the basis of what we currently know, we have balanced the revenue budget for the next two financial years, very few councils are in that position. Our Council Tax increase of 1.29% will be the lowest council tax increase of any principal council in Surrey, and is a manifestation of the Value for Money we are providing for our residents. For the third year running we have kept our capital financing on a more sustainable basis by making a revenue contribution to fund non-income generating capital expenditure. We continue to focus on investing in our staff, assets and services to ensure we can deliver the high- quality services our residents and businesses deserve and expect.

We are now focused on delivering homes and regeneration within the Borough. Our acquisition of the long leasehold of Elmsleigh fits centrally within this, giving us complete control over this key part of the town centre. Over the next 5 years we are looking to deliver more than 1,000 new homes across the Borough to help address the housing needs of our residents. We

will be delivering affordable, keyworker, and emergency accommodation as well as private rental homes.

Our commercial assets continue to perform robustly, with the asset values increasing, the tenants paying their rent on time, and those assets which were fully let on acquisition remaining fully let. These assets are generating net income of £10m per annum for the Council to support the delivery of services for our residents. This is after meeting all costs including interest, (fixed for the duration of all loans), and crucially capital repayments, as well as building a significant sinking fund. This has offset the very substantial loss of grant income from central government and other funding. The funding has enabled us to continue to invest in our Independent Living Services, to help future proof it and ensure it can continue to meet the needs of our residents.

We are looking to embrace the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) new Financial Management Code and invited CIPFA to the Council a couple of weeks ago for a very positive workshop to explore how we can build on our existing governance arrangements to further

improve our resilience. In June, at our invitation, the LGA will be coming to do a Corporate Peer Review focusing on finance and property.

Our commercial assets income means that we are able to put forward a balanced budget, strengthening our resources and service delivery capacity even though 2020-21 will be the fourth year in which this Council will:

- receive no general Revenue Support Grant from the Government;
- have a significant cut in our New Homes Bonus Grant this time 27% (£203 thousand pounds)

Over past three years we have had reduced funding from Surrey County Council for recycling and Independent Living support – to date approximately a five hundred thousand pounds per annum loss.

We are adding net £6m to sinking fund reserves and setting aside £1.4m into a planned projects fund to pump prime and facilitate our existing pipeline of projects across the Borough. The majority, at least £900,000 of this fund will be ringfenced towards providing a Green Belt Protection Fund. The fact that we are adding to reserves rather than

drawing them down like a number of Councils is reflected in the latest set of scores from the CIPFA resilience index. By the end of 2020-21 we will have £22m in our sinking funds.

We are maintaining the funding of our Capital Programme on a more sustainable footing, after decades of relying on selling assets and spending capital receipts. For the third year running, we are ensuring that capital spending, which is not funded by specific grant and which does not generate future income streams (for example housing development or cashable savings), will be funded from revenue contributions to capital. In this budget there is a seven hundred and fifty thousand pound revenue contribution towards Capital.

In contrast to our position of continuing to maintain our budget on a sustainable basis, Surrey County Council still faces very significant financial pressures and is balancing its 2020-21 budget by a combination of £38m of service transformations, and additional income from the Adult Care Precept.

We have not only managed to avoid significant frontline service reductions, but we are investing in staff, assets, and resilience. The main areas of investment in this budget relate to Housing, Planning, Independent Living, resourcing our response to Heathrow expansion

Staffing

We need to retain skilled and dedicated staff in order to deliver our services to our residents. In recent years we have lost staff even to smaller neighbouring councils in a number of professional service areas. The budget year 2020-21 is the first year for which we are setting the staff pay increase following discussions with the Union under the new local collective agreement.

We have reached agreement with the local branch of Unison on a 2.5% increase in pay for all staff. This is reflected in the budget for 2020-21.

A significant cost pressure for us in this budget round has been the increase in employer pension contributions following the triennial valuation. As a result of our establishment numbers having rising by 73 Full Time

Equivalents since the previous valuation in 2016, reflecting the investment in staff resources we have made, our required contributions have risen significantly. In order to avoid compounding the pressures we face in 2021-22 with the potential impact of negative grant and loss of business rates, we are bearing the majority of the additional impact upfront in year one with an additional cost of £1.1m. By bearing most of the additional cost upfront, which we are able to do because of our robust financial position, rather than spreading evenly across three years, we receive an interest saving of approximately £60,000, which is a comparable rate of return to that we could achieve by investing the cash elsewhere.

Like most of the UK public sector and particularly local government, this Council is facing a challenging financial future, not only because of expected future cuts in the amount of business rates we will be allowed to retain but also because of financial and economic uncertainty. 2020-21 will be the fourth year we do not receive **any** revenue support grant. We have been facing the prospect of having to pay the Government a grant of seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds, i.e. effectively a negative grant. The

Government has delayed implementing this for a further year until 2021-22.

This has helped make balancing the 2020-21 budget easier but looms large for 2021-22. With only a one year Spending Review period in place we have no certainty as to how much business rates we will be allowed to retain beyond 2020-21. We will learn in the coming year the outcome of the so called Fair Funding Review which will determine how that pot is divided up, and then we have the implementation of the so called “75 per cent” business rates retention scheme nationally which could transfer business rates away from us. In our outline budget projection we are assuming a reduction in 2021-22 in the funding we are allowed to retain by central government of more than £1.5m

Before I focus on our Revenue Budget I would like to touch on our Capital Strategy and the approach we have taken to managing risks with respects to the commercial asset acquisitions we have made. As the Capital Strategy makes clear, having successfully closed the underlying revenue gap created by withdrawal of government funding, we are currently not actively pursuing commercial acquisitions out of the Borough and are now focused on driving

regeneration and housing delivery within the Borough. As well as acquiring the high-value, high-profile income-generating commercial properties focused on by the media, we have also been buying smaller, strategic sites in the borough that can be converted into residential properties. We now have sufficient land and property as a result of these smaller, strategic acquisitions to provide over 1,000 new homes over the coming 5 years. The focus of any finance-raising initiatives will therefore be on shorter term requirements to cover shorter term cost pressures. We will continue to manage very carefully our commercial property portfolio, with regular reports on the Portfolio as a whole, monitoring the financial health of tenants, and using internal and external expertise to manage the properties. We are currently setting aside £6m per annum to build up our sinking funds to cover future risks. This does not mean we are closed to other outstanding opportunities within our preferred area.

The Government has announced changes to the controls over council tax increases, with upper tier councils allowed to levy a 2% Adult Care Precept and Police and Commissioners allowed to increase Band D council tax by

up to £10 on a Band D (3.83% for Surrey Police). The limit of (the greater of) 2% or £5 per year on a Band D property will apply to districts and Boroughs. In our case a £5 increase equates to a 2.4% increase. We need to bear in mind the need to prepare for potentially very significant funding reductions from 2021-22 onwards possibly in excess of £1.5m. We have decided to increase council tax for 2020-21 by an amount that is significantly lower than the maximum increase allowed by the Government.

We will increase our council tax by 1.29% or £2.61 on a band D property. This is significantly less than the rate of inflation on either a Retail Prices Index (RPI) or Consumer Prices Index (CPI) basis and less than the increases in council tax being made by Surrey Police (3.83% or £10 on Band D) and Surrey County Council (3.99% or £58 on band D).

Indeed this will be the lowest Council Tax Increase of any council in Surrey. Our proposed increase on an average band D household is equivalent to an increase of £2.61 per annum or just 5 pence extra per week. Coupled with the fact that Spelthorne retains just over 10p in every £1 of council tax we collect on behalf of ourselves, the police and the County, we believe this

demonstrates our commitment to keep our portion of the bill as low as we can whilst protecting local services.

Underlying Interest rates continue to remain at historically low levels.

However in October 2019 the Government without any prior warning increased the margin on Public Works Loan Board rates available to local authorities by 100 basis points. Whilst some of this impact has been offset by underlying rates falling back since then, this has increased in the short term the cost of this source of loan finance (although PWLB rates are still comparable to what they were at the end of 2018). To be clear this does not affect our existing PWLB loans all of which are feixed rate for their term. So we are working with our treasury management advisers to explore alternative funding sources. In contrast, we earned an average of 4.75% on our core cash investments, for the first 6 months of 2019-20 whilst maintaining a sensible and prudent approach to risk. An average rate of return of 4.75% is an excellent return compared to the 0.5% many councils continue to accept.

The Capital Programme of £66.5m for 2020-21 before the Council includes:

- £6.4 million in 2020-21 to complete the Ceaser Court housing phase 1 development of 55 flats
- £4.25m for the Whitehouse hostel for single person homeless, which will be funded from a combination of Homes England Grant and s106 receipts
- Three million pounds for completing the conversion of West Wing of the Council's offices here at Knowle Green in to 25 affordable housing flats
- £2.8m for building a new fit for purpose Harper House for emergency accommodation for families
- £8m for initial improvements on the Elmsleigh site
- £15.75m on a number of housing and regeneration schemes across the Borough
- £20 million pounds for potential regeneration and strategic acquisitions within the Borough

In 2023/24 we have provision for a £1.3m contribution towards the River Thames scheme for flood relief. The importance of this has been put into perspective by recent weather patterns.

We want to work in partnership with public sector colleagues including health, tangible examples are the Ashford Hospital residential development where we are working with the Trust where the vast majority of new homes will be for key workers.

In the meantime in order to meet our future financial challenges we will focus ever more closely on:

- maximising revenue income from assets,
- generating new income streams – for example commercial refuse
- procurement savings
- flexible use of technology, and looking to use applications in smarter ways
- looking at how we deliver and prioritise services to residents
- reducing the running costs of our operational assets. Most notably we have reduced the size of our office footprint by 40%, which both enables the creation of 25 affordable housing units, the progress of which can be observed by looking out of the Chamber windows, while

also reducing our office running costs (business rates, heat and light etc),

Achieving a 40% reduction in office space is a significant outcome. I would like to thank all staff based at Knowle Green for their contribution in helping to make this happen.

Mister Deputy Mayor before I conclude I would like to reiterate this administration's recent key achievements:

- Delivering additional affordable homes to meet the needs of our residents
- Pro-actively pursuing initiatives to ease the pressure on our homelessness register
- We are investing financial resources into reducing our environmental footprint. The West Wing will have photo voltaic units above the affordable flats. We are building high environmental standards into our developments. Next month we receive delivery of two electric pool vehicles and we are looking to transition our existing fleets towards

electric vehicles. We now have two e-bikes, which the Chief Finance Officer has already tried out

- Having generated £10m of ongoing net income per annum to enable us to protect and enhance the services for our residents in contrast to some other councils in Surrey and many across the country.
- Continuing to maintain an excellent rate of return on our financial investments which places us in a good position to reinvest additional capital receipts
- Equally we are responding to the needs of our younger residents maintaining and refurbishing play areas in our parks.
- We continue to provide support for voluntary sector organisations across the Borough, with a direct grants support budget of £210,000, and once discretionary business rates relief and support in kind is taken into account, the value of that support is equivalent to more than £600,000 per annum.

I would like to thank the Chief Executive and his Management Team especially Terry Collier and his financial colleagues and all the staff for their support and assistance in preparing this budget.

I would like to thank councillors for making their contribution towards the Council operating more efficiently by embracing paperless agendas for Committees. I know this has resulted in the occasional technical issue. Given the future challenges we face it is important that we all, councillors and officers, continue to be focused on working more efficiently and making smarter use of technology.

I now formally move the recommendations of the Cabinet of 26 February 2020, as set out within the Budget Book, detailing the precepts by the County Council and Surrey Police and the Band D Council Tax levy for the year 2020-21 and commend this Budget to the Council.

Thank you Mister Deputy Mayor

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Councillor Sandra Dunn – Opposition Speech on Council Budget

Mister Deputy Mayor – I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Leader for prior sight of his Budget speech as this allows me to make more relevant comments.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Council Officers for their hard work over the last fiscal year and we are in full agreement that the negotiated agreement with Unison of 2.5% is a fair settlement in order that we retain our skilled and dedicated staff. It is also noted that extra pressure has been put on our gross expenditure by the increase in employer pension contributions, and we support the front loading of making up of the deficit.

This is the first year of a new Council term with a markedly different political makeup and we are all having to learn our respective roles. We all want to make the Borough a better place to live in for all our residents. As an Opposition group we are seeing things which we need to question and scrutinize and there are times when we feel completely shut out of the decision-making process. For example, the Local Plan working party.

We recognize the strong financial position that we currently find ourselves in because of commercial property investments. However, we

are not in favour of any further extension of the portfolio. The National Audit Office has cautioned against dependence on commercial property income to support services. The NAO goes on to point out that “there are inherent potential risks associated with the acquisition of commercial property.”

The Leader has told us that we need “to prepare for potentially very significant funding reductions” from next year. For this reason, we believe that the Spelthorne element of the Council tax should be increased by the maximum allowed of 2%. This would cost a Band D householder an additional £1.26 per year and increase income by £50,000. Failure to do so is an unnecessary political gesture.

Turning to the Capital programme, we are not confident of plans for future development. The Council has already wasted hundreds of thousands of pounds on aborted projects at Northumberland Close and the Staines Leisure Centre. Large sums are included in the capital estimates for undefined projects, for example, £20 million described only as investment acquisitions.

We welcome the strategic commitment to increasing affordable housing within developments. However, over the past few years we have fallen far short of our aspirations and have much ground to make up. It is

disappointing to note that the application by Spelthorne Borough Council at Victory Place for 115 houses includes only 6 affordable units.

We generally support the cost savings identified and the opportunities for generating new income streams but the level of detail available does not enable us to analyse these closely. We have concerns over some of the elements of the growth bids associated with Asset Management Consultants and agency staff. We would like to see the commercial and building parts of the budget separated out so that the costs are transparent.

We note and endorse the continuation of grants and other supports to local charities. We also welcome the funding of initiatives for facilities for our younger residents. We recognize that this is only possible to make these choices as we are solvent as a Council. Looking forward we must make the best possible choices for our community and this should be done in a transparent way involving all stakeholders.

The Opposition parties were only able to view the predicted figures of this budget 48 hours before this meeting and it is therefore an impossible task to construct an alternative budget. If the Council adopted a Committee system instead of a Cabinet system, then all parties would have input and this situation would not arise.

In conclusion, my group are unable to support this budget as there are too many areas of concern.

Thankyou Mister Deputy Mayor.

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