

## **Minutes of Cabinet**

**27 January 2021**

### **Present:**

Councillor J.R. Boughtflower, Leader  
Councillor J. McIlroy, Deputy Leader  
Councillor M.M. Attewell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing and Housing  
Councillor R.O. Barratt, Portfolio Holder for Compliance, Waste and Risk  
Councillor S. Buttar, Portfolio Holder for Finance  
Councillor A.J. Mitchell, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development  
Councillor R.J. Noble, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Communications and Corporate Management

### **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Councillor R. Chandler.

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Councillor C. Bateson, Councillor R.D. Dunn, Councillor K.M. Grant, Councillor A.C. Harman, Councillor V.J. Leighton, Councillor R.W. Sider BEM, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley.

### **2804 Minutes**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 3 December 2020 and the Extraordinary Cabinet meeting held on 25 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **2805 Disclosures of Interest**

There were none.

### **2806 Leader's announcements**

The following are the latest service updates from various Council departments.

- Spelthorne, along with the rest of England is enduring a third period of lockdown which continues to be a very difficult time for many residents and businesses in Spelthorne. The Support4Spelthorne community helpline is open and there to help residents. For businesses, grants are available for companies who continue to face new guidelines and restrictions due to COVID.
- The Council has taken the unprecedented decision to propose freezing its share of the Council Tax charge for 2021/22 at last year's levels – making Spelthorne, we believe, the only Council in Surrey to do so. Very careful consideration was given to the setting of this year's Council Tax and budget, the Council is very aware that many families have been under a lot of financial pressure. Through careful financial management the Council

will be proposing a 0% increase in Council Tax at the meeting of Full Council in February. This is of course while continuing to maintain all services and provide vital support to residents during the pandemic.

- Over the Christmas period, the Council continued to support all those residents in the Borough who needed our help. Families and individuals in temporary accommodation received Christmas hampers, which included kind donations from local traders. Our Community centres also produced Christmas hampers and activity packs for members as a way of keeping connected during the festive period.
- The Council also continues to provide hot and nutritious meals for the most vulnerable families in the Borough. The Council will ensure that no child is ever left hungry and that families are supported. The Council thanks the food banks in the Borough for their dedication and hard work in supporting families.
- Spelthorne has been providing help and assistance to homeless people. Thanks to a grant from central government, the Council has been able to house people in emergency accommodation for longer periods of time, not just when the weather is cold, enabling us to work with them to address any health issues and support them to move into a new secure home. The Council is looking forward to the completion of the White House in Ashford which is expected to be in May. The White House facility, which will support single homeless residents, will include 27 en-suite rooms with shared kitchen and living facilities as well as space for education and training on the ground floor.
- The Council has submitted a formal planning application to build a new leisure centre to replace the current one in Staines-upon-Thames. This centre will be the first in the UK to be designed and built to fully meet the ultra-low energy Passivhaus standard, providing an extremely high level of environmental sustainability. The Council is excited to proceed with this highly anticipated facility for the Borough and the aim is to start construction of the new centre around mid-2021.
- The Council has announced the purchase of the freehold of the former Marks & Spencer building in the heart of Staines-upon-Thames. Having bought the Elmsleigh Centre in February 2020 this opportunity supports the Council's regeneration and housing strategy for Staines town centre, to the benefit of its residents and local retail businesses.
- Spelthorne has recently launched a consultation to establish whether residents support the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) prohibiting the possession and use of legal highs in the Borough. The survey, which can be found on the Council's website, closes on 28 February.
- The Council would like to reassure residents that it is committed to the redevelopment of the car park for in order to create new homes on Victory

Close in Ashford. The development will all be 100% affordable housing and prioritised for 'key workers' in the Borough. The Council looks forward to returning with an improved scheme to suit the needs of residents and to progressing with this much needed and innovative residential development programme.

**2807 Recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Lendy Memorial Lion Petition**

Cabinet considered the recommendations contained in the report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Lendy Memorial Lion petition.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Leighton, informed the Cabinet that Council had asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look into the Lendy Memorial Lion petition in detail after it received a lot of resident support. Councillor Leighton explained that the officers report contained two recommendations, the second regarding a letter of support for two academics to undertake further research, however, she had wanted to discuss each recommendation separately as primarily the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been asked to recommend a course of action regarding the memorial and the Committee felt there should be no delay in addressing this as residents had made it clear that they wished for the memorial to be uncovered.

Councillor Leighton explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were satisfied that the Council had established the credentials of Mr Doyle, an investigative journalist who had provided the Council with a detailed background to the memorial and the Lendy brothers but that the provenance of the academics had been queried as their credentials had not been validated.

Councillor Leighton concluded that whilst the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had unanimously agreed with recommendation 1, they had been divided on recommendation 2 with seven members voting for, five against and two choosing to abstain.

The Leader allowed Councillor Sider to address the Committee as Armed Forces Champion. Councillor Sider echoed Councillor Leighton adding that he had sought information on the background of the academics and had been concerned that some of the tweets associated with them did not appear to be unbiased. Councillor Sider requested that Cabinet support recommendation 1 but reject recommendation 2.

**Resolved that:**

- i. The Council supports the views of residents, as expressed in the petition. The statue should immediately be uncovered and left in place.
- ii. The Council provides at the site a plaque containing historical information, with more detailed information available, for example through a QR code.

- iii. The Council works with local informed sources and their wealth of information so other suggestions for ensuring access to detailed background information can be pursued, such as a booklet in the Embroidery Gallery and the involvement of the well-respected local history society.

**Reason for decision:**

The Council has listened to the views of its residents who have made it clear that they wish the memorial to be uncovered and left in situ for residents and visitors to enjoy.

The Council believes it is important to provide residents and visitors to the borough with access to historical information about the brothers and the memorials heritage and believes that a wealth of information is already available and thus the Council does not believe it is necessary to write a letter of support for the academics to receive funding for further research.

**2808 Determination of the 2021/22 Council Tax base for tax setting**

Cabinet considered a report on the determination of the 2021/2022 Council Tax Base for tax setting.

Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to determine and approve its Council Tax Base for the following financial year before 31 January each year.

**Resolved that:**

1. The gross Council Tax Base for 2021/22 is determined at 40,223.0 after taking account of the Council's agreed Council Tax Support Scheme.
2. The net Council Tax Base for 2021/22 calculated as Band D equivalents, is determined at 39,016.3 after adjustment by 3% to allow for irrecoverable amounts, appeals and property base changes.

**Reason for decision:** The Council Tax Base for 2021/22 has been calculated in accordance with the prescribed guidelines.

**2809 Reserves Policy**

Cabinet considered a report to approve the reserves policy and to note the restatement of useable reserves as at 1 January 2021.

Cabinet noted that the Council needs to restate the Useable Reserves as at 31 December 2020 to the Useable Reserves as at 1 January 2021 which will reflect and realign the Council's General Fund reserves with its strategic goals for the next three years.

**Resolved** to approve the Reserves Policy as part of its Outline Budget Strategy and to note the restatement of reserves as at 1 January 2021.

**Reason for decision:**

On 21 May 2020, the Council agreed to utilise £2.2 million of the Council's useable reserves to support taxpayers and businesses in the Borough through the pandemic, this was before any formal Government announcements on financial support.

Having subsequently received additional Government support towards its COVID response the Council is forecasting that it only needs to utilise £0.7 million to support the current financial year and, subject to any further impact on the Council between January and March 2021, the Council will be looking to review its earlier decision and return £1.5 million to an earmarked COVID support reserve.

**2810 Outline Budget 2021-22 to 2024-25**

Cabinet considered a report on the Outline Budget for the period 2021-22 to 2024-25.

**Resolved to:**

1. Agree the net budgeted expenditure (before investment and use of reserves) for 2021-22 be set at a maximum level of £22.1m; and
2. Support the overall strategy set out in the report for addressing efficiencies and achieving medium term financial sustainability.

**Reason for Decision:**

Cabinet were satisfied that the report set out the parameters in which a detailed balance for 2021-22 could be worked up and put forward an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy designed to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

**2811 Treasury Management Half Yearly Report 2020/21**

Cabinet considered the Treasury Management Half Yearly Report 2020/21.

The report outlined the treasury activity during the half year, the associated monitoring and control of risks and the financial environment in global markets.

At 30 September 2020 the Council's borrowing totalled £1,153m of which £1,052m was loans from the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) and £101m from local authorities.

The Council's investment portfolio totalled £122m as at 30 September 2020. This included externally managed strategic funds of £33m with an income return of 3.6%.

**Resolved** to note the treasury position achieved during the first six months of 2020/21 and the financial environment in global markets.

**2812 Managed Service for the Incubator**

This item was withdrawn and will be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting on 24 February.

**2813 Urgent Items**

There were none.

**2814 Urgent Actions**

Cabinet noted the three urgent actions taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader since the last Cabinet meeting in December 2020.

**2815 Exempt Business**

**Resolved** to move the exclusion of the Press and Public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**2816 Exempt Report - Proposal for an in-house Planned and Reactive Repairs and Maintenance Service**

Cabinet considered an exempt report on the proposal for an in-house Planned and Reactive Repairs and Maintenance Service.

**Alternative options considered and rejected by the Cabinet:**

There was only one option available to Cabinet as two procurement exercises had failed to secure a third party provider and the current provider (Runnymede Council) had formally confirmed that they did not want to extend the partnership arrangement for a further term.

**Resolved to:**

1. Approve the transfer in house of the planned and reactive repair and maintenance service for properties within the municipal portfolio; and
2. Approve the expansion of the repair and maintenance service to include the residential portfolio which the Council will manage on behalf of Knowle Green Estates Ltd (a Council wholly owned company).

**Reasons for Decision:**

There have been two unsuccessful procurement exercises undertaken to appoint a third party contractor. The service must be brought in house to ensure the continuity of the servicing and maintenance of all properties.

**NOTES:-**

- (1) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are reminded that under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16, the “call-in” procedure shall not apply to recommendations the Cabinet makes to the Council. The matters on which recommendations have been made to the Council, if any, are identified with an asterisk [\*] in the above Minutes.**
- (2) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are entitled to call in decisions taken by the Cabinet for scrutiny before they are implemented, other than any recommendations covered under (1) above.**
- (3) Within five working days of the date on which a decision of the Cabinet or a Cabinet Member is published, not less than three members [one of whom must be the Chairman] of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are able to "call in" a decision;**
- (4) To avoid delay in considering an item "called in", an extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be convened within seven days of a "call in" being received if an ordinary meeting is not scheduled in that period;**
- (5) When calling in a Cabinet decision for review the members doing so should in their notice of "call in":-**

  - Outline their reasons for requiring a review;**
  - Indicate any further information they consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to have before it in order to conduct a review in addition to the written report made by officers to the Cabinet;**
  - Indicate whether, where the decision was taken collectively by the Cabinet, they wish the Leader or his nominee (who should normally be the Cabinet Member) or where the decision was taken by a Cabinet Member, the member of the Cabinet making the decision, to attend the committee meeting; and**
  - Indicate whether the officer making the report to the Cabinet or the Cabinet Member taking the decision or his/her representative should attend the meeting.**
- (6) The deadline of five working days for "call in" by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the above decisions by the Cabinet is the close of business on 4 February 2021.**