

## 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, 24 February 2022 at 7.00 pm

### Present:

Councillor I.T.E. Harvey, The Mayor, in the Chair

### Councillors:

|                   |               |                    |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| S.M. Doran        | J.T.F. Doran  | A.J. Mitchell      |
| C.F. Barnard      | R.D. Dunn     | S.C. Mooney        |
| M.M. Attewell     | S.A. Dunn     | L. E. Nichols      |
| C.L. Barratt      | T. Fidler     | R.J. Noble         |
| R.O. Barratt      | N.J. Gething  | O. Rybinski        |
| C. Bateson        | M. Gibson     | J.R. Sexton        |
| I.J. Beardsmore   | K.M. Grant    | R.W. Sider BEM     |
| M. Beecher        | A.C. Harman   | V. Siva            |
| J.R. Boughtflower | H. Harvey     | R.A. Smith-Ainsley |
| A. Brar           | N. Islam      | B.B. Spoor         |
| S. Buttar         | T. Lagden     | J. Vinson          |
| J. Button         | V.J. Leighton |                    |

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from Councillors R. Chandler, M.J. Madams and D. Saliagopoulos and

### **1/22 Apologies for absence**

**24 February 2022:** (Agenda items 1 to 18)

Apologies were received from Councillors R. Chandler, M. Madams and D. Saliagopoulos.

### **10 March 2022 continuation** (Agenda items 19 to 31)

Apologies were received from Councillors Barnard, J. Doran, S. Doran, R. Dunn, S. Dunn, T. Fidler, M. Gibson, M. Madams and B. Spoor

### **2/22 Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 09 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **3/22 Disclosures of Interest**

Agenda item 19 (Referral of a decision of the Development Sub-Committee on 5 January 2022) – Members of the Planning Committee were entitled to take part in the debate on this item without making reference to the planning merits of the case. They were required to keep an open mind when considering the matter if and when it came before the Planning Committee.

Councillor T. Fidler disclosed a conflict of interest on item 12 Pay Award as a family member worked for the Council, and would be impacted by the decisions. He left the meeting during consideration of this matter.

Councillor S. Mooney declared that she was a Surrey County Councillor for Staines and Cabinet Member of Adult Social Care and Health.

### **4/22 Announcements from the Mayor**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“I cannot start this meeting without referring to the horrendous events that started early this morning in Ukraine. Not only is the Russian invasion a blatant attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine and on its people, but of course, democracy itself. Ukraine has been a free democracy for over 30 years, and we must assume that this invasion signals the end of that, at least for the time being. This has a particular poignancy for the Mayoress and I as her father had to flee Hungary in 1956 under threat of imminent death, in the face of the Soviet invasion, which was again to put down democracy. I am sure you all join me in sending our best wishes to the Ukrainian nation and people.

Since our last, pre-Christmas Council meeting, my Mayoral year continues to be impacted by the enduring impacts of COVID. In particular, I had to make the difficult decision at very short notice to cancel my Christmas Mayors Church Service due to a spike. We have now been able to rearrange this. The pre-Christmas spike did not stop the Mayoress and I enjoying Christmas lunch at both our Day Centres at Fordbridge and Greeno. Thank you to both staff and guests for their warm welcomes.

On the second of February the \chief Executive and I welcomed the High Sheriff of Surrey, Dr Julie Llywellyn here to Knowle Green for informal discussions.

Sunday sixth February saw the Mayoress and I attending Guildford Cathedral for a service to mark the seventieth anniversary of the accession of Her Majesty the Queen. This was a very real privilege. It was also sombre as of course it also marked the passing of her father King George Sixth. I have several events coming up, to which you should have all received invitations.

In particular I encourage you to book to attend our ABBA tribute night on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March at the Holiday Inn Shepperton. This should be a light-

hearted and fun evening with a quiz and also “fancy dress” competition. Tickets are only £45 and all profits to my charities East to West and Ashford Youth Centre. You can also take advantage of a heavily discounted overnight stay for £85 for two, to include breakfast.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March Sunbury Cricket Club are very kindly hosting a concert in aid of these charities and you can book vis the mayor’s office.

I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and best wishes to our Monitoring Officer, Victoria Statham who is leaving Spelthorne at the end of March after over 21 years. She will be taking up a post at Elmbridge Borough Council and I would say that our loss is certainly their gain. Victoria has always been very supportive and she will be sorely missed.

It continues to be a great honour to serve the residents of Spelthorne.

Thank you”

#### **5/22 Announcements from the Leader**

The Leader made the following announcements:

“Today is a very sad and shocking day as we woke up to the news that Vladimir Putin has brought war back to Europe on what has been described as a catastrophe for our continent. At this time I would like to express my deepest empathy for the people of Ukraine. This Borough stands in solidarity with those who will be all impacted by this act of aggression.

Yesterday a by-election was held in Stanwell North and on behalf of this authority I would like to officially welcome Councillor Jon Button to Spelthorne Borough Council.

The Prime Minister announced earlier this week that all Covid restrictions will be lifted and from today, 24 February, you will not be legally required to self-isolate if you test positive for COVID-19. I ask that we all make sensible choices to minimise the risk to those most vulnerable in the community. As we emerge from the pandemic, I want to, once again, place on record my admiration for the many in of our community who volunteered to support others and Officers in this authority who have been serving Spelthorne diligently during the pandemic.

To reflect on the last 2 years Spelthorne will be creating a long-lasting memorial in the Borough and we are consulting with residents about how best to commemorate the difficulties our community has faced. We want the memorial to be resident-led and are keen to hear from anyone with ideas and suggestions on a fitting tribute. Please email [news@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:news@spelthorne.gov.uk)

If you are a business based in Spelthorne there are still a number of grant funded support services available – including website provision, free digital media training and free business coaching. If you would like to take

advantage of these services please get in touch with our Economic Development Team.

The Borough will benefit from a multimillion-pound contract between Amazon Prime Video and Shepperton Studios for exclusive use of new production facilities. Shepperton Studios have launched a £500,000 community fund to support local individuals, non-profit and voluntary organisations. The fund will be distributed over ten years and will benefit the Shepperton area and wider borough of Spelthorne.

I would like to make Members and Residents aware of two consultations being undertaken by Surrey County Council.

Firstly the latest draft of their long-term vision for the county, known as the 2050 Place Ambition.

Secondly the County are also undertaking a consultation in relation to their preparation of a new Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) for Surrey. Details of both are on our consultation webpage.

Spelthorne Council continues to welcome applications for funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for local projects and improvements and the 31 March deadline is fast approaching. Examples of the types of projects Local CIL can be used for are community centre improvements, community notice boards, bike shelters and local signage.

And finally, 2022 is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year and, as of 6 February 2022 Her Majesty the Queen became the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. On behalf of the Council, I would like to extend my congratulations to Her Majesty and wish her well in her recovery from Covid. At the special bank holiday in June there will be lots of events in Spelthorne, and residents should check our website for more details, including advice on street party applications.”

## **6/22 Announcements from the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:

“The Monitoring Officer, Victoria Statham, after 21 years of loyal service has recently chosen to move to a neighbouring authority. Victoria’s last day of employment with Spelthorne will be the 18 March 2022. As Head of Paid Services, I should like to place on record our deep appreciation for Victoria’s professionalism, integrity and hard work in support of this Chamber and the democratic mandate that underpins our collective public service commitment. Victoria, Thank You and we wish you the very best in your future endeavours.

Last Friday, a red weather warning was issued by the Met Office for Storm Eunice as very high winds battered Spelthorne and the rest of the South-East. Many colleagues worked and remained on stand-by over the weekend to cover essential services supporting our residents. As Chief Executive, I want

to pay tribute to our Neighbourhood Services team. Despite the adverse weather conditions, all scheduled waste and cleansing work across the Borough was undertaken and completed without incident. The demands on the Parks Team have equally been significant, clearing fallen trees and debris from roads and footpaths. I also want to thank our Community Wellbeing Team and Meals on Wheels Staff who ensured vulnerable residents were prioritised and supported. All in all, another prime example of how this authority keeps our communities at the very heart of what we do.

Indeed, this authority goes to incredible lengths to serve our residents, particularly those most needy in pursuing our corporate priorities and values as elucidated in our corporate plan. As an authority, we remain a learning authority, keen to excel and adopt best practice. That is why, subject to support from the Corporate Policy and Resource Committee, we intent to initiate an LGA Corporate 'whole-system' Peer Review. Peer Reviews are a valuable 'health-check' for any authority and with our recently completed LGA Finance Peer Review firmly under our belt, it is now time to advance in securing a Corporate Peer Review, maximising the return on our annual c£10,000 LGA subscription.

Late last night, Mr Jon Button was duly announced as elected Councillor for the vacant seat of Stanwell North. Congratulations Councillor Button. As Returning Officer, I should like to thank our election team for their sterling endeavours in delivering yet another smooth election supporting our democratic mandate. Mr Mayor, may I also thank you for your Civic assistance at the count and ensuing result announcement.

Referencing the prospect of future elections, I ought to also inform this chamber that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has decided to undertake an electoral review of Spelthorne Borough Council. The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the duty placed on the Commission to undertake an electoral review of every principal local authority in England 'from time to time'. The last electoral review of Spelthorne Borough Council was undertaken in 1998. Accordingly, the Commission considers that a review of this authority is now due."

## **7/22 Questions from members of the public**

The Mayor reported that, under Standing Order 14, 6 questions had been received from members of the public.

### **1. Question from Nigel Rowe:**

"Surrey 2050 has a long history. It seems clear from reading the documentation, the Surrey Interim Local Strategic Statement and Minutes of meetings of the EM3 Joint Leaders Board that decisions and commitments on the future development of Staines were made a very long time ago, based on proposals by or with the acquiescence of Spelthorne Borough Council to the

Surrey Joint Leaders Board and Surrey Future Steering Board. The then Leader of SBC (Cllr Ian Harvey) was a member of the Surrey Joint Leaders board at the time. SBC's Chief Executive was and still is a member of the Surrey Future Steering Board. The Council's apparent long-standing commitment to EM3, to Staines as a 'Step Up' town, and to the Longcross-Staines-Heathrow corridor has major implications for how the town will develop and the need for a significant increase in its population. When does the Council plan to explain all of this to residents of Staines? Surrey County Council Leader Cllr Tim Oliver says it is important Surrey 2050 is something done "with" and not "to" the affected communities. Spelthorne Borough Council has a constitutional requirement "to work in partnership with residents to make Spelthorne a place where people are fully engaged, and to encourage the active involvement of the community in the decisions that affect them". The community is surely entitled to know what 'vision' the Council has committed to for the future development of the town; how this vision will impact on the town's amenity, townscape, skyline and character; and how the Council intends to deal with the high demands of its infrastructure requirements (schools, medical services, utility supply, road access to the town, etc)? Network Rail is mounting a drop-in exhibition and consultation on its plans to rebuild the Iron Bridge and has invited residents across Staines and on the other side of the Thames. Given such an exercise for such a comparatively minor undertaking, does the Council agree that it should mount a major drop-in exhibition and consultation over a few days to inform the residents of Staines on the planned dramatic transformation of the town and, if so, when can we expect it to happen?"

**Response from Councillor Beardsmore, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

"There is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding in your question, so I am going to have to go into some detail and history in order to try and make sense of what you ask.

'Step Up Staines' was announced in a document issued by EM3 in March 2014. It is described on page 'v' of the executive summary of the document thus...

*The following interventions have been assembled into integrated Growth Packages that offer targeted solutions at three broad spatial levels:*

Step Up Staines is one of the 'interventions' in spatial level 2.

In the previous year EM3 had already clarified the role of LEPs as:

*organisations leading on plans for local growth and who, as announced in the Budget in March 2013, will have funding devolved to them from government from 2015.*

So, by the end of 2013 EM3 were in control of our strategic growth. In fact, by 2014 EM3 had secured funding of £428m ! An eye watering amount. It is no accident that the start of this process of giving huge amounts of money to LEPs mirrors the start of austerity and wholesale cuts in funding to local authorities. In effect, we helped subsidise the LEP with service cuts.

Please note that LEPs are not accountable or subject to scrutiny in any way. We understand that their current board does have five councillors on it, including the leader of Surrey County Council, the deputy leader of Hampshire County Council and the Leader of Runnymede. Four of the five councillors are from the same political party. One is well known for having very close links with a major developer who I believe is Inland Homes.

In your question you refer to Councillor Ian Harvey. He only became a councillor in 2013 and like most other councillors would have known nothing about any of this.

#### This was the first iteration of the development of Staines

Fast Forward to 2018, where an EM3 report decided that Step Up Towns should become corridors. The reason for this seems to be that the step up towns have collectively failed to match expectation.

#### This was the second iteration of the development of Staines

Surrey Future Draft 1 2019

This is a very light document, however it does define the Longcross/Staines/Heathrow corridor and has this to say about Staines:

*'Regeneration to deliver improved commercial, retail and residential opportunities to support the sub-regional role of Staines is a priority of Enterprise M3 LEP'.*

So Staines has again been promoted by EM3. Pity they don't seem to have told us.

#### This was the third iteration of the development of Staines

So to our current situation. The Surrey Place Ambition 2050 Draft Implementation Framework is a document that is merely pulling together existing/emerging strategies and local plans into one document across the County (effectively just collating in one place what is already known and in place or being worked on by all the districts and boroughs and others). As a footnote, EM3 have to date invested at least £10m into strategic infrastructure for Staines.

The amount of future development in Staines (and the associated infrastructure) is for the Staines Development Framework (SDF) to determine. The Surrey vision is simply stating that this document needs to be developed (it is not setting out any parameters in terms of what is expected). That

decision sits solely with Spelthorne, and ultimately the Councillors who will approve the Local Plan and the draft Development Framework for submission to the Planning Inspectorate (known as Reg 19).

There is nothing new in this draft document that has not either been in the public domain for a number of years (Spelthorne Borough Council's desire for a Southern Light Rail access from Staines-upon-Thames to Heathrow, and Staines as an EM3 Step Up Town), or is not being developed by Spelthorne Council and therefore in the public domain since work first started on the document (e.g. Staines Development Framework).

There will be a public consultation on the draft Staines Development Framework once the SDF Task Group are satisfied that the draft is ready to be formally considered by the Local Plan Task Group and Environment and Sustainability (E&S) Committee. A consultation programme will be laid out when those documents are considered by the E&S committee. However, officers can confirm now that the intention is (COVID variants permitting) that these will be in-person events with Staines to ensure residents visitors and businesses have the opportunity to understand what that proposal is, and for them to feed in their thoughts.

We welcome this change and apparent opening up of the strategic process, because for the first time in 8 years we actually get a say in our future.

In terms of a public meeting, I absolutely agree that these are hugely important, but logically they need to be done at the start of the process where they can have a real influence. Spelthorne did just this. The statutory consultation to launch a Reg 18 draft Preferred Options Consultation on a Local Plan is six weeks. Spelthorne's was eleven ! (Between 5 November 2019 and 11 January 2020). More importantly within that there were NINE public meetings open to any resident in the Borough. 511 residents and RA reps attended those meetings. They could submit prepared questions or ask any question they liked on the night. Other consultation included a special edition of the Borough Bulletin with an 8 page pull out, a dedicated consultation page with a purpose built on line portal for responses, presentation to councillors and Residents Associations plus over 1,200 emails and around 240 letters to stakeholders on our consultation database.

All this input played a major role in shaping our policy. The one thing Spelthorne can say with confidence is that our emerging plan has gone far beyond statutory requirements in obtaining and incorporating the views of our residents."

## **2. Question from Nigel Rowe:**

"As we understand it, there are two routes to securing a lower housing 'target' for the borough. One would be for Spelthorne to present the Planning Inspectorate with a Local Plan supported by a compelling case that justifies a departure from the national standard methodology. The other is to persuade the relevant government department to make an exception for Spelthorne and

apply a different methodology to this borough. Does the Council believe the case it has put to Kwasi Kwarteng MP in response to his offer last summer to assist the Council in its endeavours to secure a lower number is compelling and persuasive, and, if it does, why has it steadfastly refused to pursue the first option via its Local Plan and instead opted to rely on the government making an exception for Spelthorne?”

**Response from the Councillor Beardsmore, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

It is a question of the rules we have to operate under. It is cheap and easy for a minister to claim our housing number is not mandatory. He simply leaves out key pieces of information. Firstly, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is absolutely clear that all councils must always try to meet their housing need figure. Following on from that, all councils must make maximum use of any brownfield sites they have available. Because of the proposed zoning in Staines, Spelthorne would fail this test. As such we would have no grounds to seek a lower housing number. Until these rules change, we are stuck in terms of sound process.

In terms of the housing need figure the Council has made several representations to Mr Kwarteng and to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities concerning the high level of housing need for the Borough. The most recent letter from the Leader of the Council was sent in November 2021 and sets out clearly residents’ concerns over the high housing number and the impacts on Green Belt and the character of the Borough with high rise development.

This letter also sets out that the continued use of 2014-household projections as a basis for the standard methodology is unsound, given the projected slowdown in population growth from the latest figures. The standard methodology uses a formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for, as a means of addressing projected household growth and historic under-supply. These projections, in conjunction with the amount of Green Belt and waterbodies in the Borough, remain robust reasons for reducing the Borough’s housing requirement.

Whilst we continue to push for a revised methodology, the most effective means of protecting the Borough from unplanned and speculative development is to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place. At present, no Local Planning Authority has been successful in having a Plan adopted where their housing figure is below that set out by the standard method, since transition arrangements ceased to apply. By delaying the Local Plan, Spelthorne is at risk of being subject to continued applications for unplanned development. This vulnerability is hugely damaging to the Borough as shown by the recent appeal decision for Elmsleigh Road by Inland Homes, where the Planning Inspector clearly set out that the Borough’s under delivery of housing and lack of five-year housing land supply were key factors in allowing the development and were given ‘significant’ weight. This argument was also successful at appeal when the Council’s decision on Bugle Nurseries in the

Green Belt was overturned. An adopted Local Plan will ensure that the Borough has sufficient housing supply which can be delivered in a managed way to minimise impacts in Spelthorne.

It is a simple fact that despite many attempts, no-one using the 2017 methodology has been able to get their housing numbers reduced. We are already facing two examples of predatory development, and the longer we go without a draft plan the greater the risk of more such attempts being made.

**3. Question from Nigel Rowe:**

“Why has the Council not yet published a summary (called for by the Environment & Sustainability Committee last October) of the findings of its public consultation last summer on the future development of Staines, what conclusions has the Council drawn from the findings of the consultation, and why has it not committed to take any account of these findings/conclusions in its development plans for the town? To simply state that the consultation will inform work on the Local plan means nothing if there is not clarity on the conclusions the Council has drawn from it and those aspects it accepts must be accommodated.”

**Response from the Councillor Beardsmore, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

“Two summaries of the Staines Development Framework (SDF) Objectives and Options report were produced: a summary produced by consultants David Lock Associates (DLA) at the request of Members and a comprehensive report produced by Officers, which contains tables of every response, sorted by frequency. The SDF web page was updated between the 18 and 26 January 2022 and the report produced by DLA was mistakenly deleted from the web page. It was reinstated on 9 February 2022. The officer report has remained on the website from its publication in October. It is also on the website as an appendix to the Environment & Sustainability (E&S) Committee report from October 2021.

The comments from the consultation opposing high rise in Staines are noted and are being considered by Members of the Staines Development Task Group and DLA. The extent to which they will be committed to in the draft SDF depends on whether they can be incorporated into sound policy that will withstand scrutiny by an inspector at Examination in Public of this document and the Local Plan. We have already shown through consideration of zoning proposals for more sensitive areas of the town that we are trying to accommodate the reasonable wishes and expectations of our residents in a way that we believe will withstand that scrutiny in the face of national policy that seeks to optimise densities on brownfield land and in town centres. None of the contents in the draft SDF can be formally ‘accepted’ for inclusion until considered by the E&S Committee when it is asked to agree the draft for consultation as the Task Group is not a decision-making body.”

**4. Question from Nigel Rowe:**

“A large proportion of flats in new high-rise tower blocks are often bought by buy-to-let investors or overseas buyers, some apparently happy to let them remain unoccupied while the value of their investment grows or simply as a depository for their funds. This is already happening in Staines, with flats in new apartment blocks being advertised worldwide. Does the Council agree it should insist that developers allocate a high/defined number of flats in any new tower block development for sale to owner-occupiers only and, if the answer to this is ‘yes’, will it seek urgently to overcome whatever obstacles there are to achieving this?”

**Response from the Councillor Beardsmore, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

“The issue of buy-to-let investors who are just looking to make a quick profit by growing the value of their funds through capital appreciation is, unfortunately, not just a problem being faced by Spelthorne; it has rippled out from London and will apply to a large number of areas within the south-east.

Some councillors and residents will be aware that Australia does have very strict rules. All foreign non-residents and holders of short-term visas have to apply to the Foreign Investment Review Board if they want to buy property. Its rules state that they can do so only if their investment leads to an increase in available dwellings.

Last year (April 2021) the Government introduced a 2% surcharge on stamp duty land tax for non-UK buyers of UK residential property. This applies to existing homes, buildings under construction and off-plan purchases. The surcharge has been introduced to pay for more affordable housing for UK residents. As we understand it, the Government is not planning to change stamp duty in the short term. Locally, Spelthorne is now applying the unoccupied surcharge on wherever it can.

Government advice dating back as far as the now superseded Circular 11/95 has made it very clear that there is seldom good reason to restrict the occupancy of houses. The underlying government principle is that undue restrictions would interfere too greatly in the rights of individual owners. The current Planning Policy Guidance advice is the “Planning permission usually runs with the land and it is rarely appropriate to provide otherwise. There may be exceptional occasions where development that would not normally be permitted may be justified on planning grounds because of who would benefit from the permission... A condition limiting the benefit of the permission to a company is inappropriate because its shares can be transferred to other persons without affecting the legal personality of the company”. Despite numerous opportunities, no government of any political complexion has sought to change this.

It should be remembered that developments undertaken by Spelthorne Borough Council are intended to be directly let, ensuring full occupation.”

**5. Question from Nigel Rowe:**

“The chair of the Environment & Sustainability Committee, who is also chair of the Local Plan Task Group, some time ago proposed a zoning approach for new developments in Staines. This would restrict the height of new developments to defined limits close to the river Thames and adjacent to existing residential areas. This was enthusiastically welcomed by residents and embraced by the Staines Development Framework Task Group. What is the current status of this proposal, and can we be assured it will be enshrined in the new Local Plan and strictly adhered to?”

**Response from the Councillor Beardsmore, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

“To expand on the answer to Question 3 already given, at the time of speaking the proposals for zoning certain areas of the town to limit heights and densities remain at the forefront of discussions with the Staines Development Task Group and we anticipate they will feature in the Staines Development Framework. As already stated, the Task Group is not a decision-making body and reports to the Environment & Sustainability Committee, which will be called upon to agree the draft for public consultation, together with the Local Plan. Our ability to include the zoning proposals is dependent on a strategy that meets our housing need in full, so that we are able to argue that we have a sound plan that, although not optimising densities in all areas of the town, still delivers overall on our housing needs for the Borough as a whole.”

**6. Question from Kath Sanders:**

“Thank you very much to Cllr Beardsmore for the answer to my question in December about the 2021/22 Green Initiatives Fund and how much of the £747k had been allocated as of 30th September 2021. It was also good to see the information on the bidding process discussed at the Environment & Sustainability meeting on 18th January 2022 (Item 11/22).

Please would it now be possible for residents to get a further update as to how much of the £39k Green Better Neighbourhood Grant element has been allocated as of 31st December 2021 and what further progress has been made in terms of utilising the remaining funds this year (or whether agreement has been reached to rollover and potentially add to the Green Initiatives Fund in the next fiscal year)? Thank you.

**Response from the Councillor Beardsmore, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Thank you for your question, Ms Sanders. As you have outlined, we have allocated £39,000 from our Green Initiatives Fund for Green Better Neighbourhood Grants. Councillors have been asked to submit their proposals for allocating these grants, with the closing date for responses being 28 February. To date, we have received applications to the value of

£11,252 and expect to receive more bids by the close of business next Monday.

Alongside these projects, the Council has also received requests to utilise the Green Initiatives Fund for a range of other initiatives and the following proposals are being put forward to the Environment and Sustainability Committee for consideration at their meeting in March (as of 22 February 2022 these are):

- £20,000 towards Phase 1 of the Local Walking Cycling Infrastructure Plan
- £49,000 (including on-costs) for a Climate Change Officer post
- £9,000 for an energy audit of the Council's main buildings to identify opportunities for reducing energy and implementation of renewable energy schemes
- £2,000 for membership of Association for Public Service Excellence, which provides access to climate change best practice information and knowledge, and access to studies
- £3,000 for training staff to embed consideration of climate change in all aspects of the Council's work
- £5,000 membership of Colne Valley Partnership to open up opportunities for accessing funding for projects along the River Colne
- £7,500 towards electric mopeds for the parking services team

Carry over of any unused funds will be a matter for councillors as part of the forthcoming outturn process.

#### **8/22 Petitions**

There were none.

#### **9/22 Recruitment of Monitoring Officer**

Council considered a report that sought to ensure that an interim Monitoring Officer is designated in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and that there is a clear and efficient process for the recruitment to the permanent role.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to:

1. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make an interim appointment as Group Head of Corporate Governance,
2. Designate Jayne La Grua as Monitoring Officer (on an interim basis) from 21 March 2022,
3. Constitute the Appointments Committee as set out in the report, and
4. Delegate authority to the Appointments Committee to designate the next Group Head of Corporate Governance

**10/22 Application of the six months' rule to Councillor M. Madams**

Council considered a report that sought approval for Councillor Madams's absence from attendance of meetings from 14 October 2021 until the Annual Meeting of the Council on 26 May 2022.

It was proposed by Councillor J Boughtflower and seconded by Councillor M Attewell and **resolved** to grant a dispensation for Councillor M Madams for non-attendance in accordance with Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**11/22 2021-22 additional pay uplift**

Council considered a report that sought approval for an additional pay uplift of 1% to all scale points including personal salaries and apprentices.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to agree an additional pay uplift of 1% for 2021/22, as recommended by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

**12/22 Pay Award 2022-23**

Council considered a report that sought approval of the 2022/23 pay award.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to agree the staff pay award for 2022/23, as follows:

2% to all scale points including personal salaries and apprentices and an additional 0.5% for scales 1 to 5 inclusive, as recommended by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

**13/22 Pay Policy Statement**

Council considered a report that sought approval of the Pay Policy Statement.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to agree the Pay Policy Statement.

**14/22 Treasury Management Strategy Statement**

Council considered a report that outlined the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to approve:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23; and
2. To note the updated Treasury Management Practices (TMP) and Schedules.

**15/22 Detailed Revenue Budget 2022/23**

The Council considered the recommendation of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on the detailed Revenue Budget for 2022-23 (including the precepts being levied by Surrey County Council and Surrey Police) and the proposed Council Tax for 2022-23.

It was moved, seconded and

**Resolved** to agree that in accordance with Standing Order 17(f), the respective Budget speeches of the Group Leaders may each exceed 10 minutes in length if necessary.

**Resolved** that:

1. A 2.4% increase on Band D for the Spelthorne Borough Council element of the Council Tax for 2022/23 be approved. Moreover:
  - a) The revenue estimates as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
  - b) No money, as set out in this report be appropriated from General Reserves in support of Spelthorne's local Council tax for 2022/23.
  - c) The Council Tax base for the year 2022/23 be 40,703 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.
2. The Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme with the current rules and regulations be continued.
3. The complete disregard of war pension / armed forces pension income from benefit calculations be continued.
4. The growth and savings items as set out in the report's appendices 2 and 3 be agreed.
5. 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 be noted.
6. The Council Tax Base for the whole council area for 2021/22. [Item T in the formula in Section 31b (3) of the local government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "act")] be 40,703 band D equivalent dwellings and calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purpose for 2022/23 is £210.05 Per Band D equivalent dwelling.

That the following sums be now calculated by the Council for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Section 31 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992.

|   |             |  |
|---|-------------|--|
| A | 119,603,377 | Being the aggregate of the amount which the council estimates for the items set out in Section |
|---|-------------|--|

|   |             |   |
|---|-------------|---|
|   |             | 31A (2) of the Act considering all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.  |
| B | 111,053,652 | Being the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act   |
| C | 8,549,725   | 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 | 210.05      | 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 | 210.05      | 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. |

That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2022/23 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      |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 140.03 | 161.37 | 186.71 | 210.05 | 258.73 | 304.41 | 350.08 | 420.10 |

As required by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (as amended), Council held a recorded vote on the Revenue Budget 2022/23.

For: Councillors S Doran, C Bateson, I Beardsmore, M Beecher, J Button, J Doran, R Dunn, S Dunn, T Fidler, K Grant, T Lagden, L Nichols, J Sexton, V Siva, R Smith-Ainsley, B Spoor, J Vinson – **17 votes**

Against: Councillors I Harvey, M Attewell, C Barnard, C Barrett, R Barrett, J Boughtflower, A Brar, N Gething, T Harman, H Harvey, N Islam, V Leighton, T Mitchell, S Mooney, O Rybinski, R Sider BEM – **16 votes**

Abstain: Councillors S Buttar, M Gibson, R Noble – **3 votes**

It was proposed by Councillor Smith-Ainsley and seconded by Councillor Barnard and **resolved** by Council that Standing Orders should be suspended to enable items 16, 17 and 18 to be considered.

**16/22 Capital Strategy 2022 to 2027**

Council considered the Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 Report that sought approval of the following:

1. The Capital Strategy as set out in the report,
2. That all development and investment projects, along with all significant projects follow the previously approved business case governance process as set in in Section 11 of the report,
3. That no financing resources, unless stipulated in regulations or necessary agreements, are ring fenced,
4. The Council plans to continue its use of capital receipts to fund the revenue costs of eligible proposals (subject to full business cases for each project),
5. The financing of the Capital Programme and revenue implications as set out in Section 14 of the report and;
6. The financing of the Capital Programme being delegated to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee to provide sufficient flexibility to allow for the most effective use of Council resources.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to agree the Capital Strategy for 2021/22 to 2025/26.

**17/22 Estimated 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme**

Council considered the Estimated 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme report.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to agree the Estimated 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme.

**18/22 Estimated 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme update - Victory Place**

Council considered an addendum to the Estimated 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme report.

It was proposed by Councillor L Nichols and seconded by Councillor J Sexton and **resolved** to agree the Estimated 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme,

**19/22 Ashford Victory Place – Appointment of Contractor for Construction Works Contract**

It was proposed by Councillor J Boughtflower, Seconded by Councillor T Fidler and **resolved** that the public and press be excluded during consideration of this item, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any

particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because, disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in being able to undertake even-handed negotiations and finalising acceptable contract terms.

Council considered a report on Ashford Victory Place.

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell and seconded by Councillor J Boughtflower that this item be discussed at the Council meeting on 10 March 2022 when the remaining items on the agenda would be considered.

This motion **fell**.

It was proposed by Councillor R Noble and seconded by Councillor L Nichols and **resolved** to agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

The meeting was adjourned until 7.00pm on 10 March 2022.

### **Reconvened meeting**

Council reconvened at 7.00pm on 10 March 2022 to consider the remaining items..

A minute's silence was observed as a symbol of unity with the people of Ukraine following the invasion by Russia.

### **20/22 Referral of a decision of the Development Sub-Committee on 5 January 2022**

Councillors M Beecher, S Mooney, D Saliagopoulos, J Sexton, C Bateson and V Siva had referred the following decision for consideration by the Council, in accordance with the Council's Reservation Scheme.

Decision made by the Development Sub-Committee on 5 January 2022 in relation to the Oast House/Kingston Road Car Park and Health and Wellbeing Centre – Pre application consultation.

*The Sub-Committee resolved to:*

- 1. Agree the key objectives which the Council is looking to achieve from the wider site as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report, and*
- 2. Agree the preferred option for the residential element of the Oast House/Kingston Road site (Option 1).*

Councillor M. Beecher spoke on behalf of the councillors who had requested the referral. Councillor R. Noble, Chair of the Development Sub-Committee, responded for the Development Sub-Committee.

Councillors H. Harvey and Buttar joined the meeting during the debate.

Council voted on the following options:

1. Note the decision of the Development Sub-Committee (Note)
2. Refer the decision back to the Development Sub-Committee (Refer)
3. Withdraw the decision of the Development Sub-Committee (Withdraw)
4. Abstain

A recorded vote was requested by the Mayor.

| OPTION           | COUNCILLORS  |
|------------------|--|
| Note<br>(6)      | Mayor I. Harvey, A. Brar, H. Harvey, R.Noble,<br>O. Rybiinski, R. Smith-Ainsley  |
| Refer<br>(1)     | I. Beardsmore  |
| Withdraw<br>(21) | M. Attewell, C. Barratt, R. Barratt, C. Bateson, M.<br>Beecher, J. Boughtflower, S. Buttar, J. Button, R.<br>Chandler, N. Gething, K. Grant, T. Harman, N. Islam, V.<br>Leighton, T. Mitchell, S. Mooney, D. Saliagopoulos, J.<br>Sexton, R. Sider BEM, V. Siva, J. Vinson |
| Abstain<br>(1)   | L. Nichols   |

Council **resolved** to withdraw the decision of the Development Sub-Committee made on 5 January 2022.

#### **21/22 Report from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor L. Nichols, presented the report of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committees held on 19 January and 07 February 2022, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

#### **22/22 Report from the Chairman of the Administrative Committee**

The Administrative Committee had not met formally since the last Council meeting.

#### **23/22 Report from the Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, the Mayor presented the report of the Community Housing and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 01 February 2022 which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

#### **24/22 Report from the Chairman of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

The Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, Councillor I. Beardsmore, presented the report of the Environment and Sustainability

Committee meeting held on 18 January 2022, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

He advised that he had spoken to Mr Gbangbola to update him on Counsel's advice that the Council did not have the jurisdiction to continue any further investigative work and the Committee's acceptance of that.

**25/22 Report from the Chair of the Economic Development Committee**

The Vice Chair of the Economic Development Committee, Councillor V. Leighton, presented the report of the Economic Development Committee meeting held on 25 January 2022 which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

**26/22 Report from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Committee**

The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Services Committee, Councillor A. Brar, presented the report of the Neighbourhood Services Committee meeting held on 13 January 2022 which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

**27/22 Report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee had not met since the last Council meeting so there was no report to present.

**28/22 Report from the Chairman of the Planning Committee**

The Vice Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor R. Smith-Ainsley, presented the report of the Planning Committee meetings held on 05 January and 02 February 2022, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

**29/22 Report from the Chairman of the Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee had not met since the last Council meeting so there was no report to present.

**30/22 Report from the Chairman of the Licensing Committee**

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

**31/22 Motions**

In accordance with Standing Order 16 the Council received two written Notices of Motions.

**Motion 1**

The Mayor informed the Council that Councillor R. Smith-Ainsley had requested an alteration to his motion and that a copy of the altered motion had been laid around the Chamber. In accordance with Standing Order 18.7

the Mayor sought the consent of the Council and it was **resolved** that the altered motion be accepted.

Councillor C. Bateson moved and Councillor J. Sexton moved the following motion:

“That Officers consider options which would include the possibility of the Council making a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) under Section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in respect of areas within the Borough that have seen a marked and sustained increase in street drinking associated with Anti-Social Behaviour. Officers to report back to the Neighbourhood Services Committee on proposed next steps by the end of April.”

The motion was carried.

It was **resolved** that:

“That Officers consider options which would include the possibility of the Council making a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) under Section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in respect of areas within the Borough that have seen a marked and sustained increase in street drinking associated with Anti-Social Behaviour. Officers to report back to the Neighbourhood Services Committee on proposed next steps by the end of April.”

## **Motion 2**

Councillor V. Siva withdrew her motion in accordance with Standing Order 16.4.

### **32/22 General questions**

The Mayor reported that four general questions had been received, in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillors M. Beecher, H. Harvey and O. Rybinski.

#### **1. Question from Councillor Malcolm Beecher**

"Could the Leader or Chair of the Audit Committee, advise what is the current market value of Spelthorne's commercial property portfolio?"

#### **Response from the Leader**

“The Council’s investment assets are revalued every year in line with proper accounting practice. The assets are currently being revalued by independent valuers to confirm a valuation as at 31 March 2022 for the 2021-22 Accounts. This process has not yet been completed. So, the latest valuation is as per the Statement of Accounts for the Council published for 2020-21, which totals £939.75 million”

## 2. Question from Councillor Helen Harvey

“Broken down by ward and out of ward/borough, please can you identify the amount of staff time, and cost of that time (appreciating this might be an estimate), which has been dedicated to answering questions from members of the public about the Council’s developments across the borough and is this impacting on service delivery in any areas?”

### Response from the Leader

“Without having a time recording system in place it is difficult to arrive at a definitive figure, therefore officers have reviewed a number of options and using established standard costing methodology has arrived at an estimate cost of £600 per question submitted to Council. Shown below are the number of questions by ward multiplied by the standard costs per question.”

Taking into account the above caveat about estimation, and having reviewed all 83 questions from members of the public received at Council meetings in the current and the last municipal year, we have identified 13 questions directly relating to the Council’s developments. With a total cost of responding of £7,900. This is broken down as follows:

|                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sunbury Common    | 3 questions at a cost of £1.8k |
| Staines           | 6 questions at a cost of £3.7k |
| Non-ward specific | 4 questions at a cost of £2.4k |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>£7.9k</b>                   |

In addition to the questions submitted to Council which have been estimated above, officers have undertaken an assessment of the time spent and costs of responding to general correspondence using a similar standard methodology. Please note that only records relating to Staines Ward could be located.

| Ward    | Number of pieces of correspondence/discussions | Time        | Cost    |
|---------|--|-------------|---------|
| Staines | 89   | 489.5 hours | £58,740 |

Therefore the total for all questions is £66,640.

In accordance with Standing Order 14.3, Councillor H. Harvey asked the following supplementary question:

“Considering the disappointing and challenged budget projected deficit gaps for the next few years, I find it shocking as I am sure many of our residents will be, to learn of the level of officers’ time estimated at £58,000, and over £66,000 in total, which has been spent in answering questions raised by persons or person residing outside our borough. Indeed in the first part of this meeting, which we held a couple of weeks ago, we dedicated 17 minutes in answering questions from a person not resident in this borough. In view of this can the Chair of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee agree to add

to the forward plan an action to review the comments, complaints and compliments policy to ensure it is fit for purpose and does not unduly take up officers time over and above that which is reasonable, balanced and fair and furthermore does not prevent officers from their other job responsibilities to the detriment of the smooth running and effective running of the Council.

### **Response from the Leader of the Council**

“I will undertake to consult with the Monitoring Officer to establish what are the appropriate obligations of the Council in responding to questions and to take forward consideration of whether or not alternations are required to the processes we have got”

### **3. Question from Councillor Olivia Rybinski**

“As the Deputy Chair of O&S during the previous Boughtflower strong leader model administration, I have continued to take a particular interest in transparency and scrutiny of the business of the council and during the past months, have become increasingly concerned with the apparent failure of each committee to scrutinise their own decisions and also the leader and deputy leader seemingly acting outside their remit.

I recall that during the full council debate on the introduction of the committee system, Cllr Leighton, the then long-standing Chair of O&S, raised her concern over the risk to the authority of no longer having an O&S committee. Apparently, it was the decision of the committee system working group to no longer have an O&S committee!

In view of the clear ongoing need for an O&S committee function does the leader think it was a mistake to lose an O&S committee and will he be recommending in the upcoming review of the committee system, that such a committee be formed or added to the role of another committee such as Administration, as there is at our neighbour at Runnymede council?”

### **Response from the Leader**

“Thank you, Councillor Rybinski, for your continued interest in ensuring that we have effective governance at Spelthorne. The Committee System Working Group, which has representatives from all groups, and representation from independent members, is in the process of reviewing the current committee structure. Please do pass any suggestions that you may have for the working group’s consideration to your group’s representative who is Councillor Ian Harvey. The working group will then review suggestions, along with the results of the recent survey, before making its recommendations to Council, via the Standards Committee, in due course.

My personal opinion on this subject is that some form of scrutiny committee would be a good idea. There are however some complex issues that would need to be addressed, for example who could serve on the committee and

what outcomes would be available. I would not want to see the creation of a new committee that could simply overrule decisions of a Service Committee. It is important that we encourage all committees to make decisions after a detailed and rigorous review of the options.”

#### **4. Question from Councillor Helen Harvey**

“During the last full council meeting on 9th December 2021, I asked the leader a formal question regarding how was the £23m Capital funding gap for the new leisure centre going to be met? This was a concern that I had previously raised to the former cabinet portfolio holder Cllr Attewell during the council meeting (and additionally in part 2) on the new replacement leisure centre proposal 22 October 2020.

GetSurrey gave an incisive report on 10th December on the issue, highlighting the weak and vague answer provided by the leader and failure to provide a credible financial solution to meet such a significant estimated gap of £750k per year for the revenue budget, on an ongoing sustainable basis.

My follow-on question was: - ‘Are you confident that this chamber should proceed with this state-of-the-art leisure centre, when it appears to me that this answer does not project far enough into the future as to how the gap will be closed?’

In reply, Cllr Nichols informed me that I would be provided with a written answer. On 2nd January 2022, I wrote to remind him that members were yet to be furnished with that answer. On 12th January Cllr Nichols replied to me saying that he had a draft response but was just checking some things with Finance.

I have still not yet received this answer and it’s now over 2 months and today is the deadline for submitting questions for the next Full Council. Due to this failure, I am now compelled to ask the following additional question irrespective of whether Cllr Nichols retrospectively sends me the answer before next weeks’ full council meeting:-

One wonders if there is something been hidden. Why have I and members, not been provided with a clear and unambiguous financial plan for how this huge funding gap will be met on a long term and sustainable basis and since the tender for the build has not yet been agreed, will you give an undertaking to provide members with a detailed, transparent and sustainable financial plan covering the short term up to 5 years, 6-20 years and 20-50 as to how this gap is to be met before you proceed to enter into the build contract?”

#### **Response from the Leader**

Thank you for your question Councillor Harvey.

I wish to start by offering a sincere apology to Cllr Harvey for failing to answer her supplementary question. I would assure her that this is the consequence of a mistake on my part, and that I never intended to avoid answering her question or to hide anything. I did provide what I believed to be an answer, but which was in fact the answer to the original question at the Council meeting on 9th December.

The circumstances are best explained by providing a chronology of events.

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 9th Dec  | Cllr Harvey asked a supplementary question at the Council meeting and a written reply was promised.  |
| 2nd Jan  | Cllr Harvey sent an email chasing a reply to her supplementary question.<br>I wished to check exactly what the question was and the draft minutes of the Council meeting were not yet available on the website.  |
| 3rd Jan  | I wrote to Committee Services asking for confirmation of the wording of the supplementary question.  |
| 3rd Jan  | The reply was 'Does the Leader feel confident that this Chamber should proceed with this state of the art Leisure Centre when it appears to me that this answer does not project far enough into the future as to how the gap will be closed ongoing'.   |
| 3rd Jan  | I further asked if a minute of the verbal reply I gave at the time existed.  |
| 4th Jan  | A draft minute was provided.<br>This was in fact the answer to original question and not the supplementary.<br>I did not have a copy of the answer I read out at the Council meeting and mistook the minute provide for an answer to the supplementary. I thought that it did address the supplementary question, albeit in a roundabout way.<br>I should have been more careful in my checking. |
| 12th Jan | I confirmed with the officer who had written the answer that it was still correct. I did not indicate that I thought this was the answer to the supplementary, and I assumed this was understood.  |
| 12th Jan | I wrote to Cllr Harvey saying I was having the response checked.   |
| 12th Jan | The response was confirmed by the officer.   |
| 16th Jan | I sent the response to Cllr Harvey.<br>I have received no subsequent communication on this matter.   |

There was no attempt to hide anything. The failure to provide a proper answer was the result of a misunderstanding on my part.

Once again I sincerely apologise for failing to provide the written answer as promised.

I will now directly address the substance of your original supplementary question.

Appendix 1 to February's Detailed Budget report projects indicative balanced Budget figures forwards to 2025/26 inclusive, with a budget surplus of £290k in 2024/25 rising to £362k in 2025/26. The last two years in the Outline Budget period, take into account an assumed £750k per annum impact on the element of the annual loan financing which will not be offset by additional income generated by the centre post completion. So, it can be seen that when we set the Budget on 24th February, given that we were showing a better than balanced budget for each of those years, we had currently closed the funding gap to cover the impact of the Leisure centre funding.

In Part II of the later Council meeting this evening, we will be discussing the impact of construction cost inflation on the scheme. Councillors will see in that debate that despite allowing for very significant cost inflation in the build cost and also allowing for an uplift in Public Works Loan Board long term rates of fifty basis points, we are still projecting, other assumptions remaining unchanged, an overall Council budget surplus of £20k in 2024-25 rising to £90k in 2025/26. Clearly over the next few years the Council, as indeed all organisations, will be facing pressures across a range of expenditure categories, however we have time to put in place measures to mitigate those pressures. Officers will be commencing in April consideration of strategies to offset those pressures.

In the context of rising energy costs the business case for investing in a low carbon leisure centre with Passivhaus design is becoming ever stronger. We also have feedback from across the country that it is newly built leisure facilities which are bouncing back the strongest in terms of their income streams post the COVID-19 lockdowns.