

**Minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee  
29 November 2021**

**Present:**

Councillor L. E. Nichols (Chairman)  
Councillor J.R. Sexton (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

J.R. Boughtflower	R.J. Noble	S.M. Doran
C.F. Barnard	N. Islam	I.J. Beardsmore
V.J. Leighton	S.A. Dunn	V. Siva
S. Buttar	A. Brar	
S.C. Mooney	O. Rybinski	

**In Attendance:** Councillors C Bateson, M. Beecher, R. Dunn.

**619/21 Apologies and Substitutes**

There were no apologies for absence. Councillor Siva was joining the meeting remotely and was therefore unable to vote.

**620/21 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- Councillor Harvey was substituting for Councillor Brar.

**621/21 Disclosures of Interest**

Agenda item 5 – Knowle Green Estates Ltd

Councillor Buttar declared that he was a member of the Knowle Green Estates Ltd board of directors.

Agenda item 16 – Staines Library Hub and Museum

Councillor Mooney declared that she was a councillor at Staines County Council.

**622/21 Questions from members of the Public**

There were none.

**623/21 Ward Issues**

There were none.

**624/21 Knowle Green Estates KGE**

a Knowle Green Estates Annual Report

The committee received a presentation from KGE's board of directors.

There was a need to deliver a substantial amount of housing due to the number of people on the Council's waiting list. It had however not been possible for KGE to do this because of committee decisions to refuse developments such as Benwell House (phase two). There was an ongoing significant impact on the Council's and KGE's finances due to recent committee decisions to change the design specification of some schemes. Committee reticence in decision making was also creating a need for the Council to service debts for longer periods of time.

KGE's recent request for financial support from the Council was discussed. As a relatively young company, KGE had not had time to accumulate significant levels of reserves. It had therefore been necessary to request interim funding from the Council, as its sole shareholder.

The annual report was noted.

b Tenancy Strategy

It was a statutory requirement for the Council, as a housing provider, to have a tenancy strategy.

Members debated the open market rent percentage, which had been previously considered by the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee. There were differing views on whether it was appropriate for the Council and KGE to subsidise rents by 20 or 30% in the context of Covid-19 but also whilst KGE required financial support from the Council. The updated Housing Strategy sought a flexible approach to the open market rent subsidy so that it could take account of tenants' financial situations and the viability of each scheme.

The committee agreed that the existing tenancy strategy should remain in effect.

**625/21 Capital monitoring (Qtr. 2 July-Sept)**

The most significant areas of overspend were highlighted. Most were due to delays with various housing schemes, and the moratorium on Council sponsored high-rise development in Staines Town Centre.

The committee noted the current level of overspend (£1,286k) on capital expenditure against its Capital Programme provision as at 30 September 2021.

**626/21 Revenue monitoring (Qtr. 1 April-June)**

There was discussion about the interim pay award, which was proposed in response to the nationally agreed scheme that Spelthorne Borough Council had previously opted out of. The Council was not obliged to follow the national scheme, although it was recommended that consideration be given to the national and regional context on staff remuneration.

The committee discussed whether it should taper any pay rise to benefit staff on lower pay scales the most. It was suggested that the recruitment and retention of staff in professional roles that supported statutory functions was proving to be challenging. Inflation was also a consideration for all staff.

The Committee:

- Noted the current level of underspend on revenue expenditure against its Revenue Budget provision as at 30 September 2021.
- Recommended to Council that it approve a supplementary estimate of £200k to the Spelthorne Borough Council pay award for 2021/22, subject to an enhanced pay increase being proposed for the lowest paid staff (i.e. weighted towards the lowest paid staff).

**627/21 Outline Budget 2022-2023**

The process for setting balanced budgets for 2022/23, which involved each service committee reviewing draft budgets, was explained. Various assumptions had been made in anticipation of the government's budget settlement in December. Local authorities with responsibility for education and social care were expected to receive better settlements than district councils.

The Committee:

- Recommended to Council that the base budget for 2022-23 take into account an additional 1% pay award for 2021-22, in accordance with its resolution on the revenue monitoring report at agenda item 7.
- Recommended to Council that it apply the maximum empty property council tax premia for properties which were empty for a) up to 2 years, b) 5 to 10 years and c) more than 10 years.
- Recommended to Council that it seek to protect its council tax base over the four-year outline budget period by increasing council tax by the maximum allowed by the Government limits, whilst seeking to find savings and efficiencies to close its budget gaps.
- Supported the range of measures set out in the proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

#### **628/21 Determination of the 2022/23 Council Tax base for tax setting**

The Committee:

- Recommended to Council that the gross Council Tax Base for 2022/23 be determined at 40,867 (2021/22: 40,223) after taking account of the Council's agreed Council Tax Support Scheme
- Recommended to Council that the net Council Tax Base for 2022/23 calculated as Band D equivalents, be determined at 39,233 (2021/22: 39,016) after adjustment by 3% to allow for; irrecoverable amounts, appeals and property base changes.

#### **629/21 Treasury Management Strategy - mid-year report**

The Council's appointed treasury management adviser had said that Spelthorne Borough Council was performing better than many other local authorities.

The committee noted the treasury position achieved during the first six months of 2021/22.

The Deputy Chief Accountant was asked to explore whether it was possible to identify sustainability measures/scores for funds with the Council's treasury management advisers.

#### **630/21 Procurement of Fire Alarms Systems and Emergency Lighting Installations Maintenance Services - Residential and Municipal Properties**

It was hoped that local companies would be able to submit bids but due to the specialist nature of the service being tendered, there was a limited number of specialist companies available. The committee questioned whether the contract could be offered in lots as well as one larger contract and be compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations. The weighting between price (60%) and quality (40%) in the scoring was noted.

The Committee:

- Approved the procurement process for the letting of contract(s) for maintenance services of fire alarm systems and emergency lighting installations in the Council's municipal and residential properties, subject to the tendering exercise enabling companies to bid to provide services in lots (such as separate services for municipal and residential properties).
- Agreed a contract commencement date of 1 April 2022 for an initial contract term of three years, with the option to extend annually for further two 12-month periods, at the Council's sole discretion, taking into account contractor performance on the contract(s).
- Delegated the appointment of contractor(s) to the Group Head of Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.
- Authorised the Head of Corporate Governance to enter into any legal documentation necessary to implement the new contract(s).

**631/21 Corporate Plan 2021-2023**

The new Corporate Plan had been delayed due to Covid-19. The new focus around the CARES and PROVIDE acronyms was highlighted. Chair and vice-chair feedback had been generally positive and the committee asked that officers involved in the Plan's drafting and formatting be thanked. The targets in the Plan would be monitored by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The committee recommended that Council adopt the Corporate Plan for 2021-23.

**632/21 Oast House/Kingston Road Car Park and Health and Wellbeing Centre**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

**633/21 Exclusion of Public and Press (Exempt Business)**

It was proposed by Councillor Sexton, Seconded by Councillor Boughtflower, 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.

The reasons for this were:

Agenda item 15 – Staines Library Hub and Museum

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.

Agenda item 16 – 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Communications House, Staines

Disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in any lease, contract or other type of negotiation with the tenant, who could then know the position of the Council.

**634/21 EXEMPT ITEM - Staines Library Hub and Museum**

The recommendation in the officer's report was agreed.

As proposed by Councillor Beardsmore and seconded by Councillor Noble, the meeting was extended in accordance with procedure rule 38.2.

**635/21 EXEMPT ITEM - 5th Floor, Communications House, Staines**

The recommendation in the officer's report was agreed.

**636/21 Ashford Multi-Storey Car Park**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

**637/21 Opportunities for collaborative working**

The report aimed to provide a structured approach to collaboration discussions and identify areas where collaboration with other local authorities could be pursued with a view to addressing financial and recruitment pressures. Collaboration did not need to be limited to other Surrey districts, although there could be considerations should a partnership be formed with a much larger authority. Care also needed to be given to avoiding resources being drawn away from Spelthorne.

There was discussion about whether more collaboration would result in the formation of unitary authorities. It was generally felt that this was unlikely, particularly because SCC's recent interest in this had been dismissed by the government.

The Committee:

- Noted the progress made to date on discussions with other local authorities on opportunities for collaborative/joint working arrangements.
- Agreed to the formation of a Councillor/Officer Working Group.

- Agreed the Terms of Reference for this Working Group
- Appointed Councillors Beardsmore, Boughtflower, Nichols and Sexton to the working group.

**638/21 Verbal update on the Corporate Recovery Plan**

Service committees were reviewing their elements of the Corporate Recovery Plan with the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to undertake its own review in February 2022. The Audit Committee would also undertake its own review in due course.

The verbal update was noted.

**639/21 Forward Plan**

The committee noted the forward plan.

**640/21 Additional Corporate Policy and Resources Committee**

The Committee agreed that an additional meeting be held on Wednesday 19 January 2021 at 7.00pm.

**641/21 Urgent Actions**

The urgent actions were noted.

**642/21 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.