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, 8 December 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillors:

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

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors S.M. Doran, D. Saliagopoulos, M.M. Attewell, C.F. Barnard, R. Chandler, J.T.F. Doran, R.D. Dunn and S.J Whitmore

137/22 Minutes

It was proposed by Councillor Boughtflower and seconded by Councillor Mitchell that Councillor Ian Harvey be appointed as Chairman of the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Sexton and seconded by Councillor Beecher that Councillor Chris Bateson be appointed as Chairman of the meeting.

Resolved that Councillor Ian Harvey be appointed as Chairman of the meeting in the absence of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor.

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

138/22 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Sinead Mooney and Councillor Joanne Sexton declared they were Surrey County Councillors.

139/22 Announcements from the Mayor

The Chair, Councillor I Harvey made the following announcements on behalf of The Mayor:

“I apologise for not being with you all tonight but in my absence I have asked the acting Chair to read out my announcements.

The following are the events I have attended as Mayor since the October Council Meeting:

Spelthorne's Health & Wellbeing Seminar - very enjoyable and good to see Spelthorne Officers, NHS Staff, School Staff, Community Centre Staff and volunteers come together to discuss how joined up work could be effected in the Community of Spelthorne to help residents with their health and well-being.

Surrey Police Safe Drive Stay Alive event advising and educating youth 17-19 years old how to drive safely with scenarios that used Emergency Service Staff, NHS Staff and victims and their families of driving accidents.

Talk by Nick Pollard organised by the Stanwell Local Conversation on Lord Thomas Knyvett who apprehended Guy Fawkes in the crypt of the Houses of Commons foiling the Gunpowder Plot. Lord Knyvett lived in Stanwell and was also the Lord of Staines.

Jane Eyre performed at the Riverside Arts Centre with the proceeds going to my two charities: The Stanwell Family Centre and the Spelthorne Mental Health Association. It was a very good performance and one of the actors was a Spelthorne Borough Council colleague - Cllr. Tom Fidler. Well done Tom.

Recorded a Christmas message for the Talking Newspaper that covers Spelthorne, Runnymede and Elmbridge for those with sight impediments. It was a pleasure to do.

Armistice Day Flag Raising Ceremony at Knowle Green.

Laid a wreath and attended the Wreath Laying Ceremony at Stanwell War Memorial and attended Mass.

Attended Halliford School to discuss with the Headmaster holding a Spelthorne's Got Talent contest on their premises in the new year. More about this in the New Year.

Peer Group Review - Group Leaders meeting with Peer Group Team.

Attended Spelthorne Business Awards at the Holiday Inn Shepperton. I was very proud to be part of this event and to see how successful and innovative the business in Spelthorne are, whatever their size.

Surrey Mayors Annual Dinner held for Mayors both present and past. Very enjoyable but I did not manage to get John up to dance.

Started the Staines Rotary Santa Fun Run - not only run by families but also by their dogs who accepted their medals with wags of their tails. Enjoyed a ride around Staines on Santa's Train.

Ashford Youth Centre to meet some of those who attend the Centre and have discussions about their ideas for events, their wish to have more apprenticeships available.

Attended Philip Southcote School for secondary school age youth with Special Needs. It was a pleasure to meet these young people and learn the qualifications they had achieved and to listen to their pride in themselves and attending college and their thanks to their teachers.

Mayors Business Reception at Berkeley Homes site in Staines. Again, it was a pleasure to meet some of the entrepreneurs and other companies. Berkeley Homes made us very welcome by offering us their site and providing the drinks and nibbles. Again, money was raised for my two charities.

Council Chamber - meeting with youth who had taken part in a Leadership Course run by the Rotary Clubs of Staines and Ashford., It was good to hear how proud they were of themselves when they talked about what they had achieved.

MacMillan Coffee afternoon at the N.E. Surrey Short Stay School in Staines. I was very impressed to see the relationship between the staff and the young people attending and how they were pleased to be learning.

Christmas Lunch at the Greeno Centre where I was made to feel very welcome and enjoyed some brilliant food. It was lovely to see the local residents enjoying themselves and the way the Centre staff and the Purple Angels helped everyone whatever their needs.

Thoroughly enjoyed the Dress Rehearsal of the children's Christmas Play. It was heart breaking and both heart warming at the same time. The look on the children's faces was a pleasure to see. The staff are so dedicated to the children and it was wonderful to see them together. They were all helped to achieve to their maximum.

I have also had several meetings with the members of my Mayor's Committee and would like to say a big thank you to them for all their support and help and also to Maxine Cole my PA, who has been a very big support to me and come up with some wonderful ideas."

140/22 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

“I would like to start by congratulating all the finalists and winners of this year’s Spelthorne Business Awards. The quality of this year’s entries showed the hard work and resilience of our local businesses which have gone from strength-to-strength despite extremely challenging trading conditions. Thank you also to the sponsors whose generosity and support enable us to host these awards each year.

I am pleased to say that after five years of preparation, we have submitted our draft Local Plan for independent inspection. The Plan will guide key planning decisions for the Borough over the next 15 years in relation to housing, green spaces, community facilities and local infrastructure. Submitting the Plan for examination is a crucial step forward and an independent planning inspector will now be appointed to decide whether it can be adopted. A series of public hearings will also be held in 2023 where the inspector will listen to all the arguments for and against various aspects of the Plan.

Many will be aware that the Government announced on Tuesday this week that there will be changes to National Planning Policy, particularly around housing targets and local plans. A prospectus on a revised National Planning Policy Framework is due to be published this side of Christmas. As such, we are arranging a Local Plan Task Group meeting in the New Year to be briefed by officers and discuss the changes, to be followed by an Extraordinary Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting at the end of January to review our options and agree the way forward for the Local Plan before the examination commences.

Many residents are worried about the impact of the rising cost-of-living. I know that when you are struggling financially it can feel like a very lonely time but there are lots of organisations which can help, and it is always worth checking if you are receiving all the benefits and grants to which you may be entitled. A number of warm hubs have been introduced in the Borough and we are also opening our Community Centres on Saturdays to help residents who are concerned about heating their home. More information on the support available is on our website.

Working with the North West Surrey Health and Care Alliance, we recently announced the creation of the Spelthorne Healthy Communities Partnership with the aim of improving health outcomes for local people. The partnership will look at the wider influences on health and wellbeing and identify new ways of delivering services.

There are lots of Christmas events being held in the Borough in the run up to Christmas. These are friendly community-run events and a great way to get in the Christmas spirit with your family and friends. You can find more details on our website and in the Bulletin magazine.

Finally, on behalf of all the staff and councillors here at Spelthorne Borough Council, I would like to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New year. I look forward to continuing to support all our residents in 2023. “

141/22 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:

“Three weeks ago, at our invitation, this authority was the focus of a comprehensive Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Review.

A senior team of experienced officers and members spent three days here at Knowle Green, reviewing a range of information, documentation, and conducting more than 40 meetings involving over 125 people, including a range of council staff and members as well as external stakeholders and partners.

The team also visited a range of locations across the Borough, including a walking tour of Staines-upon-Thames, Fordbridge Community Centre, the White House and the West Wing as well as a variety of Borough housing development sites.

The scope of the peer challenge primarily focused on six themes:

- Local priorities and outcomes
- Organisation and place leadership
- Governance and culture
- Financial planning and management
- Capacity for improvement
- Sustainable delivery of affordable housing

At the conclusion of the Corporate Peer Challenge Review, the Council received formal feedback from the team who declared how impressed they were with key strategic and local projects and achievements that we have collectively accomplished, included our outstanding partnership effort in supporting our community - particularly our brilliant covid pandemic response. The findings also acknowledged the friendly and caring staff culture and the strength of cross service working.

Moreover, the review team explicitly recognised the complex and challenging political arena within which Officers operate, eloquently stated by the Lead Member as “there needs to be the recognition that the intense political dance is affecting your reputation, is costing you money and could ultimately affect the delivery of Council services for your residents and businesses.”

The full presentational pack has been circulated to all members and participants in the peer review, and it certainly raises some hard-hitting points

and identifies recommendations that we will all need to consider and collectively address.

In due course, a comprehensive report, including its 12 recommendations, will be available so that we can identify our own action plans to support the findings. This will be published both internally and externally following discussion by Full Council in the New Year.

Mr Chairman, I am incredibly proud of Team Spelthorne, its commitment, its professionalism, and its dedication to serving our communities and our businesses. I would therefore like to place on record my heartfelt appreciation as the Head of Paid Services for what we have achieved.

As testament to this incredible work, as witnessed by everyone in this chamber tonight – Spelthorne has also secured more national recognition, this time from the Federation of Small Businesses with three awards for our unstinting work in supporting Borough businesses throughout the pandemic and now in the post-pandemic world of a cost-of-living crisis.

I would like to extend my fullest congratulations to the Economic Development team as I know how incredibly hard, they have worked in support of our businesses and in securing the All-England Award for Local Government.

Mr Chairman, we can all take immense pride in the knowledge that this authority's work is recognised alongside the best in the country."

142/22 Questions from members of the public

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

1. Question and statement of context from Peter Bower:

"At the Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting on 8 November, Cllr Beecher produced data that one might have expected to give the Council pause for thought. Seventeen Councils have delayed submission of their Local Plan and a further four have withdrawn their Local Plan from Investigation pending clarity on the government's new policy relating to baseline data used to determine a borough's housing target. Indeed, one Council has been told by the Planning Inspector to use 2018 data which will reduce it's housing target by close to 20%. If Spelthorne used 2018 data the borough's housing target would drop from 618 p.a. to 489 p.a. – a reduction of 1,935 over the Plan period. Eliminating use of all the Local Plan's allocated green belt sites would consume 740 of this number, leaving 1,195 to reduce the allocations elsewhere in the borough, including in Staines which is currently required to absorb 55% of the borough's entire housing target.

Question:

Given 21 Councils have delayed or withdrawn their Local Plans pending clarity on Government policy; that one Council was told by the Inspector to use 2018 data to lower their housing target; and that those responsible for Spelthorne's Plan have made a powerful case in the Foreword to it *against* the current housing target of 618 p.a. (asserting that it "will damage our environment and ruin the character of our small and highly constrained borough"), why has the Council refused to follow other boroughs either in producing a Plan using 2018 data, or awaiting clarity on the government's housing policy?"

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

"I will start with the 2018 data. I went online to look this up and just by reading the very first link on the browser I knew the answer. Nevertheless I did follow up the link and it confirmed what was so obvious from just looking at the link.

The link referred to the plan as North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031. 2011! There is your answer right there.

I will explain.

We are working under a regime known as the Standard Methodology which was introduced in 2017. That methodology currently locks us in to the 2014 dataset. Councils whose plan was already in progress in 2017 were allowed to use a procedure known as transitional arrangements. As part of those transitional arrangements, N Herts were allowed to base their housing numbers on the 2018 dataset. Before you ask, almost the first thing I did when I got this job the first time was enquire whether we could use a more up-to-date data set than the 2014. The answer from the Ministry was a very blunt NO.

Currently the 2017 methodology is still firmly linked to the 2014 data.

This does sum up so much of the plan process, namely the endless repetition of simple facts. The issue of transitional arrangement has been raised several times by councillors and answered several times.

This Council voted by a majority of 3:! In favour of the Local Plan, which I can advise has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. There is no doubt these questions will be raised, debated, and answered at the hearing sessions as they have been submitted as part of representations, which the appointed inspector will read and consider in full. On Tuesday this week, we heard announcements form Michael Gove MP, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, regarding potential changes to the planning system and what these could be. However, officers are waiting for the detail of these changes that will be published before Christmas before they can brief Members on possible implications and what

options there are for the Local Plan as submitted. This is likely to be early in the New Year. Whatever the changes are, what we do know is hope that the new Local Plan will enable us to implement a zoning approach to the most sensitive areas in Staines, which we can't do with our existing policies. The reality is that a lower housing target would do nothing to offer Staines that protection because it does not operate as a cap on future development and this is a sustainable town centre where sites will be expected to be optimised. Indeed, the statement is very clear under the heading 'Brownfield First' that town centre sites should be used before others and there is reference to measures being introduced to make this easier to achieve.

So it's coming anyway, with or without a Local Plan and whatever the numbers say. The zoning policy on those identified areas is as far as we can push with valid planning reasons and part of that justification is that we will be meeting our need in full across the Borough. If we had a lower housing need figure, we could reduce the amount of Green Belt release, but don't forget it is these sites that will deliver 50% affordable housing of the 30% on Brownfield sites, provide family homes with gardens, a new sixth form college, a replacement community centre, and sports and recreation enhancements. Do we really want to lose those benefits? In favour of a Plan that delivers 98% of new homes as flats with a Brownfield-only strategy? This Council agreed the Local Plan because it recognises that whilst it won't please everyone, it represents the sound and sensible approach."

2. Question and statement of context from Alan Doyle:

"The recent LGA Peer Review made a number of positive remarks about the Council. However – rather pointedly – it also made a number of recommendations for improvement. Amongst other issues, the Peer Review Panel noted:

- There is poor behaviour by some Councillors which is widely recognised as damaging your reputation and is affecting morale and the ability to retain and recruit staff
- Councillors appear focused upon the internal political rather than the bigger external picture
- There needs to be recognition that the intense political dance is affecting your reputation, is costing you money, and could ultimately affect the delivery of Council services for your residents and businesses
- Members need to fully appreciate the financial implications of their decision making – or not making decisions
- Accept the need for higher density in urban areas if you wish to continue to protect the green belt, as set out in the Local Plan that you have agreed to and are about to submit
- You need to understand the necessary and vital relationship between density and viability

Question:

By the time the Review Panel returns next year, will the Council be able to show that it has ended:

- The repeated submission of questions to Council, which has taken up so much officer time, and which the Information Commissioner would describe as vexatious, and;
- The continued filibustering attempts to prevent the submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, which officers have more than once pointed out would be at huge cost to us all?"

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:

"Members of the public have the right to participate in Council and other committee meetings by submitting questions in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Any further restriction relating to public questions will require amendment to Council standing orders which must be first considered by the Council's Standards Committee and agreed by full Council.

Actually, the biggest issue was not the public questions but the ongoing queries to officers from some Councillors and members of the public. Let me be absolutely clear, the large majority of these questions were genuine and honest but clearly, especially in the last few months, a growing number of them were, as you say, vexatious and repeating things that have already been asked and answered on multiple occasions and in some cases being little more than rants, which most people learned to ignore. It was the cumulative effects of these that were really consuming officer time.

As to the nature of the council that will be in place when the peer review return. Nothing to do with me. Before they come back there will be an election so the nature of the Council they report back to will be entirely in your gift, Mr Doyle, and the residents of Spelthorne."

143/22 Petitions
There were none.

144/22 Outline Budget 2023/24
This item was not discussed at this meeting of Council.

145/22 Determination of 2023/24 Council Tax Base for tax setting
This item was not discussed at this meeting of Council.

146/22 Members Allowances Scheme 2022-23
Council considered a report from the Corporate Governance Support Officer that sought consideration of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022-23, as set out in the report.

Council requested that the Independent Panel reconsider members' allowances for 2023/24 to ensure that they are relevant to the new Committee System model that the Council currently worked under.

Council **resolved** to approve the recommendations of the Independent Renumeration Panel.

147/22 Grants Panel
This item was withdrawn from the agenda and therefore was not discussed at the meeting.

148/22 Appointment of Representative Trustees
Council were advised that this item would be referred to the Administrative Committee as the Terms of Reference for this committee stated that "they are responsible for making appointments to Outside Bodies which are not reserved to Council" and would be discussed at the next meeting of this Committee.

149/22 Reports from the Committee Chairs
The Chairs of the Committees presented reports which outlined the matters their Committees had considered since the last Council meeting.

Questions for Councillor Beardsmore, Chairman of the Environment and Sustainability Committee:

Councillor R Barratt noted the number of responses received in respect of local green space in responses to the Local Plan and queried how efforts would be rebalanced to reflect what concerned local residents.

Councillor Beardsmore explained that this was down to the Inspector now that the Local Plan had been submitted, but he agreed the responses on Local Green Space were outstanding, and the Council needed to think of ideas of what could be done with green space, and then consult with residents who responded.

Councillor Leighton asked if anything arising from the Visioning Process had been submitted for consultation.

Councillor Beardsmore responded that it did not appear to have been submitted.

Council **resolved** to note the Chair's reports.

150/22 General questions
The Mayor reported that five general questions had been received, in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillor Sexton, Councillor Nichols, Councillor S Dunn, Councillor Spoor, and Councillor Beecher.

Question from Councillor Sexton:
Why was the Spelthorne Council Position Paper provided to the LGA Peer Review team not discussed with members before it was issued?

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:
Thank you for your question, Councillor Sexton. The Position Statement you refer was produced as part of the normal preparation process for a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). The document contained baseline data and other factual information in accordance with an outline template provided by the LGA. This was designed to provide the CPC Team with a wide range of background material they needed to understand more about our borough, the key challenges faced by both the Council and our communities, and the way we work constitutionally and operationally to deliver our key services and projects.

As a factual document, the Position Statement did not require any decision or approval by Councillors. The Monitoring Officer-determined that it was appropriate for this to be signed off by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, prior to submission. We did, however, give a commitment that this information would be shared with all Councillors in advance of the CPC commencing and this was done on 7 November 2022. As you will have noted, the completed document amounted to some 56 pages with 11 Appendices, and this took a significant amount of time to prepare. Although we had planned to circulate this sooner, the time officers had to do this was curtailed by the date of the CPC being brought forward by a couple of weeks, something which you had requested.

All Councillors were given the opportunity to meet with the CPC Team during the Peer Review process, and they could also email them directly, so if you or any other Councillor felt that anything was missing or factually incorrect there was sufficient opportunity to ensure that they were made aware of this.

Councillor Sexton asked a supplementary question as follows:
I was assured that all members would have the option to be involved and look at the formatting and everything else that was required before it was sent to the LGA, that all members would be inclusive, yet we had to chase for this and we only got it a few days before?

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:
Thank you for your question. If I remember rightly, as soon as I found out it needed to go due to the deadlines of the Peer Review coming early, it was sent out to all members for feedback that day. As soon as the document was approaching the deadline, I did my part as best as I could, and I can’t answer much more than that.

Question from Councillor Nichols:
When will this Council be given the opportunity to appraise and discuss the Surrey County Council plans for a County Deal? Can we be assured that the full Council will get the chance to vote on any proposal before its submitted?

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:
I, along with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive have attended 3 meetings of the joint District & Borough Leaders' meetings – one of which was virtual.

The meetings are viewed as a 'collaboration platform' for Districts & Boroughs with a focus revolved around 'Devolution, County Deals and the levelling up agenda'.

Authorities accepted that there needs to be focus on:

a. Increasing Pride in Place
b. Tackling health inequalities
c. Empowering communities

It was recognised however that these are not solely County-wide matters and that some of the existing County services needed improving or potentially being devolved to the District and Boroughs.

Arising from the last meeting, a letter has been sent to the Leader of the County Council, Cllr Tim Oliver, setting out a list of devolved powers being sought from Surrey County Council from the District & Borough Leaders as part of any County Deal. The letter, once received, will be placed on the Council's modern.gov system.

As you should already be aware, I gave an undertaking to report back to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on developments, and that early in the new year, there will need to be a report presented to full Council on the emerging County Deal being pursued, though currently the Leaders of the District and Boroughs are more focused on the devolvement of functions within the County.

So in summary, yes and yes.

Councillor Nichols asked a supplementary question as follows:
Does the Leader accept that there are many members here who are extremely nervous of this process which to us is going on in secret, and which with Surrey County Council, the track record has not been great. Are you confident that we will get proper notification and a chance to discuss before Surrey County Council issue their edicts?

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:
Thank you for your second question. Yes, I do, I think from the big meeting at Epsom, it was all agreed by all members of various different parties and interests that what was said there would remain quiet, and I think some of that has come out in the letter to Councillor Tim Oliver of the requests such as verge cutting and parking, and also buses which are thrown back to them. I think members may be a bit worried about it but I think there is a lot being done jointly which is very differently from how it was when unitary was

knocking around. My guess would be that they will be coming to this Chamber at some point, not just about the shopping list of boroughs and districts, but the options of moving forward whether this borough might look in a different position, and that's not Surrey Unitary, that's what Districts and Boroughs would be pushing. That's early days, but I would be open to more questions and answers at the next Corporate Policy and Resources meeting.

Question from Councillor Sandra Dunn:
After receiving feedback from the LGA Peer Review – can the Leader assure Councillors that member Induction Training after the May 2023 elections will include the operation of the Committee system, management of the commercial property portfolio, council developments and the function and facilities of the Local Government Association? Also, as a previous member of the panel of councillors that were made responsible for organising this can he assure me that this will include cross party members and when is it proposed that this committee will meet?

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:
Thank you for your question. I was on the same Committee nearly four years ago. The Member Induction Training for May 2023 is currently in the process of being drafted and has not been finalised. I'm thinking of what the offer of help was from the Peer Review of them offering help and assistance to getting this right. I think we are so early on being a Committee System still and there is a lot of work not just in the Constitution, but other things around it, that we should be asking them to assist to get this training right. The Members Development Steering Group has not been reconstituted and that's something we need to reconstitute under the Committee system, but the induction programme will be presented for comment at the next meeting of the Administrative Committee – that's where it sits – in January. It will move to the Administrative committee rather than Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. I'm remembering the point when we were on the Committee. There was a lot of work involved in getting organised and I think we are going to have a lot of new members next time and there's a lot of training needed, and I think there's something hopefully coming back in February to full Council about training, but I would hope the LGA could quickly offer some advice to get this right. We can't afford to get it wrong.

Councillor S Dunn asked a supplementary question as follows:
I would like ask if we are still going to have a Council Committee from ourselves that will represent whatever it is the LGA put forward when you have your conversations with them? You can assure me that will still take place?

Response from Councillor Boughtflower, Leader of the Council:
It has got to. I'm hoping they will come in and be the consultant in the room to offer their best advice. I think we got to proceed with it with them in place to give more solid advice this time around. So yes, the Committee will exist but it will be under the Administrative Committee.

Question from Councillor Spoor:

Following the findings of the Coroner in Rochdale that Awaab Ishak died as a consequence of mould and poor living conditions, what assurance can be given about the condition of properties where council holds nomination rights? What action does the Council take to ensure that tenants are placed in accommodation private and nominated that is fit for human habitation and how are ongoing situations controlled?

Response from Councillor R Barratt, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Services & Enforcement Committee:
Thank you for your question Councillor Spoor.

Where the Council nominates those on the Housing Register to properties, the Council relies on the Registered Provider undertaking its own void checks and any appropriate maintenance to meet their required standards. This also applies to Registered Provider provided temporary accommodation. The Council holds regular meetings with representatives of our largest Registered Provider, A2Dominion, where social housing disrepair cases are discussed to ensure systems, procedures, and their repairs contracts are working well, and to enable any problem areas to be resolved.

Where the Council nominates to private rented properties under our rent assure scheme, the property is inspected and there is a formal inventory. Routine visits, including inspections, are undertaken at 2 weeks, 3 months, 12 months and 21 months.

Moving forwards, as Knowle Green Estates (KGE) stock increases, the company will regularly monitor the condition of its units and will report on any issues in its Annual Report. Currently KGE units are relatively new and currently there are no issues in its stock.

The Council places some homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation and this is inspected on a quarterly basis and clients are visited within a few days of their placement. It is rare to hear of any damp/mould issues in bed and breakfast units as there tends to be no limit on heating rooms.

The Housing Options team involve Environmental Health wherever there are concerns about the conditions of properties which cannot be resolved through dialogue with landlords. Our Environmental Health team continue to respond to complaints from residents about poor housing conditions, taking appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

On the 29 November 2022 Spelthorne's Chief Executive, Daniel Mouawad, provided an initial response to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing & Communities, to outline the actions this Council will be taking to prioritise mould and damp in dwellings, following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. This includes actions to prioritise cases based on risk, reduce response times for appropriate cases and further training for support officers to provide 'first point of contact' advice to residents contacting the Council about poor housing conditions due to damp and mould. A copy of this letter

and any subsequent follow up response will be placed in the Members' Library.

Councillor Spoor asked a supplementary question as follows:
My concerns are not so much on new tenancy, but existing ones. In the Rochdale case, the situation had been going on for some time and ignored. I'm not sure if local councillors had been involved with this at all, but as a local councillor, I have been contacted as an absolutely last step when the landlord had not actually reacted to the situation. Is there anything the Council is going to promote so that the renters can actually contact the Council before they actually contact their councillor because nothing has been done?

Councillor R Barratt requested that Councillor Mooney respond:
I'm very grateful that Councillor Spoor asked that additional question because knowing the bit of detail I know about the very sad case in Rochdale where sadly that two year old lost his life and I think it's known publicly that the actions of the registered social landlord were not great. They didn't step up and listen to the complaints from the family and they didn't deal with the situation robustly enough. I think whilst we can accept that this borough council will deal with the Knowle Green Estates properties in a sufficient and efficient way, I don't have that confidence with A2Dominion, the registered social landlord in Spelthorne. I would like to make a suggestion that Councillor Spoor's question is passed to A2Dominion and we receive a written response from them. I think many of us here in this Chamber get casework from tenants of A2Dominion where they're not as robust as they should be in dealing with repairs and disrepairs and standards of their properties, so I think we should seek those assurances. And also, Councillor Spoor, in response to your question, the private sector landlords as well, I'm very happy to let you know that the day after the report was published in the public news about this tragic case, a resident in Staines made contact with regards to a damp and mould issue in their property and Environmental Health visited on that day and have written to the private landlord requesting that they take immediate action and also given words of advice around ventilation to the tenants. Whilst I'm very confident that this borough council's actions, I really would urge the Chamber to seek a statement from A2Dominion.

Question from Councillor Beecher:
Would the Leader not agree that the removal of the Foreword from the Local Plan submitted for examination, a Foreword that has been referenced by others, is a material change to the document?

Response from Councillor Beardsmore, Chairman of the Environment and Sustainability Committee:
Officers received advice from the advisory inspector on the Local Plan, who considered that criticisms of Central Government policy were not appropriate in the Foreword. In June, all Group Leaders were invited to sign that Foreword, but only two accepted. Presumably the rest were not willing to criticise government policy. Unlike the policies and allocations, the foreword is not material to the Local Plan, and we are not required to have one. Given the Inspector's concerns and the lack of support,it was recommended that it be

removed for now and further consideration could be given to the inclusion of a Foreword after the examination. As such, the signatories to the Foreword, plus the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainability Committee and the Chief Executive all agreed to its temporary removal. It has been referenced in some of the representations to the Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, so officers have provided a response and the Inspector will be aware of the Council's position on the Foreword and can raise it at the examination if they are inclined to do so.

Councillor Beecher asked a supplementary question as follows:
You said "temporary." Can you tell me when the foreword will be reinserted?

Response from Councillor Beardsmore:
Basically it will be down to when we actually look at the Plan when it comes back from the Planning Inspector which would be June, July, August next year. At that point, we have the option to put in another foreword, not put in a foreword, or write something completely different or put in the same thing. I certainly wouldn't fetter the new Council on anything like that.

151/22 Motions
In accordance with Standing Order 16 the Council received three written Notices of Motions.

The Chairman proposed that motion two be dealt with first as motions one and three dealt with confidential business. This was agreed.

Motion two:

Councillor Beardsmore made a statement proposing that the following motion be withdrawn:

"Some 22 district councils, including our neighbours in Runnymede, have either agreed to delay submission or withdraw their Local Plan from examination pending clarification from the Government of its housing policy. Should the Government formally change or modify its housing policy, Spelthorne Borough Council commits to a re-evaluation of the housing numbers set out in the Local Plan by officers for a subsequent review by the Environment & Sustainability Committee."

Councillor Beecher agreed that his motion should be withdrawn in response to the commitment in the Leader's announcements that the Environment and Sustainability Committee would meet to discuss the government's announced changes to national planning policy.

Resolved that the motion be withdrawn.

Motion three:

Councillor Mooney proposed that the following motion be withdrawn as it was dependent on the outcome of discussions related to motion two:

“Until such time as the Spelthorne Local Plan 2022-2037 and Staines Development Framework as approved for Regulation 19 consultation and submission to the Planning Inspectorate are formally adopted by this council that the policies within the Staines Development Framework be adopted temporarily for all council-owned assets within the catchment area of the development framework.”

Councillor Beecher agreed that the motion should be withdrawn as the motion had not been reviewed by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee as agreed at a previous Council meeting.

Resolved that the motion be withdrawn until it could be discussed by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Gething and seconded by Councillor Mitchell and **resolved** to exclude the press and public for discussion of motion three, in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

Motion one:

Councillor Gibson moved and Councillor Nichols seconded the following motion:

“Council notes the unilateral decision by Surrey County Council taking over highway verge cutting and on-street parking enforcement. These services are currently performed by Spelthorne to a high standard.

The Council believes these changes will not improve services and reduce local accountability.

The Council resolves the Leader writes to the Leader of Surrey County Council:

1. Requesting that the decision is reversed as it is not in the best interests of residents.
2. Seeks justification of the changes in terms of tangible benefits.
3. Seeks a guarantee of no reduction in standards, if implemented.”

It was proposed by Councillor Leighton and seconded by Councillor Sider that the motion be amended to the following:

“Council notes the unilateral decision by Surrey County Council taking back highway verge cutting and on-street parking enforcement. These services are currently performed by Spelthorne to a high standard.

The Council believes these changes will not improve services and will reduce local accountability.

The Council resolves that the Leader continues working with the other borough and district leaders in Surrey to:

1. Requesting that the decision is reversed as it is not in the best interests of residents
2. Seeks justification of the changes in terms of tangible benefits
3. Seeks a guarantee of no reduction in standards, if implemented."

The amended motion was carried.

152/22 Temporary Adoption of the Staines Development Framework

The motion related to this item was withdrawn from discussion.