

**Minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
23 January 2024**

Present:

Councillor M. Beecher (Chair)
Councillor K.M. Grant (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	J.P. Caplin	J.R. Sexton
S.N. Beatty	S.M. Doran	J.A. Turner
J.R. Boughtflower	L. E. Nichols	H.R.D. Williams
T. Burrell	K.E. Rutherford	

Substitutions: Councillor K. Howkins (In place of P.N. Woodward)
O. Rybinski (In place of M.J. Lee)

In Attendance: Councillor C. Bateson

1/24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

2/24 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

3/24 Questions from members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

4/24 Review of the Coverage of the Spelthorne Air Quality Management Area

The Committee considered a report from the Principal Pollution Control Officer on the proposed changes to the coverage of the Air Quality

Management Area (AQMA) in line with improved air quality measurements since the establishment of the AQMA.

The Committee queried what the differences were between options 2 and 3 and were advised that option 2 presented a cautious approach which retained coverage in the south of the borough where it was expected that there would be traffic growth due to the development of Shepperton Studios and the River Thames Scheme. Furthermore, it would have greater coverage of High Streets within the borough. Option 3 would retain extensive coverage in the north of the borough but with less precautionary coverage linked to development. The Committee were informed that on a practical level, the difference would impact planning where air quality surveys were required for developments of a certain size, and areas outside the AQMA would have different thresholds.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Note the proposed change in the coverage of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
2. Agree Option 2 to recommend adoption of the proposed more conservative modified AQMA boundary detailed in Appendix 2, Figure 2.

5/24 Approval of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding

The Committee considered a report from the Service Lead for Strategic Planning and Enterprise on two schemes recommended for CIL funding. The Committee were advised that these had been the only two bids received and both had been extensively debated by the CIL Task Group.

The Committee queried who would be monitoring the ANPR Cameras and were advised that this would be done by Surrey Police.

The Committee asked what measures were in place to ensure that the increase in number of appointments provided by the extension to the Medical Centre were met. The Service Lead for Strategic Planning and Enterprise advised that KPI's had been agreed with the Practice Manager to demonstrate that the targets were being met.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Infrastructure Delivery Coordinator and the CIL Task Group for their work.

The Committee **resolved** to approve CIL funding for:

1. Visit Staines / Surrey Police – Installation of 3 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Cameras. £43,189.04 (inc VAT)
2. Studholme Medical Centre / NHS – Medical Centre Extension. £627,061 (inc VAT)

6/24 Spelthorne Design Code Project

The Committee considered a report from the Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning) on the procurement of a Consultant to support the Council in the development of the Spelthorne Design Code and were informed that having a Design Code was now covered by legislation and was a requirement for all Local Planning Authorities.

The Committee queried the ambitious timetable that had been set out and asked for reassurance that it would be adhered to. The Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning) advised that while they could not guarantee that the timetable would be achieved, they advised that any delays, and the reasons for them, would be communicated to Members. The Committee went on to ask about the funding for the project and were informed that government funding had already been secured for £45,000 and other bids were being submitted for all applicable funding streams.

The Committee asked whether there was scope for collective learning with other boroughs that were also working on Design Codes and were advised that Design South-East were setting up a group for South-East authorities and that Spelthorne would be part of that.

The Committee asked how the Citizens Panel would be formed and were advised that individuals would apply to be on the panel and would then be sent a questionnaire. The results would be anonymised and participants blind selected to ensure that a cross section of residents were appointed.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Note that a growth bid for £90,000 to assist with delivering the Spelthorne Design Code project has been submitted
2. Agree to undertake the procurement process for the appointment of a Consultant to support the Council in its development of the Spelthorne Design Code (in line with the draft specification as set out in Appendix A)
3. Delegate permission to award the contract to the successful bidder to the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee and the Group Head of Pace, Protection and Prosperity and authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into a contract with the successful bidder.

7/24 Draft Proposed Fees and Charges for 2024-25 (as part of the annual budget process)

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Accountant on the draft Fees and Charges for this Committee and were advised that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (CPRC) had agreed that for discretionary fees above £25, these would be rounded up to the nearest whole pound.

The Committee requested that the Solicitor send a note to all Members explaining the process in relation to the approval by CPRC of the change in Discretionary Fees and how it would apply to all other Service Committees.

The Committee queried why some of the Statutory Fees had increased by so much. The Group Head of Place, Prosperity and Protection advised that for Planning Application fees, there was a national decision by Central Government to increase fees by an average of 30% in recognition that Planning departments had not had sufficient resourcing for a period of time such that the cost of running the service was not in line with the fees that were being charged.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve the proposed Fees and Charges for 2024-25 for this Committee
2. Recommend to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that they approve the proposed Fees and Charges for 2024-25.

8/24 Revenue Growth Bids, Revenue Savings Plans, Capital Growth Bids 2024-25 (as part of the annual budget process)

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Accountant on the Revenue Growth Bids, Revenue Savings Plans and Capital Growth Bids 2024-25.

The Chief Accountant advised the Committee that the sub-totals for Appendix B had been omitted and informed them the figures were as follows; total amount of Growth Bids = £246,852, total amount of funding = £188,552, and Net increase of £58,300. The Chief Accountant informed the Committee that the increase in income from Planning Applications, set out in Appendix C, should be identified as a budget increase as opposed to a saving. The Chief Accountant further advised that as there were no Capital Bids, this could be removed from the recommendation in the report.

The Committee queried why the budget for Watercourse and Land Drainage had been reduced. The Group Head of Sustainability and Transformation informed the Committee that this year had seen an increase in demand for the clearing of ditches which had been supplemented from another budget. The Chief Accountant advised that there was a budget of £200,000 for in-year Growth Bids which could be considered for this. The Committee asked who had decided to reduce the budget for Watercourses and Land Drainage and were informed that the Chief Accountant would provide a written response.

The Committee queried why the budget for Planning Development Control had decreased and were informed that the Chief Accountant would provide a written response.

The Group Head of Place, Prosperity and Protection queried why the Growth Bid of £50,000 for when the Local Plan returned to examination had not been included on Appendix B and were informed that the Chief Accountant would provide a written response.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve the proposed Revenue Growth Bids and Savings Plan and for 2024-25 for this Committee.
2. Recommend to Corporate Policy & Resources Committee that they approve the proposed Revenue Growth Bids and Savings Plan for 2024-25.

9/24 Appointment of Member Representative to the River Thames Scheme

The Committee considered a report from the Group Head Commissioning and Transformation on the member representative for the River Thames Scheme for the remainder of the 2023-24 municipal year.

Councillor Boughtflower proposed Councillor Attewell and was seconded by Councillor Howkins.

Councillor Burrell proposed himself and was seconded by Councillor Beatty.

Councillor Attewell removed her name from consideration.

The Committee **resolved** to agree that Councillor Burrell be nominated as member representative to the River Thames Scheme for the remainder of the 2023-24 municipal year.

10/24 Update on Biodiversity Net Gain

The Committee received an update from the Group Head Commissioning and Transformation on the Council's suggested approach to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and were advised that the dates for mandatory BNG were 12 February 2024 for major applications, 2 April 2024 for small site applications, and November 2025 for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

The Group Head Commissioning and Transformation informed the Committee that developers would need to provide, as part of the application process, a complete biodiversity metric which would highlight any lost habitat and how they would account for this. Developers would also need to provide a Biodiversity Gain plan which would mean planning could not commence until it had been approved. Surrey Wildlife Trust will provide expertise in biodiversity metrics when planning applications are received, additionally Surrey County Council intend to create a pool of ecologists that could be use by Surrey boroughs.

In relation to the use of Spelthorne land to offset BNG delivery, developers would need to provide BNG onsite initially where possible, alternatively there is the option to go offsite or purchase Government statutory credits. Local Planning Authorities could sell Biodiversity units from its own land holdings but could not direct developers to use them. Potential Council owned sites, to be included on the register, had been identified and a paper would be presented to the February Committee meeting.

The Committee queried whether the River Thames Scheme would need to consider BNG and were advised that it would.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

11/24 Updates from Task and Finish and/or Working Groups

The Committee received an update from the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee on the work of the Climate Change Working Group.

The Chair advised the Committee of a report that would be presented to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee on 19 February 2024 on the installation of a Papilio 3 unit in Elmsleigh Surface Car Park. A Papilio 3 was a converted container that once set down and connected could provide charging to electric vehicles.

The Committee asked whether there would be a charge for using the Papilio 3 unit and were advised that there would be a fee but it would be competitive. It was further stated that it would be investigated to see whether a scheme could be put in place to provide residents with a discounted rate.

The Committee asked where the power would come from for the unit and were advised that the Papilio 3 does not use as much power as an ultrafast charger, and that the unit has solar panels on the roof to provide additional power.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

12/24 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the forward plan for future Committee business.

The Committee queried why the report on 'Strategic Planning – Car Parks in Staines' had no date assigned to it and were advised that the report needed further discussion with the Group Head Assets as to which Committee it should be presented to.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan.

Meeting ended at 20:50

Actions Arising from Meeting

The following actions arose from the meeting:

The Solicitor agreed to send a note to all Members explaining the process in relation to the approval by CPRC of the change in Discretionary Fees and how it would apply to all other Service Committees.

The Chief Accountant agreed to provide a written response as to who had decided to reduce the budget for Watercourse and Drainage.

The Chief Accountant agreed to provide a written response as to why the budget for Planning Development Control had been decreased.

The Chief Accountant agreed to provide a written response as to why the Growth Bid of £50,000 for when the Local Plan returned to examination had not been included on Appendix B.