

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, 14 December 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillor D. Saliagopoulos, The Mayor, in the Chair

Councillors:

E. Baldock	J.R. Boughtflower	K.M. Grant
M. Arnold	J. Button	S. Gyawali
M.M. Attewell	J.P. Caplin	K. Howkins
C. Bateson	R. Chandler	N. Islam
S.N. Beatty	D.C. Clarke	A. Mathur
M. Beecher	J.T.F. Doran	L. E. Nichols
S. Bhadye	S.M. Doran	K.E. Rutherford
M. Bing Dong	S.A. Dunn	O. Rybinski
H.S. Boparai	H.R.D. Williams	J.R. Sexton
L.H. Brennan	M.J. Lee	B. Weerasinghe
M. Buck	R.V. Geach	P.N. Woodward
T. Burrell	M. Gibson	

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors D.L. Geraci, A. Gale and J.A. Turner

96/23 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell, Boparai, Sexton and Weerasinghe advised that they were also Surrey County Councillors.

Councillor Boparai declared that he was Spelthorne Borough Council's representative on the Surrey Police and Crime Panel.

97/23 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

98/23 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“Good evening Councillors and Officers. A special welcome to Alderman Sider who is here this evening. Welcome also to those residents who are watching this meeting on YouTube and also to members of the public gallery who are here this evening. Thank you for your continued interest in the democracy process in Spelthorne.

Myself and my Consort have been out and about in the borough. Our engagements, to mention a few, were:

The Mayor’s Charity Greek Night at Thameside Brewery. Thank you to those who attended and also for your kind generosity. The evening was a great success and for those of you on social media you might see a few pictures and even a video. Indeed, the Leader of the Council showed us some of her dance moves. She managed to lead a whole Congo dance out and back into the venue!

We also attended the fantastic Spelthorne Business Awards. It is staggering the amount of businesses we have in our borough. Thank you to our Team who organise these awards. Just for the record, the Leader was once again leading the dance charge! The organisation was staggering and Tracey Carter and all her Team (including Sheila) really excelled themselves.

We have attended the Irish Embassy in London. It was to celebrate 125 years that London Irish has been operating. A Celebratory Book has been written and the occasion was attended by the Irish Ambassador. He took a particular interest in the Mayor’s chains and I promptly gave him my card and said that we would be very honoured if he came to visit us if he were at Hazelwood in the future!

Spelthorne in Bloom was a fantastic evening - so difficult to choose the winners. There are so many green fingered residents and businesses. Nottcuts Garden Centre in Staines were our Hosts. Nick Wood Dow, Deputy Lord Ltn officiated the evening. I really do wish to thank the Manager at Notcutts - even though his wife was expecting her baby that evening he still came along and so generously provided the evening with refreshments.

I have had the pleasure of hosting groups of young people in the Council. I thought I might label these engagements “How to be a Councillor when I grow up”! Thank you to our officer, Matthew in Committee Services who started this idea. A charming group of Rainbow brownies spent an hour after school, learning how to use the microphone, and asking questions! We also had some older children who were in the Chamber for their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. I cannot read you this report without mentioning the amazing young people we have in this borough. Of course a huge thanks to Nick Charalambous - such an influential hardworking officer. How lucky we are. We are going to design a democracy badge with certificate and we propose to present this to our young people who come to the Chamber and fire questions at me! Should any Councillor wish to join me I will make sure you know dates. Thank you to Cllr Geach who has already made enquiries about her

local school attending. This invitation is to all councillors who wish their local school or young people to come for a visit to the Chamber!

We also attended an early morning River boat Business Breakfast. A fantastic opportunity for our businesses to network in the borough. Many new friends were made that day. I really do have to thank Sheila and Tracy for raising £600 for the Mayor's Charities that morning. Astounding.

We have also been meeting with the other Mayors of the Surrey boroughs. We visited Brooklands Museum - if you want to know what it was like to sit on Concorde (the real Concorde) then it is a fantastic place to visit quite apart from the aircraft they have there. The highlight was a trip to the Chelsea Football Club training ground in Cobham. It was surreal to be sitting having lunch on the same long table as the Manager of Chelsea (could have been awkward as my Consort supports Tottenham Hotspur). Of course those of you who follow football know that the current Chelsea Manager was the Manager at Spurs! I feel sure Alderman Sider will know exactly what I am talking about. Again the Mayorial chains were a talking point. I have to say however that our Spelthorne Chains are quite the best in Surrey!

We have been to visit the Showmans' Guild in Staines. I would encourage all councillors to google them and it is truly fascinating that we have such a big organisation in our borough. Thank you to the Chief Executive and the deputy leader for accompanying me.

I attended the AGM of the Citizens Advice Bureau together with the Mayor of Runnymede. Not such good news I am afraid. We heard that their referrals and inquiries are increasing at an alarming rate. They neither have the resources nor the funds. I think we as a Council need to do all we can to assist them. It is however recognised that Spelthorne and Runnymede Councils are very generous indeed to the Bureau in any event. I do hope that we can lobby our MP to try and see if they can get more Government Grant. Again these are our volunteers and it is a shame they are quite worried about the future.

On a cheerier note the borough is certainly enjoying plenty of Christmas parties. It has been an absolute honour to attend our Day Centres and celebrate with our residents at this time of year. Fordbridge Day Centre in Ashford is quite one of the best Day Centres I have ever been to. I want to make a plea to every Councillor here this evening. If you are not already doing so, please visit your local Day Centre - such an array of activities and delicious food and kind care! Again, mostly manned by volunteers! Tomorrow we are going to Staines Day Centre. Another fine example of what we offer to our elderly and frail residents.

Just last week we attended Staines Synagogue to celebrate Chanukah. Happy Chanukah by the way to all this evening. My thanks go to Councillor Geach who attended with her lovely family. We were given such a welcome and it was an honour to celebrate one of the biggest celebrations in the Jewish Calendar.

We have also been celebrating with the wonderful residents of Stanwell Moor, Diwali, the Festival of Light. It was an evening like no other. Music, dances, delicious food and such a welcome to the Mayor. Many thanks to the Stanwell Councillors and past Madam Mayor, Cllr Susan Doran for introducing us to the residents and community.

Just last evening I was invited to attend the Shepperton Big Tree Night. A fantastic fine tuned operation with some amazing stalls and carol singing by local school children. Thank you to Cllrs Maureen Attewell and John Boughtflower for welcoming the Mayor. Apparently Maureen funded the real reindeers to entertain the children. Now that is a use of our good causes fund that I think is just fantastic. Please relay my thanks to the volunteers and committee.

Lastly, one of our highlights was to attend Ashford Hospital Community Day last month. The Hospital doors were thrown open to everyone. For those of you who have ever wondered what an operating theatre looks like - well you would have been in for a treat! I have to report that I was taught how to replace a new knee, cut a bone in half and delivered a baby (doll of course)! The Trust are very keen to have these open days every year - both at St Peter's and Ashford. It's a great opportunity to meet staff and to see how they work. Great ideas by the Trust".

99/23 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

"On tonight's agenda is the Outline Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 which was presented at the Corporate Policy Resources Committee on Monday 27 November. Work is progressing well and the detailed plan will be presented at the Council meeting in February when the budget for 2024/25 will also be set. The Corporate Plan is a key policy document which outlines the strategic priorities for the Council for the period of the Plan, as well as the values the Council will uphold. Putting residents at the heart of everything we do will be the overarching theme of the new Plan.

Surrey County Council has said it is engaging in discussions with Government on a Level 2 County Deal, following the Chancellor's announcement in the Autumn Statement. This does not involve or require any structural reform of local government or a unitary deal of any form. Spelthorne Borough Council will retain its sovereignty and independence which I believe Spelthorne residents will very much welcome. We will continue to engage with Surrey County Council and trust they will work with this authority and listen to our residents in a way which is open and accountable.

We are accelerating the work on Design Codes, rather than waiting for the adoption of the Local Plan. Design Codes are paramount in shaping our communities and Officers are being supported by Andy Von Bradsky (ex-chief architect to the government.) We want to ensure that we actively engage with

all sections of the community in this process, so that we can all be justifiably proud of the buildings and places that will be built in the future.

And finally, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. This time of year gives us a chance to stop and think, and to connect with those who are most near and dear to us. Christmas is also a time to be thankful for everything we have, pay tribute to our dedicated colleagues at the Council and emergency services who'll be working hard over the Christmas period.

I would also like to share my personal thanks to the many wonderful residents who volunteer and give their time to help to those who are less fortunate. Without the fantastic network of our voluntary organisations, life would be so much poorer in Spelthorne, and they all deserve our support for their work in the community. I do hope whatever you have planned over Christmas and the New Year is enjoyable and that 2024 is a good year for you all".

The Deputy Leader made the following announcements:

"This Autumn the Council ran a consultation on a new Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document which will help to ensure that new homes and developments are more friendly to the environment. The results of the consultation are currently being analysed and a paper will be presented to the E&S Committee in March.

The hard work and achievements of local businesses were celebrated at the Spelthorne Business Awards held at the Hazelwood Centre in Sunbury on 24 November. The quality of the entries the Council received are proof of the wealth of local entrepreneurial spirit, talent and innovative thinking across a wide range of sectors. Many congratulations to all the finalists and winners, and I would also like to thank our sponsors for continuing to work with us to celebrate the best of business in Spelthorne.

The Council has launched the Spelthorne Youth Awards and is looking for nominations for young people aged between 5 and 19 who are living or receiving education within Spelthorne and deserve recognition for their achievements. There are 7 categories, from community to sport and arts to academic. The deadline for nominations is Friday 9 February.

Finally, I too would like to echo Cllr Sexton's thanks to all the staff here at Spelthorne and the voluntary groups who work tirelessly all-year-round supporting residents in the Borough. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and New Year and I look forward to continuing to work with you all in 2024".

100/23 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:

“Regrettably, I commence tonight by sharing some sad news regarding David Furst, Chairman of Laleham Resident Association who passed away peacefully in his sleep this morning with his family around him, after a short illness.

David was a gentleman, loved Laleham and did everything he could to improve the lives of the residents he represented. Many in the community, including Ward Councillors who knew him well, are devastated by his passing.

We send our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

I hope you take this opportunity to spend this Christmas break with your loved ones.

We fast approach the end of another busy year, one in which we have addressed the ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living and housing crisis. Despite the many challenges we have faced as an authority, we have increased the scope of our support for our communities and have successfully responded to the increase in demand for our services.

As Chief Executive, I couldn't be prouder of what we have achieved as 'Team Spelthorne'.

Christmas is a time to be thankful for everything we have, and speaking on behalf of the Senior Management Team - myself, Terry and Lee - I would like to pay tribute to you all – Officers and Councillors alike – for your role in making Spelthorne such a special place to live and work in.

I would also like to thank our dedicated colleagues who'll be working hard over the Christmas period maintaining service continuity for our residents.

There is much to look forward to in the New Year. We're planning on making even bigger strides forward in 2024 and are excited to be celebrating this Authority's 50th Anniversary and of course, in opening the world's largest Passivhaus Leisure Centre.

Merry Christmas Madam Mayor and to each and every one of you”.

101/23 Questions from members of the public

The Mayor reported that, under Standing Order 14, no questions had been received from a member of the public.

102/23 Changes to the Allocation of Seat for Committees

The Council considered a report from the Group Head Corporate Governance that sought approval for the revised proposed allocation of seats to the Conservative Group following the Ashford Town By-election in September 2023.

Council **resolved** to approve the revised allocation of seats to the Conservative Group.

103/23 Changes to the Constitution

Council considered a report from the Group Head Corporate Governance that sought:

1. approval for the proposed amendments to the Constitution as set out in the report and attachments; and
2. Approval to authorise the Group Head Corporate Governance to update the Constitution accordingly.

Councillor J Sexton proposed, and Councillor Bateson seconded the following amendment:

“This Chamber approves the proposed amendments to the Constitution as set out in this report and attachments, subject to any changes that Council agree tonight, and authorise the Group Head Corporate Governance to update the Constitution accordingly.”

Council adjourned at 19:34 and reconvened at 19:40.

Council **resolved** to agree the amended recommendation.

Council considered the amendments and **resolved** the following:

Part 1 – Introduction to the Constitution

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 2 – Article 5, The Mayor

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 2 – Article 10, The Officers

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 3 (b) – Terms of Reference of Committees

AGREED with the proposed amendments.

Part 3 (d) – Delegations to Officers

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 3 (f) – Roles of Different Councillors

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 4 (a) – Council Standing Orders

Councillor K Howkins left the meeting at 20:02.

The meeting adjourned at 20:02 and reconvened at 20:12.

An amendment to Part 4a SO 6.2 and 8.2 – National Anthem was proposed by Councillor Sexton and seconded by Councillor Bateson:

The suggested amendment should not apply to SO 8.2, and the National Anthem should continue to be sung at the Annual Council meeting.

A recorded vote was requested and the results were as follows:

For (14):	E. Baldock, C. Bateson, S. Beatty, M. Bing Dong, T. Burrell, J. Button, J. Caplin, J. Doran, S. Doran, R. Geach, M. Gibson, K. Grant, S. Gyawali, J. Sexton
Against (14):	D. Saliagopoulos, M. Attewell, M. Beecher, S. Bhadye, J. Boughtflower, L. Brennan, R. Chandler, D. Clarke, N. Islam, M. Lee, A. Mathur, O. Rybinski, B. Weerasinghe, P. Woodward
Abstain (7):	M. Arnold, H. Boparai, M. Buck, S. Dunn, L. Nichols, K. Rutherford, H. Williams

In accordance with Standing Order 21.3, as there was an equality of votes for and against the motion, the Mayor cast a further vote against the motion.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Sexton FAILED.

A recorded vote on the original motion was requested and the results were as follows:

For (14):	E. Baldock, C. Bateson, S. Beatty, M. Beecher, M. Bing Dong, T. Burrell, J. Button, J. Doran, S. Doran, R. Geach, M. Gibson, S. Gyawali, L. Nichols, J. Sexton
Against (14):	D. Saliagopoulos, M. Attewell, S. Bhadye, J. Boughtflower, L. Brennan, R. Chandler, D. Clarke, N. Islam, M. Lee, A. Mathur, K. Rutherford, O. Rybinski, B. Weerasinghe, P. Woodward
Abstain (7):	M. Arnold, H. Boparai, M. Buck, J. Caplin, S. Dunn, K. Grant, H. Williams

In accordance with Standing Order 21.3, as there was an equality of votes for and against the motion, the Mayor cast a further vote against the motion.

The amendment to Part 4a SO 6.2 and 8.2 FAILED.

It was proposed by Councillor H. Williams and seconded by Councillor J Boughtflower that the amendments to SO 21 – Voting, and SO 40.1-40.5 – Public Questions at Committee/Sub-Committee be removed.

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 4 (c) – Substitution Scheme

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 4 (e) – Contract Standing Orders

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 4 (g) – Access to Information Rules

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 4 (i) – Procedure Rules for Task & Finish Groups and Working Groups

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 5 (a) – Councillor Code of Conduct

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 5 (d) – Planning Code

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 5 (h) – Monitoring Officer Protocol

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 5 (k) – Conflicts of Interest

AGREED with the proposed amendments

Part 5 (m) – Disclosure and Barring Checks

AGREED with the proposed amendments

The meeting adjourned at 21:01 and reconvened at 21:12.

104/23 Corporate Plan

The Council considered a report that sought agreement of the Outline Corporate Plan for the Council for 2024-28, including the priorities, key themes and values.

Council **resolved** to adopt the proposed Outline Corporate Plan for 2024-28.

105/23 Statement of Licensing Policy 2024-2029

Council considered a report that sought approval of the revised Statement of Licensing Policy 2024-2029.

Council **resolved** to approve the adoption of the revised Statement of Licensing Policy 2024-2029.

106/23 Gambling Act Policy 2022-2025

Council considered a report that sought adoption of the Gambling Act Policy for 2022-2025.

Council **resolved** to approve the adoption of the Gambling Act Policy 2022-2025.

107/23 Determination of 2024/25 Council Tax Base for Tax Setting

Council considered a report that sought approval for the determination of the 2024/25 Council Tax base for tax setting. This report had previously been considered by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 27 November 2023 and it was recommended that Council approve the following:

- A) The gross Council Tax Base for 2024/25 is determined at 41,305 (2023/24: 40,867) Band D equivalents after taking account of the Council's agreed Council Tax Support Scheme; and
- B) The net Council Tax Base for 2024/25 calculated Band D equivalents, is determined at 39,241 (2023/24: 39,233) after adjustment by 5% to allow for irrecoverable amounts, appeals and property base changes.

Council **resolved** to agree the recommendations from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee as outlined above.

108/23 2024-25 to 2027-28 Outline Budget Report

Council considered the Outlined Budget Report 2024-25 to 2027-28.

It was proposed by Councillor S. Dunn, seconded by Councillor J. Sexton and **resolved** to extend the meeting beyond three hours in accordance with Standing Order 5.2.

S. Doran and J. Doran left the meeting at 21:52.

Council **resolved** to:

1. Note the current projected draft budget gaps as set out in 1.80-1.81 of the report,
2. Approve the exploration of the range of options over the four year period set out in the report to close the budget gaps including seeking to maximise transformation savings, including digital transformation,

smarter use of physical assets, delivering cashable savings, prioritisation and collaborative savings and in the last instance to use its reserves to deliver a balanced budget for 2024/25. It was noted that there was some headroom to protect front line services and vulnerable residents, either in 2024/25 or future years; and

3. Confirm support for the initiatives suggested in the report which would allow Officers to work on closing the gaps for the years 2024-25 to 2027-28.

109/23 Asset Management Strategy & Asset Management Plan

The Mayor presented this item after items 16 and 17.

Council considered a report on the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan, replacing the Asset Management Plan dated September 2020.

Council **resolved** to approve the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan.

110/23 Appointment of Independent Members to Standards Committee

The Mayor presented this item before Item 15.

Council considered a report that sought approval for the appointment of Gareth Young as the Chair of the Standards Committee for two years, until December 2025.

Councillor R.Geach left the meeting at 21:55.

It was proposed by Councillor Boughtflower, seconded by Councillor Bateson and **resolved** to exclude the public and press for the discussion of this item, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose information relating to an individual.

Council **resolved** to approve the appointment of Gareth Young to the position of Chair of the Standards Committee.

111/23 Reports from the Committee Chairs

The Mayor presented this item before Item 15.

The Chairs of the Committees presented reports which outlined the matters their Committees had considered since the last Council meeting.

Councillor M. Gibson, asked the following question of the Chair of the Audit Committee:

“Do we have any idea when we might have our accounts audited or when?”

Councillor J. Button, the Chair of the Audit Committee, provided the following response:

“We are still waiting, unfortunately, because there is a backlog of five years of unaudited accounts. The last year we had audited accounts was for the year 2017-2018. This does present a problem because we as councillors get presented with the annual reports each year which, as you all know, are rather long and involved and certainly, I know myself and many members here can't get into the nitty gritty of them, so that's why we have the external auditors who are professionals at this who can then give us the reassurance that those accounts are actually correct. So not having that for the last five years is obviously an issue. Now, it is not specifically a problem to Spelthorne. Across local authorities across the country, I believe there is nearly 1,000 outstanding audits out there and the government keep promising that they are going to bring forward legislation to tackle this, but we are still waiting for that. In this uncertainty, the auditors, BDO, who are the ones in line to do the next year's set of accounts which is 18-19, they don't want to start doing any work on it if in a few week's time, the government is going to say, 'oh, we are just going to write all those audit's off.' So it's a bit of a Mexican standoff at the moment, and until the government can come up with what they are going to be doing, we are just stuck.”

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

112/23 Motions

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

Motion No. 1

The Council note:

- The efforts of Surrey's Police Officers and PCSOs in keeping local communities safe
- The increased levels of burglary and vehicle crimes and lack of visibility of police on the streets of Spelthorne
- That the office costs of the Police and Crime Commissioner have increased by 50% while the number of PCSOs has been halved

The Council believes that the PCC isn't a necessary role and requires the Leader write to the Home Secretary asking that the role be abolished with the financial savings reinvested into frontline policing and review the role of the Police and Crime Panels.

The motion was deferred to the next Council meeting.

Motion No. 2

Councillor Sexton moved and Councillor Doran seconded the following motion:

Thank you Madam Mayor, I would like to propose that the Council approve for the new leisure centre the name “Eclipse Leisure Centre”.

I am delighted to say that progress on the new Leisure Centre is moving ahead at a great pace and I’m informed by the Contractors that we remain on target to reach practical completion by the Summer of 2024. Once completed it will be the largest Passivhaus Leisure Centre in the world. Not only will it be a model for environmentally friendly, sustainable leisure centres everywhere, but it will also be a beacon for health and wellbeing locally and a flagship centre for the new operator Places Leisure. As such, it is only appropriate that it has a suitably fitting name, and following consultation with Members, I propose to the Council that it should be called “Eclipse Leisure Centre”.

A named vote was requested.

For (15):	Councillors M. Arnold, C. Bateson, S. Beatty, M. Beecher, M. Bing Dong, H. Boparai, T. Burrell, J. Button, J. Caplin, M. Gibson, K. Grant, S. Gyawali, K. Rutherford, J. Sexton, H. Williams
Against (14):	Councillors E. Baldock, M. Attewell, S. Bhadye, J. Boughtflower, L. Brennan, M. Buck, R. Chandler, D. Clarke, N. Islam, M. Lee, A. Mathur, O. Rybinski, B. Weerasinghe, P. Woodward
Abstain (3):	Councillors D. Saliagopoulos, S. Dunn, and L. Nichols

The motion was carried.

Council **resolved** to name the new Leisure Centre, The Eclipse Leisure Centre.

113/23 General questions

The Mayor reported that no general questions had been received.

Meeting ended 22:40.