

## MINUTES OF THE SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting of Spelthorne Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames on Thursday, 24 October 2024 at 7.00 pm

### Present:

#### Councillors:

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

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from Councillors L.H. Brennan, J.A. Turner and B. Weerasinghe

### Councillor M. Buck, The Mayor, in the Chair

#### **88/24 Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

#### **89/24 Disclosures of Interest**

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

Councillor Saliagopoulos declared an interest in Item 8, Local Plan – Resumption of Examination, and stated she would leave the Chamber during discussion of this item.

#### **90/24 Announcements from the Mayor**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“As Mayor of Spelthorne, it is my duty to preside over council meetings and also representing the Council at civic and ceremonial events. Since assuming office as mayor, I have been serving as a dedicated ambassador, engaging with our community and supporting local initiatives. Over the past five months, I had the privilege to participate in a wide range of events and activities within our borough. I am now going to report on the highlights of my key engagements and initiatives undertaken from July to October 2024.

### **1. Local Businesses**

Let me start with local businesses. I strongly believe that fostering growth of small enterprises in our borough is vital to our local economy. Over the past few months, I had the pleasure of officially opening a few new businesses in the borough namely Attic Self Storage in Sunbury, a new facility providing essential services to small businesses and Tadka Indian Restaurant in Staines, a place to explore and enjoy meals with family and friends. I further attended the Spelthorne Business Forum breakfast meeting, where I expressed my gratitude and thank over 50 local business leaders for placing their trust and choosing Spelthorne for doing their business. I also used the opportunity to promote my four nominated charities.

### **2. Job and Skills Hub**

To support our residents to achieving their career goals, I officially opened the Spelthorne Job and Skills Hub to support residents to improve their CV writing, interview skills and find their dream job.

### **3. Promoting Sports and Leisure.**

The last three months, I supported several Sports events. I had the privilege of opening the state-of-the-art Eclipse Leisure Centre in Staines, boasting 200 station gym, 2 swimming pools, sports halls, squash courts and roof top football pitches. Such facility will undoubtedly enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of many residents of Spelthorne.

At another event at Spelthorne Eagles Basketball Club, I was proud seeing children given the opportunity to have fun and learn a new sport.

Furthermore, I supported Staines & Lammas FC, and I had the honour of presenting the winning team with a shield.

I was also involved in presenting awards at the Jump Racing event at Kempton Park.

I had the pleasure of attending the Sunbury and Shepperton Amateur Regatta for their annual regatta competition.

All the above events were fantastic opportunities to celebrate local sporting excellence and also bringing our community together.

### **4. Music in the Park**

After sports events, Spelthorne celebrated their 50th Anniversary with Music in the Park events, which was very successful in the summer. This brought joy and harmony to the residents of our borough, thanks to our dedicated Spelthorne Leisure Department Team.

## **5. Communities and Cultures**

My next engagement was to celebrate our Communities and Cultures. I had the opportunity to attend a variety of cultural and community events, the 17th anniversary of NepalBritain.com, where they celebrated the contributions of the Nepali community to British society. Moreover, I was invited to another significant event in Sunbury, the Nepali Mela which attracted over 3,000 residents of the Nepali & Gurka community of Spelthorne and neighbouring areas. It was a great opportunity to engage with Spelthorne diverse community, reaffirming our borough's commitment to diversity and respect for all cultural expressions.

## **6. Protection of Environment and Nature**

Protection of Environment and Nature is a necessity more than ever, I attended the Surrey Nature Day to raise awareness on the protection of nature within our region. This event highlighted our responsibility to safeguard the environment, and I stressed the importance of collective action in preserving our natural heritage for future generations.

## **7. Youth Empowerment and Recognition**

Another highlight of my activities was to recognize the accomplishments of the young people of Spelthorne. I had the privilege of awarding Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards to nearly 100 participants at the Duke of Edinburgh Award ceremony where I acknowledged the remarkable achievements of our young people. This Duke of Edinburgh programme plays an integral role in shaping the future of Spelthorne's youth, and I was delighted to celebrate their success. In addition, along with the Rotary Club, I recognised around 30 youths awarded with the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), a programme encouraging future leaders to develop their potential.

## **8. Promoting the Arts**

The Arts are an essential aspect of our community identity, and I was proud to open a public mural painting in Staines near Elmsleigh surface carpark. The mural represents the creativity and artistic spirit of Spelthorne, and I hope, it will be appreciated by all who see it.

### **1. Networking with Fellow Mayors**

I've had the opportunity to network with Surrey's Mayors, sharing ideas and experiences, and collectively learning from one another to improve how we serve our respective communities.

### **2. Community Engagement**

I have been deeply involved in various community engagement activities. From joining Citizens Advice Spelthorne's Walk at Lammas Park, to visiting Greeno Centre in Shepperton, I've had the pleasure of meeting and engaging with a number of active volunteers and staff who make a real difference to the lives of our residents. Their dedication, especially in working with the elderly, deserves our utmost respect and support.

### **11. Fundraising for Charities**

Supporting my four nominated charities has been a key focus, and I'm delighted to report on two very successful fundraising events, the Quiz Night and Curry Night were well-attended and brought our community together to raise much-needed funds for these charities. The next event is the celebration of Festival of Lights which is scheduled on 2<sup>nd</sup> November at Stanwell Village Hall and I look forward to seeing all members and their families.

### **12. Twinning**

On international front, reviving our International Relations and strengthening Spelthorne's historical bonds with our twinning towns were one of the most significant initiatives I embarked. I visited Grand Port District Council and worked actively with the Chairman and officers to consolidate our 15 years of friendship. For Melun, I exchanged several emails and had a teams meeting with the Mayor of Melun, his deputy, CEO and associates to rekindle the friendship between our two boroughs.

Looking forward, I am preparing to host the Mayor of Melun and his delegation during their short visit to Spelthorne on the 1st and 2nd of November. The visit will include participation in the Spelthorne Business Award Night, the Festival of Lights, and other activities marking a new chapter in our relationship with Melun. These events will reaffirm our commitment to international friendship and cooperation.

To conclude, the past three months have been an enriching and active period in my role as Mayor of Spelthorne. From supporting businesses and youth, engaging with cultural and environmental initiatives, my focus has been on fostering community unity and promoting Spelthorne's values. As we move forward, I remain committed to representing our borough with dignity and pride and ensuring that all sections of our community are heard, supported, and celebrated.

I look forward to continuing this important work and advancing the interests of Spelthorne in the months to come".

### **91/24 Announcements from the Leader**

The Leader and Deputy Leader made the following announcements:

#### **The Leader:**

It has been 18 months since this Administration was elected to lead Spelthorne Borough Council and it feels right that it is time to reflect on all we have achieved as a Council.

The past year and a half has shown once again that in Spelthorne, we have continued to deliver for our residents and have made significant accomplishments in every area of Council business. At the start of this year we launched our Corporate Plan, setting out the Administration's values and priorities over the next five years. We have defined our goals for the Borough, set around five themes: community, addressing housing need, resilience, environment and Services.

Yes, we face ongoing difficulties as national challenges continue to affect local services, and this will be the case for some time. But our successes clearly point to a strong and all-inclusive leadership and highly dedicated and resilient staff.

In February we delivered our balanced budget for the next year, and I outlined how our careful planning ensured we have sufficient contingencies in place to deliver the services our residents expect from us. Much work has already been undertaken for next year's budget, working collaboratively with Councillor Committee Chairs and by listening to our residents and understanding their needs.

We were delighted to receive over 1700 responses to the Residents' survey this summer. The insights collected have provided us with invaluable feedback on our core services and ideas on how we can do things differently to benefit our community. Compared with the LGA averages, Spelthorne scored particularly well in relation to service delivery, value for money, trust, keeping residents informed, and listening and acting on residents' views".

**The Deputy Leader:**

"We continually evolve as an organisation, looking at new and improved ways to reach our goals. The transformation and smarter working programmes within the Council continue to achieve budget savings or reduce future costs, while improving outcomes.

We are working effectively to reduce our debt, this has included lowering the agreed borrowing limits, ensuring we will leave behind a legacy for our younger residents in Spelthorne. The Administration has also agreed a Development Delivery Strategy, setting out a pathway for achieving housing and regeneration outcomes through Joint Ventures and partnership working.

We've had the responsibility of administering additional Government and Council grants to support our residents this year and have ensured these have been fully utilised. This includes £546,000 from the Household Support Fund and £252,700 in community grants, to support households and organisations meeting the challenges of the cost of living, whilst also maintaining our Warm Hubs for the second year running. We have also co-

ordinated the £1.2 million pounds grant funding received so far to support the Homes for Ukraine programme. This Council has also delivered the largest Local Authority Housing Fund Temporary Accommodation and resettlement housing programme of any district or borough council in the country, providing homes for those in need.

In spite of growing construction and inflation costs, our strong financial management has meant we have been able to continue investing in Spelthorne. This includes the opening of Eclipse, the world's largest Passivhaus Leisure Centre and a decarbonisation programme for Sunbury Leisure Centre - both a significant commitment from this Administration to our Net Zero journey.

Through new ways of partnership working and project management, we are also making sure that external providers and partners not only provide value for money, but also benefit our environment and our economy. An example which is clear for all to see is how we have adapted our street cleaning policy by utilising parking enforcement and collaboration with Resident Associations to provide an efficient and effective street cleaning programme”.

**The Leader:**

“There are so many examples of how we look after the needs of the public. Be that through tackling health inequalities or preventing unsafe and unwanted House of Multiple Occupation practices, the Article 4 Direction agreed in August, gives the Local Planning Authority more powers to consider the impacts of small HMOs on local residents and their families.

We have continued to foster a better sense of engagement between the Council and residents. Encouraging residents to report issues via a refreshed digital reporting tool on our website so we can address concerns quickly as we know by working together, we can make a difference. Initiatives such as the Spelthorne Partnership Assembly (SPA), provide an open forum for residents to share their views and for us to listen and act to make their lives better. A prime example is the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order introduced in May to ban taxis parking in Stanwell Moor and parts of Stanwell has made a real difference to our community. Additionally, our community led approach towards the development of our Design Code project will ensure that our decisions will truly reflect what our residents want for Spelthorne as we know that the people who live and work in our community are best placed to shape its future.

I am also excited to share that we have reached a significant milestone in the progression of the Local Plan, only last week a signed agreement between the Council and the Environment Agency has meant that Cllr Beecher has now written to the Planning Inspector, asking to resume the Local Plan Examinations.

As well as hearing from our residents, earlier this year we heard from our staff who are delivering the strategic priorities that this Administration have

directed. And what do they have to say? Following an all-staff survey, this organisation recorded the highest result for overall satisfaction obtained from any Council since the research programme started in 2012.

It is important to say at this point, I am incredibly grateful to our residents and Officers for working with us and their support in making Spelthorne a Borough to be proud of. We couldn't do it without our community, I am determined to work with residents to make Spelthorne the best borough it can be, so if there's a problem in your area, please let us know so we can sort it out.

This Administration remains committed to speaking up for Spelthorne; and I remain confident that our significant and positive progress will continue”.

### **92/24 Announcements from the Chief Executive**

The Deputy Chief Executive made the following announcements on behalf of the Chief Executive:

“We have received the good news that the Sunbury Walled Garden and Staines, Sunbury and Ashford Cemeteries have all received Gold awards in the prestigious South & South East in Bloom awards. One of our most important roles as a Council is to create beautiful green spaces which enrich the lives of our residents, and it is really nice to know we are doing a good job in this regard. Many thanks and congratulations to the teams in Neighbourhood Services who work tirelessly to ensure these public spaces can be enjoyed to the full; their hard work and dedication is much appreciated and a credit to this Borough.

It has been four years since we declared a climate emergency in Spelthorne and our aim of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030. With this target in mind, we have been running carbon literacy training which involves staff learning about the threats of climate change and pledging two actions that will help reduce carbon emissions in the workplace. I am pleased to say that over 100 employees and several councillors have already received their carbon literacy certificates following the training, and as a result of reaching this milestone, Spelthorne has been accredited as a Bronze-tier carbon literate organisation. Very well done to everyone who has taken part and helped deliver the training.”

### **93/24 Questions from members of the public**

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

#### **Question 1 from Alderman Robin Sider BEM:**

“Each year, The Royal Horticultural Society organises a competition called ‘It's Your Neighbourhood’. It attracts some 4000 entries, and is open to all boroughs throughout the country, and is designed to encourage community groups to promote horticulture and gardens in their respective communities. Last year, the entry of Shepperton Village Conservation Group was graded as

‘Thriving’ This year they were graded ‘Outstanding’ for their work on Lords Bridge Garden which is located at the bottom of Shepperton High Street. To have been in competition with some 4000 entries from all over the country, will the Leader of the council join me in congratulating Shepperton Village Conservation Group on this magnificent achievement.”

**Response from The Leader:**

“Thank you for your question Alderman Sider. Yes, I would very much like to send my congratulations to the Shepperton Village Conservation Group for their award, which I am sure was well deserved.

It is always heartening to hear of residents taking a pride in their community and helping to make Spelthorne a lovely place to live”.

**Question 2 from Alderman Robin Sider BEM:**

“The new leisure centre demonstrates the boroughs ‘pursuance of health and fitness. Will the Leader of the council join me in congratulating the Contractors for their construction, Officers for their diligence in overseeing the project, and those members of the council who had the courage to support this vision several years ago and who have now seen this wonderful achievement come to fruition ?”

**Response from The Leader:**

“The Eclipse Leisure Centre is a fantastic facility for all the residents of Spelthorne. We are very proud of everything that has been achieved and the fact we have delivered the largest, most advanced and energy efficient centres in the world. It represents a significant investment in the health and wellbeing of local people and will serve the community for many years to come. I would like to express my thanks to the CEX, Daniel Mouawad and all Council Officers for driving forward the development of this landmark facility and to all our partners who have worked with us on the project.”

**94/24 Local Plan - Resumption of Examination**

Councillor Gibson declared an interest in this item and stated she would leave the Chamber during the discussion.

Council **resolved** to:

1. Note that the Environmental Agency had signed a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG),
2. Agree to keep the Green Belt allocations in the Local Plan as submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 25 November 2022,



3. Agree to delegate authority to the Group Head of Place, Protection and Prosperity in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, to undertake any further consultation required by the Planning Inspector; and
4. Agree to delegate authority to the Group Head of Place, Protection and Prosperity in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, to prepare a main modification to the Local Plan, for the new policy on ‘Local Plan Early Review’.

**95/24 Waterfront Development Agreement**

It was proposed by Cllr Sexton and seconded by Cllr Bateson to move the exclusion of the Press/Public for Appendices 1, 2 and 3 as they contained exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006 Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because, disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in any lease, contract or other type of negotiation with the tenant or developer, who could then know the position of the Council.

Council moved back into an open session to take a vote on this item. Cllr Boughtflower requested a named vote.

<b>FOR</b>	Councillors Buck, J Doran, Arnold, Bateson, Beatty, Bing Dong, Boparai, Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Dunn, Gale, Geach, Geraci, Grant, Gyawali, Nichols, Rutherford, Rybinski, Sexton, Williams, Woodward - <b>23</b>
<b>AGAINST</b>	Councillors Attewell, Beecher, Bhadye, Boughtflower, Chandler, Clarke, Howkins, Islam, Lee, Mathur, Mooney, Saliagopoulos - <b>12</b>
<b>ABSTAIN</b>	Councillor Gibson - <b>1</b>

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the Heads of Terms for the Council to enter into an Agreement for Lease with the proposed tenant for the Waterfront Site, Bridge Street, Staines-upon-Thames to facilitate the delivery of a new hotel led regeneration on this prime riverside site,
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Leader to agree any minor variations to the Heads of Terms and the

final terms of the Agreement for Lease subject to valuation advice received,

3. Delegate authority to the Group Head of Corporate Governance in consultation with the Leader to finalise and enter into the Agreement for Lease and any other associated documentation in connection with the grant of the Lease to the proposed tenant; and
4. Note the Local Government Act S. 123 'Best Value' valuation undertaken by Cushman and Wakefield in respect of the proposed terms of this transaction.

**96/24 Development Site, Delivery Prioritisation**

Council **resolved** to approve:

1. The introduction of a Development Delivery Strategy,
2. The form and content of the draft Development Delivery Strategy attached to the Committee report,
3. The prioritisation list of development site delivery; and
4. That the prioritisation list of development site delivery shall form part of the Development Delivery Strategy.

**97/24 Change to Treasury Management Strategy – Proposed Draw Down of Pooled Funds**

Council **resolved** to approve the amendment to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 as set out in the Committee report.

**98/24 Gambling Act Policy 2025-2028**

Council **resolved** to approve the Gambling Act Policy 2025-2028.

**99/24 Amendments to the Constitution**

Council **resolved** to approve the changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 of the Committee report.

**100/24 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.

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

**101/24 Motions**

In accordance with Standing Order 16 the Council received one written Notice of Motions.

Councillor Mooney moved and Councillor Lee seconded the following motion:

“Members will be aware that Article 4 is a direction of the General Permitted Development Order which enables a local planning authority to withdraw specified permitted development rights and bring decisions in relation to HMOs to the Planning Committee.

With increasing demand for HMOs and growing complaints from residents across the Borough, this motion is requesting that the existing Article 4 direction in place for specific wards should be extended to the whole of the Spelthorne Borough Council area.”

The Mayor advised the chamber that, in consultation with the Council’s Interim Monitoring Officer, he had decided to implement Standing Order 16.6 of the Council’s Constitution that allowed for a motion to be referred to an appropriate committee to be considered. Standing Order 16.9 of the Council’s Constitution would allow the proposer and seconder of the motion to present their motion to the committee that it was referred to.

Council were advised that there would be no further discussion or debate on the motion.

#### **102/24 General questions**

The Mayor reported that one general question had been received, in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillor Boughtflower:

“Given this Council could be in a better financial position, will the artificial constraints (excluding the 14 stories height limit) on developing the Oast House site be removed, as the extra development potential could bring in significant extra funds. The extra dwellings would also make up our housing shortfall created by the loss of 30 plus dwellings, because of the Environment Agency’s objections and meeting the Government’s aspirations on housing developments.

Will this matter be put on the next available committee meeting agenda to be debated and voted upon?”

The Chair of the Business, Infrastructure and Growth Committee, Councillor Williams, provided the following response:

“The short answer is that we can’t build a fourteen-storey building on the Oast House site because the Oast House is a listed building and you can’t just stick a fourteen-storey extension onto a listed building.

I’m guessing the question really relates to Kingston Road Car Park, which is the land adjoining the Oast House. This requires a slightly longer answer.

In its many meeting on this matter, the Council has for a long time deliberately differentiated between the two sites when planning any development. One is a listed building, which limits what can be done to it. The other is basically a piece of bare land and presents a blank piece of paper on which the Council can draw up its plans.

However, there is at least one false assumption in this question and there are numerous reasons why the Council would not act on the suggestion implied in the question, ie to build higher.

1. It is wrong to assume that a larger development would produce a better financial outcome for the Council. In fact, the history of Spelthorne's construction projects shows quite the opposite. The more each project has grown, the bigger the losses have been,
2. You will recall that one of the first actions this Council took after the election was to stop trying to deliver these construction projects directly itself, instead adopting a model whereby the Council will work with partners who are expert in the field. So in some ways the final configuration is not entirely within the gift of the Council. The most we can do it to exert some control by leasing the land instead of selling it.
3. We need to listen to our residents. One of the reasons for the downfall of the previous administration was its determination to act like a property developer instead of a Local Authority. Residents made it very clear that they opposed the building of high-rise tower blocks, but feel they were ignored. The new administration is putting residents first and trying to limit heights rather than increasing them; and
4. In the ranking of the dozen or so construction projects the Council is considering, Kingston Road Car Park is considered a mid/long term project, meaning 3-8 years away.

You will recall that Councillors recently received a presentation about two new proposals to connect Staines Town Centre to Heathrow terminal 5 with a new railway line, One is called Heathrow Southern Rail or HSR, and is being promoted by a private consortium and is supported by Heathrow Airport Ltd. The second is called Southern Light Rail, or SLR and is being promoted by our own Chief Executive alongside our Head of Place, Protection and Prosperity. Indeed the Head of Place, Protection and Prosperity delivered the SLR presentation to Councillors recently. We expect we might get a decision from central government on which option it supports in the next 3-8 years too, so our proposed timing for any development of Kingston Road Car Park matches the decision making timing on these railway links to Heathrow.

One common denominator in both of these competing proposals is that they will both increase demand for car parking capacity near Staines Railway Station, which is of course only a stone's throw away from Kingston Road Car Park. So, it may well turn out to be that the best use of Kingston Road Car Park is in fact a car park.

I trust that this answers the question”.

**103/24 Exclusion of Public & Press (Exempt Report)**

It was proposed by Cllr Sexton and seconded by Cllr Bateson to move the exclusion of the Press/Public for the following items as they contained exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006 Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because, disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in any lease, contract or other type of negotiation with the tenant or developer, who could then know the position of the Council.

**104/24 Housing Options Document Management System**

Council **resolved** to approve an in-year Capital bid for an Electronic Document Management System for Housing Options

**105/24 Procurement of a New Spelthorne Borough Council Website**

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve a supplementary Capital budget for a new website,
2. Agree to proceed with the procurement of a new website,
3. Authorise the Head of Communications and Customer Engagement to carry out the procurement in accordance with Contract Standing Orders; and
4. Authorise the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into any legal documentation necessary to implement the new contract and approve the proposed spend under the contract.