

**Minutes of the Council
12 December 2024**

Present:

Councillors:

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

Substitutions: Councillors

Apologies: Councillors M. Bing Dong, A. Gale and M. Gibson

In Attendance: Councillors

106/24 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

107/24 Disclosures of Interest

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

Councillor Nichols and the Chief Finance Officer advised that they were Board Directors of Knowle Green Estates.

108/24 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“Before I read out my normal announcements, I would like to take this opportunity to advise the Chamber that this is the last meeting that the Council’s Interim Monitoring Officer, Karen Limmer will be attending as she retiring at Christmas.

On behalf of the Council I want to say a big thank you for all the hard work she has put in to help us all and wish her all the best in whatever she now plans to do in her retirement.

Before I share the report on my various public engagements over the past two months, I would like to announce that I have already completed half of my mayoral year. I would like to take a moment to reflect on the essence of the role as regards to my civic duties and the responsibilities entrusted to me as your mayor.

Serving as Mayor of Spelthorne is both a honour and a privilege , but it is also a profound responsibility. Beside presiding over council meetings, the role of a Mayor carries the weight of representing the community with dignity and respect. In my capacity as Mayor of Spelthorne, I have been encouraging and fostering an environment of collaboration and shared purpose where every councillor irrespective of their political affinity, every officer whatever their role or position, to represent the borough with pride, to uphold the values we cherish and work together as a team for the betterment of our community.

Looking ahead the remaining half, I reaffirm my commitment to serving with upmost respect, and dedication. I pledge to uphold the highest standards of integrity, impartiality and dedication.

This role calls for commitment to our borough and I am proud to present a summary of my main engagements and activities as Mayor of Spelthorne from 25th October to date. These events reflect the vibrancy of our Borough and the dedication of our community members to improving the lives of others.

Before I go through what I have been doing since the last Council meeting, I would like to welcome Annika Ratcliffe from North West Samaritans to the Chamber and let members know of a fantastic initiative from The Samaritans and Men in Sheds. As I am sure we all agree mental health matters and any

project that can help residents is always a positive thing. The Samaritans and the Men in Sheds organisation have recently donated a talking bench for Fordbridge Park aimed at combating loneliness among Spelthorne residents. You can see an image of the bench on the screen behind me. The bench was manufactured by Men in Sheds to encourage conversations between strangers, fostering community connections and to support those feeling isolated to improve their mental health and well being. I am sure that the Chamber will join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to both the Samaritans and Men in Sheds for providing such a beautiful bench.

The Key Activities and Highlights are as follows starting with the:

Surrey Poppy launch

I was honoured to join the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, who is the Patron of Royal British Legion Surrey to launch the Surrey Poppy Appeal in support of the Royal British Legion for their invaluable work in supporting veterans and their families.

Remembrance Day

Furthermore, we at Spelthorne Borough Council observed the Remembrance Day to honour the service and sacrifices of all those who defended our country during the wars in particular the service men and women from Spelthorne. Services were held across the borough on Sunday 10th November and I participated in a Parade in Stanwell followed by laying of wreaths at the War Memorial to pay our respect and honour those who gave their lives in service to our country. Further to that, I attended the Remembrance Day Service at St Mary's Church conducted by Father John Hillman.

The next day, Monday 11 November, a ceremony was held outside the Council Offices to remember and pay tribute to our war heroes.

Festival of Lights at Stanwell Village Hall

A number of community groups in Stanwell joined together to organise a Variety show to celebrate the Festival of Lights at Stanwell Village Hall. The event brought about 130 people together to celebrate our diverse cultural heritage in unity. They also raised funds for my nominated charities.

Spelthorne Business Awards 2024

I was proud to honour the hard work, creativity and achievements of our business community at the Spelthorne Business Awards 2024. Finalists from 17 categories of businesses were recognised for their excellence and exceptional achievements. The overall award winner was Mejuicer and I presented them with The Spelthorne Business Awards 2024. This event celebrated the contribution and commitment of our local businesses and recognised their achievements in various categories.

Civic Business Reception marking the 50th Anniversary of Spelthorne Borough Council.

Another business celebration. The Civic Business Reception was held at Eden Grove and hosted by the Berkeley Group, was another resounding success with insightful addresses by our guest speakers. This event celebrated our 50 years anniversary and brought together key businesses people and other stakeholders from across the Borough highlighting the importance of partnership, regeneration, and community engagement.

Spelthorne in Bloom 2024

Spelthorne has been blooming this year. I observed the contribution of our residents, organisations, schools and businesses whose efforts to transform our borough into a greener and more blooming borough were recognised. The participants were outstanding, they created spaces that not only uplift our streets, parks or gardens but also, enrich the lives of everyone who lives, works, and visits Spelthorne.

Reflection on the Protection of River Thames

I joined Mayors of our neighbouring boroughs to participate in an environment workshop hosted by Royal Borough of Kingston which showcased the work being done to improve River Thames' water quality. It was a good opportunity to reflect on the importance of safeguarding our natural resources for future generations.

Community Visits

As part of my community engagement, I had the opportunity to visit several community groups, namely the Macula Society in Staines and the Spelthorne Veterans, Action for Carers and Shepperton Cancer Patients participation Group. These visits have deepened my understanding of the works they are doing as well as challenges and contributions they make to Spelthorne.

Surrey Poet Laureateship

We have lot of talents in Spelthorne and I was thrilled to attend the end of year showcase organised by Surrey Poet Laureateship to celebrate the creativity and artistic expression of our poets in Spelthorne. They have done a fantastic work by creating a platform and bringing together writers, readers, and poem lovers to explore their crafts and share their words with a wider audience. I was impressed by their commitment to promoting arts and culture across Spelthorne and Surrey.

Art Exhibition by Daphne Clement

It was a pleasure to visit the art exhibition hosted by a talented local artist, Daphne Clement in Shepperton, where I discovered her remarkable works of

art, and her amazing paintings deserved all our appreciation and encouragement.

Recognising our young people

I was proud to recognise and celebrate our young generation. I awarded certificates and badges at the annual award ceremony at the 398 Egham & Staines Squadron RAF Air Cadets and students at Philip Southcote School. Their achievements and dedication are a source of immense pride for Spelthorne.

Awards to our dedicated residents/organisations

I had the honour of celebrating the award of British Empire Medal granted by His Majesty the King to one of our remarkable residents of Spelthorne namely Eric Champion, for his longstanding dedication to Arts and Culture in the community; and also we were proud for two other organisations obtaining the King's Award for Voluntary Service 2024 namely Spelthorne Litter Pickers, for their tireless environmental efforts; and The Revelries, for their cultural contributions.

Christmas Events

The festive season has started and I would like to remind everyone that Christmas is a time of joy and celebration and forgiveness. I participated in a number of events across the borough namely: Christmas service at Salvation Army, Stanwell parade and Christmas Lighting in Stanwell, I joined the residents to at Greeno Centre to celebrate Christmas and had the pleasure of attending a Christmas show by performed by the talented students of Staines Preparatory School. All were great celebrations, and I thanked everyone for their contributions to spreading joy and cheerfulness in the borough.

Fundraising for Charities

Beyond ceremonies and public engagements, I have been championing the causes of our four chosen charities and I am raising funds to support them to continue helping the community.

Conclusion

To conclude, the past three months has been a period of vibrant engagement and impactful initiatives in Spelthorne. As Mayor, I am committed to continue representing and celebrating the people of our Borough, ensuring that our community spirit grows stronger and together we'll make Spelthorne the best place to live.

The Leader made the following announcements:

“Earlier today The Mayor of Spelthorne and I attended the unveiling of the Five Swimmers statue. After looking at all the options, it was agreed that the sculpture’s new home would be in the public community gardens at in Eden Grove in Staines upon Thames. It was so wonderful to see it back to its former glory and speaking to residents tonight at the ceremony I know so many are happy to have it out for storage and in a location where the community can enjoy.

We are dedicated to safeguarding the wellbeing of our residents and are consulting on a proposed Public Space Protection Order to curb antisocial behaviour. The survey is open until 15 December, please take part and share your views.

We can formally announce that public hearing dates for the Local Plan examination have been set. The hearings, which will take place in January and February here in this chamber, represent a positive step toward the adoption of the Local Plan. We know the Local Plan will bring many benefits and protections to Spelthorne and we look forward to having it adopted so we can move onto the ‘delivery phase’ of the Plan to the benefit of our communities.

Six Acer trees have been planted in the Borough as part of this year’s celebrations for the Council’s 50th anniversary. They are beautiful eye-catching trees, and their golden colour is very appropriate for our 50th year. I am sure they will bring a lot of pleasure to residents for decades to come.

We are delighted that responsibility for grass verge maintenance will return to Spelthorne from Surrey County Council from spring next year. We have been lobbying to get back responsibility for this area as many residents have been unhappy with the service levels under Surrey, and we’re thrilled that, from next spring, we’ll be able to reinstate the service that residents expect and deserve.

Earlier this year a competition was held with local schools to design new posters to promote keeping this Borough clean and safe. Over 100 entrants were received and we featured many of the drawings in the sprint Bulletin. I am really pleased to say these have now been turned into banners and signs which are being installed in our parks, streets and hotspots to help us tackle issues including graffiti, dog fouling, speeding and littering. I would like to express my thanks to all the school children who participated in this initiative, and I am sure you will all agree that they look great!

I am very proud of everything that we have achieved together in 2024 and would also like to thank all the staff and councillors at Spelthorne for their hard work and commitment this year. And finally, if I can take this opportunity to thank our residents for all their support, particularly the volunteers who have given their time to help others and create the community spirit which Spelthorne is known for. I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous and healthy 2025.

The Deputy Leader made the following announcements:

I'm proud to highlight two local groups honoured with The King's Award for Voluntary Service. Spelthorne Litter Pickers, with their hundreds of dedicated volunteers, who keep our borough clean and vibrant, and the Revelaires who bring musical joy to care homes and day centres across Surrey, providing a lifeline to those unable to enjoy live performances. Congratulations and heartfelt thanks to both groups for their outstanding contributions.

We have launched a consultation on our approach to housing, homelessness, and rough sleeping in Spelthorne, focusing on access to affordable homes, preventing homelessness, and strengthening support services. This consultation runs until 19 January, and we encourage everyone to have their say.

Applications are open for Community Infrastructure Levy funding to support local development projects. Past grants have funded playgrounds, community building upgrades, and CCTV investments. The deadline to apply is the end of March 2024.

At the Audit Committee at the start of the month we welcomed measures from the Government and National Audit Office to address the backlog of local authority external audits. These reforms will help ease the strain on councils and auditors”.

110/24 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive Officer made the following announcements:

“Spelthorne has received the best score ever recorded by any council on how satisfied staff feel with their 'employment deal' - the balance between corporate support and employee empowerment to deliver their responsibilities - since the LGA / Kinetiq started the survey in 2012.

The staff survey was also conducted alongside a resident's survey which attracted over 1,700 responses. Spelthorne scored particularly well corporately in relation to service delivery, value for money, trust, keeping residents informed and acting on residents' views.

I would like to thank colleagues here at the Council whose hard work, professionalism and drive to deliver excellent services for residents for that is what is behind our positive results. As a learning organisation, we will also be looking closely at the areas where residents feel there could be further improvements.

Spelthorne is a Council that cares for its residents, and I want to recognise and thank you Mr Mayor and Councillors across this chamber for their continued support in driving forward and delivering services that are making a real difference to residents across the Borough.

Constantly developing, adapting and transforming itself, Spelthorne Borough Council focuses on the needs and aspirations of its members and residents, by learning together for the betterment of the whole Borough.

Thank you Mr Mayor”

111/24 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.

112/24 Appointment of an Independent Member of the Commercial Assets Sub-Committee

The Council **resolved** to approve the appointment of Mark Bunney as the Independent Member of the Commercial Assets Sub-Committee.

113/24 Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer

Council **resolved** to approve:

1. To designate Linda Heron as Interim Monitoring Officer from 01 January 2025 for a maximum of 6 months, to be reviewed after 3 months, while a permanent Monitoring Officer and Head of Corporate Governance is recruited and appointed,
2. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make the Interim Monitoring Officer the Interim Head of Corporate Governance as well, for a maximum of 6 months while a permanent Monitoring Officer and Head of Corporate Governance is recruited and appointed; and
3. To note that Article 10.1 of the Constitution provides that it is the responsibility of the Council to designate the Monitoring Officer.

114/24 Council Land and Property Disposals

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the progress of an assets disposals programme of Council owned land and property in order to generate capital receipts; and
2. Not approve the disposal of Ashford Victory Place in Ashford to the preferred bidders as per the recommendation from the Business, Infrastructure and Growth Committee.

115/24 Replacement of Mechanical & Electrical Plant at Sunbury Leisure Centre

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve a net budget of up to £739,000 to undertake improvement Mechanical and Electrical Plant replacement works at Sunbury Leisure Centre,
2. Approve a contingency budget in the amount that equals 10% of the total project cost (shown in Appendix 1),
3. Delegate authority to the Group Head of Assets in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Corporate Policy & Resources Committee to agree requests for expenditure for the contingency budget,
4. Delegate authority to the Group Head of Assets in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Corporate Policy & Resources Committee to appoint the preferred bidder as set out in this report to undertake the Mechanical and Electrical Plant works; and
5. Delegate authority to the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into necessary legal documentation to formalise the appointment of a Contractor.

116/24 Amendments to the Constitution

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

117/24 Motions

In accordance with Standing Order 16 the Council received one written Notice of Motions but this was withdrawn prior to the commencement of the meeting so was not considered at the meeting.

118/24 General questions

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

Five Swimmers Statue by David Wynn

Whilst it is appreciated that the decision to give this Statue to a local Developer has already been made. Its route was through Committee and there we go. Staines Town elected Councillors seem happy to hand it over without an argument and without consulting the residents of Staines.

I was recently invited to its "unveiling" by the Managing Director of the Developer - at their multi storey new high rise building which I declined. He wrote to me to say that "the people will be able to use this as a public space". Really? So that means people can go around the proposed quadrant freely

whenever they want and it's a walk from the High Street? I wonder if the new residents of these high rise flats will be aware of this? According to a specialist website I have seen, the Statue was sold in July 2024? Can the people of Staines be assured that this is NOT the case? The Statue is very valuable and should be insured for some £400,000 or so. Can this Council be assured that as and when it is decided, by this Council on behalf of the people of this borough, the Statue will be placed back in a public space where it belongs. Might I also say that had you asked the residents they may well have come up with a better idea than this. £90 thousand pounds to relocate and embed the Statue? I am sure we would have plenty of ideas where this sort of saving could be made, in order to pay for the Statute ourselves.

It's unknown that a public piece of Art has been gifted to a contentious developer within the confines of its Town.

Again, may the people of Staines be assured that they can reclaim the Statue when a suitable site has been identified?

The Leader gave the following response:

Matters relating to the Five Swimmers Statue were considered at length at the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 9 September 2024 under agenda item 13; the accompanying exempt report and appendices provide all relevant details.

Briefly in response to the points raised:

- Five Swimmers Statue has been loaned to Berkley Homes by way of an art loan agreement for public display only
- The statute has not been sold, gifted or given to Berkeley Homes
- The statue is located in part of the development which can be accessed by the public
- The future location of the statute will be considered when the agreement with Berkley Homes comes to an end"

119/24 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.

120/24 Exclusion of Public & Press (Exempt Business)

It was proposed by Cllr Bateson and seconded by Cllr Sexton to move the exclusion of the Press/Public for the following item 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.

121/24 Solar Canopies Over 'Eclipse' Leisure Centre Car Park

It was proposed by Councillor Beecher and seconded by Councillor Sexton that an additional recommendation be added as follows:

The Climate Change Working Group oversee the project and provide regular updates to the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

Council **resolved** to agree:

1. The recommended tender option be approved,
2. The Council enter into a contract (subject to the required standstill period) with Bidder A,
3. Delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Corporate Governance to enter into the contract and any other associated documentation in connection with the solar car park project; and
4. A supplementary capital estimate of £1.32m for the current year 2024/25.
5. That the Climate Change Working Group oversee the project and provide regular updates to the Environment and Sustainability Committee.