Minutes of the Council
26 February 2026

Present:

Councillors:

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

Apologies: Councillors J.T.F. Doran, L.H. Brennan, R. Chandler and N. Islam

150/26 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 December 2025 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held 11 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

151/26 Disclosures of Interest

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

Councillor Nichols declared that he is on the Knowle Green Estates Board of Directors and Councillor Woodward is on the Spelthorne Direct Services Board.

152/26 Announcements from the Mayor

The Deputy Mayor made the following announcements on behalf of the Mayor:

"Since the Council meeting held in December 2025, I have visited the Queen Mary Sailing Club where I saw the great work that they do for the residents of Spelthorne and held a Bingo and Biryani Night at Stanwell Rose Community Centre that raised an amazing sum of £700 with the help of the Surrey Care Trust which is one of my charities.

I would like to remind members about three forthcoming events that are to be held to help raise money for his nominated charities.

The first event is a History Talk with Nick Pollard that is being held tomorrow at the Staines Methodist Church.

The second event is the Mayor's Soiree that is to be held on 6 March at the beautiful Hazelwood Centre in Sunbury.

There are some tickets still available so if you are interested in a night of great company, entertainment and a delicious buffet please speak to the Mayor's P.A, Maxine Cole.

My third event is an elegant afternoon tea on Friday 20 March that is to be held at Squire's Garden Centre, Upper Halliford from 2.30-4.30pm.

All proceeds from both events will go directly to support the Mayor's chosen charities, helping make a real difference in our local community".

153/26 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

"Local government reorganisation is well underway, with West Surrey councillors holding their second Joint Committee meeting last week. We reaffirmed our commitment to creating a strong, modern council that delivers high-quality services whilst ensuring a smooth transition. During the meeting I also asked about renaming the council to West Surrey and South Middlesex; however, the Chair confirmed that "West Surrey" is set out in the Structural Change Order and any change would be for the newly elected shadow cabinet to consider.

The government is asking areas across the country that are changing how their local councils are organised to say whether they are interested in creating a new type of joint authority. The government sees this as a first step towards having a mayor in the future. Councils in Surrey will look at this idea before the government's deadline of 20 March.

On the 7 May, elections will be held for residents to elect councillors who will operate as a shadow authority and there will be 14 councillors in Spelthorne, across 7 *Spelthorne divisions*. More information about the elections will be available in the spring Bulletin magazine, which *will be* delivered at the end of March. This election is an important opportunity for residents to have their say so please make sure you are registered to vote no later *than* 20th of April.

While HMOs provide important housing options, an excessive concentration in one area or poorly designed properties can create issues. From 13 March, a borough wide Article 4 Direction will be in place, which means the automatic right to convert a normal house into a small HMO is removed and any conversion for 3 or more unrelated people must have planning permission.

This administration is dedicated to ensuring that HMOs do not negatively affect our borough and in addition to the above legislation, we also launched a public consultation on planning guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which closed yesterday. We will keep residents updated on the results of the consultation and any further actions that the Council will take.

The Public Spaces Protection Order introduced in May 2024 is making a real difference in Stanwell and Stanwell Moor. Over 2,000 warnings, 450 Fixed Penalty Notices, and five prosecutions have cut mini cab parking, noise, and anti-social behaviour. Thanks to our enforcement team!

Regarding the Stanwell Hotel, I continue to press the Home Office on residents' concerns. Yesterday I wrote to Alex Norris, the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum asking for clarification on a number of points. Including, confirmation in writing, when the Home Office asylum accommodation contract with the owners of the hotel is due to expire. I am committed to keeping residents informed and ensuring their voices are heard. Updates will follow as progress is made.

Councillors have agreed to move the Ashford BID forward to the next stage. Consultants have been appointed and work on the project has now begun. Funding options are being developed to make sure the BID is affordable and delivers clear benefits for local businesses, alongside early discussions with key partners and businesses. Wider consultation will start at the end of March. A provisional ballot is planned for November to December 2026, with the BID expected to begin in April 2027".

154/26 Announcements from the Interim Chief Executive

The Interim Chief Executive made the following announcements:

“I would like on behalf of Management Team express my thanks to staff colleagues across the organisation who are stepping up to contribute towards the Council’s response and input to the Surrey Local Government Reorganisation transition across nearly 30 different workstreams. Ensuring a safe and legal transition to West Surrey is of key importance. The work activity is beginning to become significant. Equally I would like to thank those colleagues involved in helping to deliver the Improvement and Recovery Plan.

I would also like to highlight that on Monday we will be launching the annual Spelthorne Business Awards. This is particularly significant as probably our last one and will be the biggest event to celebrate Spelthorne’s thriving business sector”.

155/26 Questions from members of the public

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

Preamble and Question from Mr R O’Brien:

Preamble

As a Lender of monies, it is Westminster’s responsibility to run due diligence and underwriting activities, of any loans made to Spelthorne Borough Council. With the anticipated use of these funds being well documented and publicly available, over the years.
Spelthorne Borough Council (up to now), have a sound credit relationship, meeting their annual debt repayment obligations, for the past 8 years.
A Lender holds the risk for default and manages this through interest fees on the principal loan amounts. If similar actions were taken by a Mortgage Lender or Bank seeking to change fixed and agreed loan interest rates, there would be FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) or other Watchdog authorities, protecting the rights of the borrower.
Local Government serves as a vital check and balance on overt Central Government control. With the Courts playing their role to inspect legislation and it’s legal interpretations.
Independent treasury advice was sought from Arlingclose to interpret the legislation and this has seemed fit for purpose these past 8 years. Under these circumstances it should be the Courts to decide grey areas of Government legislation. Not the Government marking their own homework, especially as the financial ramifications for Spelthorne Residents, are so great!!
The Risks to Reward ratio are asymmetrical, (costs of seeking legal counsel are miniscule when compared to the monies and impacts saved from changes to loan repayments).

Question:

Would the Leader of the Council please explain how they've decided to abandon all financial responsibility to their Residents, by not engaging with Legal advice or seeking a judicial review into mid-term loan changes from the PWLB funds?

We have seen the highly unusual approach of Westminster assigned Commissioners interpreting the legal framework of Loans and subsequently imposing an increase per year, of loan repayments, from £22.9million to £56.1million. A rise of 144% and exposing Spelthorne Residents to incredible debt risks.

Response from the Leader of the Council:

Thank you for your question. It relates to two main issues:

- How the Council sets money aside each year to pay off its debts (this is called Minimum Revenue Provision, or MRP), and
- A decision made in November 2025 to reorganise and reduce the Council's loans.

Spelthorne Council borrowed around £1.1 billion to buy investment properties. The plan was that rent and income from these properties to help pay for local services, especially services that the Council are not legally required.

This level of borrowing was extremely high. It works out at over £10,000 of debt per resident, compared with an England average of about £1,300 per person. To make this work, the investments needed to earn at least 8.5% every year just to cover the cost of the loans.

In reality, the property investments performed badly. From 2016/17 to March 2025, they made losses overall and fell in value by about 43**%**. Councils are legally required to protect public money, so losses of this scale meant the situation could not continue without action.

In February 2023, the previous government formally raised concerns about the Council's level of debt.

Then, in May 2025, the Secretary of State issued a legal instruction (called a *Statutory Direction*) requiring the Council to produce an Improvement and Recovery Plan. This required the Council to:

- set aside the correct and lawful amount of money each year to cover its debts (MRP),
- reduce borrowing as quickly as reasonably possible, and
- sell assets where appropriate.

MRP is not a loan repayment. Instead, it is money councils must legally set aside each year from their budget (funded by council tax and other income) to make sure borrowing is being properly dealt with over time. By law, it must be set at a prudent level and follow government guidance.

Independent reviews including those by CIPFA, government inspectors, and the Council's external auditors all reached the same conclusion:

- the debt was too high,
- the amount being set aside for MRP was too low, and
- the situation threatened the Council's long-term financial stability.

In November 2025, the Council restructured its loans, in line with established Public Works Loan Board rules. This reduced total debt by £342 million, nearly one-third of what was owed. Although the new loans have higher interest rates, this will fall accordingly as and when we dispose of the assets.

At the same time, the Council changed its MRP policy so that it now fully meets legal requirements and government guidance.

This approach was discussed with government officials, CIPFA, and the external auditor. The refinancing was carried out using normal processes through the Public Works Loan Board, which any council can use. This means the risk of legal challenge is very low.

Although the refinancing increases costs in the short term, much of this is offset by the £342 million debt reduction, which is spread over ten years (around £34 million a year credited to the budget). As more assets are sold, the financial position will continue to improve.

Overall, these actions do not increase risk for residents. They reduce debt, fix past problems, and put the Council on a more stable and sustainable financial footing for the future.

156/26 Pay Award 2026/27 and Pay Award 2025/26 (back dated award)

Council **resolved** to approve the Pay Award 2026/27 and the Pay Award 2025/26 (backdated award) as set out in the report.

157/26 Pay Policy 2026/27

Council **resolved** to approve the Pay Policy 2026/27.

158/26 Annual Grant Awards 2026/27

A recorded vote was requested on this item.

Councillors Bateson and Doran declared that they would both abstain from voting on this item as they had been members on the Annual Grants Panel.

For	Councillors Dunn, Arnold, Barker, Beecher, Boparai, Burrell, Button, Caplin, Geraci, Gibson, Grant, Gyawali, Neall, Nicholas, Rutherford, Sexton, Turner, Williams – **18 votes**
Against	Councillors Attewell, Buck, Clarke, Howkins, Mathur, Mooney, Saliagopoulos, Weerasinghe, Woodward – **9 votes**
Abstain	Councillors Bateson, Beatty, Bhadye, Bing Dong, Boughtflower, S Doran, Geach, Lee – **8 votes**

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the recommendation of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee regarding the proposed recipients of the 2026/27 Community Grants,

2. Note the significant decrease in grant budget for 2026/27,

3. Note the other support that Spelthorne Borough Council provides to the voluntary/charity sector,

4. Note that any underspend from the Council Grants budget and Better Neighbourhood Grants will not be carried forward to the next financial year; and

5. Note that the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee recommended that there will be no award to sport and arts agencies due to the budget cut.

159/26 Detailed Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

As required by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England) Regulations 2001 (as amended), the Council was required to hold a recorded vote on the substantive Revenue Budget.

For	Councillors Dunn, Barker, Bateson, Beatty, Beecher, Boparai, Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Geach, Geraci, Gibson, Grant, Gyawali, Lee, Neall, Nichols, Sexton, Turner, Williams – **21 votes**
Against	Councillors Clarke, Howkins, Saliagopoulos, Woodward – **4 votes**
Abstain	Councillors Arnold, Attewell, Bhadye, Bing Dong, Boughtflower, Buck, Mathur, Mooney, Rutherford, Weerasinghe – **10 votes**

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026/27 including:

a) The General Fund Budget Requirement of £19.318m for 2026/27
b) Growth and pressures of £1.252m for 2026/27 and
c) Proposed savings of £5.752m for 2026/27

2. Approve an increase in the Council's element of the Council Tax for a band D property by £6.64 per annum for 2026/27 (2.90%), giving a band D Council Tax of £235.50 per year, excluding the precepts from Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner.

3. Notes the following Council Tax increases and precepts as detailed in Appendix I:

a) Surrey County Council has increased Council Tax for a band D property to £1,938.42 per annum, a 4.99% increase on 2025/26, resulting in a precept of £80,014,295.

b) The Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey has increased Council Tax for a band D property to £352.57 per annum, a £15 or 4.4% increase on 2025/26, resulting in a precept of £14,553.420.

c) This results in an overall band D Council Tax of £2,526.49 for Spelthorne residents, an increase of £113.71 (4.5%) per annum.

d) The Spelthorne Borough Council element of the Council Tax is 9.3% of the total bill for Spelthorne residents

4. Approve the calculations for determining the Council Tax requirement for the year 2026/27 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as set out in the Council Tax Resolution in Appendix I,

5. Approve the Fees and Charges for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix H. Please note that the 2026/27 Annual Charge for a 240ltr Green Waste Bin shown on Page 115 of the report should be £80.00 as was agreed at the E & S Committee.

6. Approve the continuation of the complete disregard of war pensions/armed forces pension income from benefit calculations as set out in paragraph 2.22 of the report

160/26 Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2026-2027 to 2029-30

A recorded vote was requested on this item.

For	Councillors Dunn, Barker, Bateson, Beatty, Beecher, Boparai, Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Geach, Geraci, Grant, Gyawali, Neall, Nichols, Rutherford, Sexton, Turner, Williams – **20 votes**
Against	Councillors Boughtflower, Clarke, Howkins, Mathur, Saliagopoulos, Woodward – **6 votes**
Abstain	Councillors Arnold, Attewell, Bhadye, Bing Dong, Buck, Lee, Mathur, Weerasinghe – **8 votes**

Council **resolved** to approve the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2026/27 to 2029/30 as set out in the report.

161/26 Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27

A recorded vote was requested on this item.

For	Councillors Dunn, Barker, Bateson, Beatty, Beecher, Boparai, Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Geraci, Grant, Gyawali, Neall, Nichols, Rutherford, Sexton, Turner, Williams – **19 votes**
Against	Councillors Bing Dong, Boughtflower, Buck, Clarke, Howkins, Mathur, Saliagopoulos, Woodward-
Abstain	Councillors Arnold, Attewell, Bhadye Geach, Lee, Mooney, Turner – **7 votes**

Council **resolved** to approve the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27 including:

1. The Annual Investment Strategy for 2026/27,

2. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2026/27; and

3. The Prudential Indicators for 2026/27.

162/26 Amendments to the Constitution

Councillors Arnold, Attewell, Beatty, Bhadye, Boughtflower, Geach, Gibson, Howkins, Mathur, Mooney, Saliagopoulos, Weerasinghe left the Council Chamber before the remaining items were considered.

Council **resolved** to:

agree the proposed changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 as follows:

1. Updated Contract Standing Orders (Part 4e),

Updated Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee (part 3b),

Amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee (part 3b),

Amendment to Delegations to Officers (Part 3d); and

Amendment to Access to Information Rules (Part 4g) and

2. To authorise the Monitoring Office to update the Constitution as outlined in the report?

163/26 Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

Council **resolved** to:

1. Agree the updated Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy (part 5f of the Constitution); and

2. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution.

164/26 Reports from the Committee Chairs

Council considered reports which outlined the matters the committees had considered since the last Council meeting.

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

165/26 Motions

There were none.

166/26 General questions

The Mayor reported that two general questions had been received, in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillor Buck.

Question 1:

Will the Leader of the Council set out what specific actions Spelthorne Borough Council has taken to alleviate the fear and anxiety felt by residents in Stanwell since Home Office announced plan to place about 100 undocumented young males at Stanwell Hotel, and what concrete steps have been taken to prevent Home Office from placing unchecked young males Stanwell Hotel?

Response from the Leader:

As Leader of the Council, I have repeatedly written to the relevant Ministers requesting that the decision be reconsidered, that the hotel revert primarily to

family use, and that a face-to-face meeting be arranged to discuss these matters in detail. To ensure transparency, the Council has openly published this correspondence on our website and shared updates via social media to keep residents fully informed.

Senior Council officers have met regularly with the Police at the highest level to review policing arrangements and to ensure that the local community is appropriately protected. Instances of criminal activity have involved individuals travelling into Stanwell from outside the area; and these matters have been addressed by the Police and the Courts.

The Government has stated its commitment to ending the use of hotels for asylum seekers. The Home Office is responsible for placing residents in the hotel, and the Council does not have legal authority over its use for this purpose. However, I can confirm that the number of residents currently accommodated at the hotel is at its lowest level and is nowhere near the figure of 100 that has been quoted.

Yesterday, I wrote to Alex Norris, Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, seeking clarification on a number of important points, including written confirmation of when the Home Office asylum accommodation contract with the hotel's owners is due to expire.

I remain committed to keeping residents informed and ensuring their voices are heard and further updates will be provided as progress is made.

In accordance with Standing Order 14.2, Councillor Buck asked the following supplementary question:

"I sent a letter to the Minister and received a direct reply from the Home Office. Can the Leader tell us why my letter has been answered and hers has not?"

Response from the Leader:

Councillor Buck, this is very difficult to answer but at the time of you writing your letter you were a Labour Councillor so maybe this was the reason.

Question 2:

The Council contributes 14% of Council Tax Revenue contributed by hard working taxpayers of Spelthorne to Surrey Police. The latest crime statistics in Spelthorne are shocking:

Serious Sexual Offences – up 11%
Assaults on police officers – up 24%
Drug offences – up by 30%
Possession of knives and blades – up by an alarming rate of 79%

Does the Council have an up to date Community Safety Strategy to protect our residents and what concrete actions has the council actually taken to protect our residents and where is the evidence that any of it is working?

Response from the Leader:

Thank you for your question. While most of the crimes you mention are dealt with by the police, the Council also takes practical steps to help keep residents safe and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

We work closely with the police and other partners and have a clear Community Safety Partnership Plan that sets out our priorities. Each year, we also ask local residents for their views on crime and anti-social behaviour, and we use this feedback alongside crime data to decide what to focus on.

The Council coordinates local safety partnerships and holds regular meetings with the police and other services to identify problem areas and take action.

Some of the key things we do include:

- Enforcing rules in public spaces to tackle anti-social behaviour, which are already showing positive results.
- Running and monitoring CCTV cameras to support investigations, prosecutions, and public reassurance.
- Working with the police on targeted operations in areas with higher crime.
- Delivering education and awareness campaigns on issues like domestic abuse, scams, water safety, and youth safety.
- Supporting youth projects that steer young people away from anti-social behaviour, with plans to expand these further.

These are just some of the ways the Council helps prevent crime and keep our communities safe. More detail is available in our Community Safety Plan on the Council's website.

In accordance with Standing Order 14.2, Councillor Buck asked the following supplementary question:

"Staines is now declared the most dangerous place in Surrey. Since submitting my questions, there has been two instances of stabbings in Stanwell and given that the crime figures are rising at an alarming rate, when can residents expect an integrated plan that generally tackles crime in the Borough?"

Response from the Leader:

"This question does need to be submitted to the Borough Commander. I will forward your question onto him and advise you of his response."

Meeting concluded 22.52