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, 30 April 2026 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillors:

S.A. Dunn	L.H. Brennan	K.M. Grant
M. Arnold	T. Burrell	M.J. Lee
L. Barker	J.R. Boughtflower	G. Neall
C. Bateson	J. Button	L. E. Nichols
S.N. Beatty	D.C. Clarke	K.E. Rutherford
M. Beecher	S.M. Doran	J.R. Sexton
M. Bing Dong	R.V. Geach	J.A. Turner
H.S. Boparai	M. Gibson	H.R.D. Williams

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors J.T.F. Doran, M.M. Attewell, S. Bhadye, M. Buck, J.P. Caplin, R. Chandler, D.L. Geraci, S. Gyawali, K. Howkins, N. Islam, A. Mathur, S.C. Mooney, D. Saliagopoulos, B. Weerasinghe and P.N. Woodward

Councillor Dunn , The Deputy Mayor, in the Chair

34/26 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 February 2026, and the extraordinary Council meetings held on 29 January 2026, 19 February 2026, 26 February 2026, and 17 March 2026 were agreed as correct records.

35/26 Disclosures of Interest

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

36/26 Announcements from the Mayor

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

“In March, I was delighted to host the Spring Soirée at London Irish and attend a number of successful fundraising and community events, including the Music Night at Sunbury Cricket Club and a Rotary event in Shepperton.

My thanks go to all who supported these occasions and helped to raise valuable funds for my chosen charities.

I was also pleased to attend the Spelthorne Youth Awards which was a wonderful evening celebrating the achievements and contributions of our young people.

Other highlights included events at Kempton Park, a delightful afternoon tea at Squires Garden Centre, and the reopening of Thames Court in Shepperton. At the end of the month, I was pleased to support the launch of this year's Spelthorne in Bloom competition which recognises the residents and businesses who are keeping the Borough vibrant and colourful.

This month I attended the Civic Awards, where we recognised the hard work of our local volunteers. Many congratulations to all the recipients. I also had the pleasure of attending a Weybridge Choir performance and an afternoon tea at St Mary's in Thorpe.

It remains a great privilege to represent Spelthorne at these events and to witness the strong community spirit across the Borough."

37/26 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

"Seventeen residents were recognised at the Spelthorne Civic Awards Trust ceremony held at the Council offices for their outstanding voluntary service. The awards celebrate individuals who often work quietly behind the scenes, giving their time and energy to support the community, help those in need, and strengthen life across the borough.
Congratulations were extended to all recipients for their valuable contribution.

The Spelthorne Business Hub has now relocated from Sunbury to the Council offices at Knowle Green. Funded by the Council, the Hub supports local start-ups and small businesses by providing affordable coworking space, expert advice, networking opportunities, coaching, training, and events designed to help businesses grow and succeed. The move reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to making Spelthorne a great place to start and develop a business.

The Spelthorne Business Awards have returned for their eighth year, continuing to celebrate the talent and achievements of the local business community. The awards highlight a wide range of organisations, from innovative start-ups and sole traders to established employers, creative businesses, and high-growth companies. Entries are open until Friday 19 June.

Meanwhile, Surrey Local Government Reorganisation is progressing, with residents due to vote on 7 May to elect councillors to the new West Surrey Council. These councillors will initially serve as a shadow authority, preparing for the new council to take over all local services in April 2027. Their

responsibilities will include setting budgets and priorities, establishing governance structures, and ensuring a smooth transition, while day-to-day services for residents continue as normal. Further information is available on the Council website and in the Spring Bulletin published in March."

38/26 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Interim Chief Executive gave the following announcements:

"I would like to say something about the Council's role in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). I am doing so in light of questions and speculation following the serious incident in Laleham earlier this month.

In general, the Council's powers in relation to HMOs are limited to the regulation of property, not the selection or placement of occupants.

However, with regard to private sector HMOs, the Council's regulatory powers primarily sit in two distinct service areas: **Planning** and **Environmental Health**.

Planning controls apply to whether a property may **lawfully be used** as an HMO. Since 13 March 2026, a borough-wide Article 4 Direction has been in force. This removes permitted development rights for change of use to small HMOs and means that planning permission is now required for all new HMOs anywhere in Spelthorne.

In addition, the Council adopted a **Supplementary Planning Document** (SPD) on 17 March which provides detailed guidance on how planning applications for HMOs will be assessed, including policies to manage and prevent over-concentration of HMOs within local areas, taking account of cumulative impacts on communities.

The **Residential team** in **Environmental Health** regulates HMOs through the statutory licensing regime and enforcement of property condition and management standards.

Licensing focuses exclusively on:

- physical standards of accommodation,
- fire safety,
- amenities,
- overcrowding limits, and
- management arrangements.

It does not extend to approving or assessing individual occupiers.

Asylum accommodation and the Home Office

Questions have also been raised regarding the specific HMO used to accommodate asylum seekers where the individual involved in the recent incident was living.

It is important to be clear that:

- Decisions to use properties for asylum accommodation are taken by the **Home Office**, not the Council.
- The Home Office operates through contracted Property Agents and Accommodation Providers, who identify and manage properties.
- The placement of asylum seekers, and the assessment of any risk or vulnerability of individuals, is entirely a Home Office function.

Where a property is proposed for use as asylum any accommodation in an HMO, the Council's involvement alongside partners is limited and defined:

- The Home Office's Property Agent notifies the Council's Housing Options team about proposed properties, specifically to confirm basic suitability and compliance with housing standards.
- These notifications do not constitute Council approval of the occupants or control over who is placed in the accommodation.

Correction of earlier statement

Members are entitled to accurate information, and I want to address an error that was made previously.

In response to a question about knowledge of the Home Office plans last year a response was prepared.

Initial internal consultation suggested that the Council had not been contacted when the Home Office planned to acquire or use the property in question last year. A statement to that effect was made in good faith on Friday 17 April. Subsequent and more detailed checks – including with partner organisations – demonstrated that this information was incorrect, and a correcting statement was issued on Friday 24 April. That earlier statement should not have been made.

Councillors necessarily rely on officers for accurate advice. In this context, this was a significant error. I have therefore commissioned an external review to understand how this occurred and what lessons must be learned to prevent a recurrence. The findings will be considered and reported appropriately.

Information for residents and members

Following the Council's adoption of new HMO powers earlier this year, an information page was published on the Council's website explaining:

- what constitutes an HMO,
- the respective roles of Planning and Environmental Health, and
- the limits of the Council's powers.

In light of recent events and public concern, this guide has now been updated into a clear question-and-answer format, including an explanation of the Home Office process for asylum accommodation and the Council's statutory role. This is expected to be published on the website tomorrow."

The Deputy Chief Executive made the following statement:

“In my capacity as the Deputy Returning Officer for the Spelthorne ward to the West Surrey Election process, I would like to say a few words, but firstly to clarify in terms of responsibility.

Andrew Pritchard, the Runnymede Chief Executive is the Returning Officer for the West Surrey Elections with overall responsibility for the elections. On behalf of the team, and on behalf of the Returning Officer, I personally apologise for the fact that we had an issue last week with postal votes for the Stanwell, Stanwell Moor and North Ashford Ward. I would like to briefly set out the steps that Spelthorne and Runnymede team have agreed.

To clarify what the issue was, the beginning of the week commencing 20th April, the Spelthorne Elections team identified that the ballot papers in the 937 postal packs which were issued for this ward were instructing voters to mark their preference for no more than once candidate rather than that should have been stated for two candidates.

The Spelthorne and Runnymede team have agreed the following actions:

1. To cancel all the original postal votes for the ward concerned and re-issue ballot papers on different coloured paper to clearly differentiate the votes.
2. To ensure that when the revised ballot papers are returned in the postal vote packs, that the window of the envelope it clearly states that they are re-issued papers. This enables at the postal vote opening process for the team to different and only open the reissued papers.
3. That all returned original papers will be securely retained and quarantined and in case required post the election result.

Candidates and agents were made aware of the issue. We issued communications across our full range of channels, including our website, social media channels, engaged with two resident associations within the ward, and with other local organisations such as a Stanwell events in order to maximise awareness amongst voters that we were reissuing the ballot papers. In the ballot paper revised packs, we have inserted an information sheet explaining to the voter that they need to vote on the new papers and to either destroy securely the original papers on the white paper or return the papers to the council. We immediately engaged the printers of the ballot papers to get them to set up as a priority a new set of Stanwell papers. This resulted in the new batch being printed and collected for delivery by first class on Monday the 27th April. We have had confirmation that households have received the new postal votes packs on Tuesday 28th this week, and we have started to receive back new postal vote packs from voters in the ward.

A communications update was issued on the day that the revised ballot papers were printed, highlighting that the ballot papers were due to be delivered the following day, and we will continue to issue further communications to raise awareness.

At the count, we will explain to observers why the Stanwell, Stanwell Moor and North Ashford ballot papers are in a different colour to those of the other wards.

Any formal concerns about this issue can be raised with the Returning Officer. I would also like to remind people that it is not necessary to take your polling card to the polling station when you are voting as the staff at the station will establish your details. People do not need to worry if they have mislaid their polling cards."

39/26 Questions from members of the public

There were no questions from the members of the public.

40/26 Improvement and Recovery Plan Progress Update

Council considered the Improvement and Recovery Plan Progress report for onward submission to the Commissioners.

Council **resolved** to approve the Improvement and Recovery Plan Progress Report for onward submission to the Commissioners.

41/26 Amendments to the Financial Regulations

Council considered adoption of proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations in the Council's Constitution.

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations (Part 4d of the Constitution) as detailed in Appendix A; and
2. Adopt the revised Financial Regulations and for the Constitution to be amended accordingly.

42/26 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.

43/26 Motions

There were no motions considered at this meeting.

44/26 General questions

There were no general questions submitted for this meeting.