

Minutes of Extraordinary Cabinet

25 January 2021

Present:

Councillor J.R. Boughtflower, Leader
Councillor J. McIlroy, Deputy Leader
Councillor M.M. Attewell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing and Housing
Councillor R.O. Barratt, Portfolio Holder for Compliance, Waste and Risk
Councillor S. Buttar, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor R. Chandler, Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and New Leisure Centre Development
Councillor A.J. Mitchell, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development
Councillor R.J. Noble, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Communications and Corporate Management

Apologies:

There were none.

Councillors in attendance:

C. Bateson, R.D. Dunn, M. Gibson, K.M. Grant, A.C. Harman, V.J. Leighton, L.E. Nichols, R.W. Sider BEM, R.A. Smith-Ainsley.

21/21 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

22/21 Moratorium on developments in Staines-upon-Thames

On 10 December 2020 Council agreed a Motion that Cabinet consider a Moratorium on development in Staines-upon-Thames.

Cabinet was asked to make a decision on:

1. Whether any proposed development of Staines Town Centre by Spelthorne Borough Council should be kept on hold until the Staines Development Framework has been adopted; and
2. Whether Developers of Major applications proposed in the Staines Town Centre should be requested to defer their applications until the Staines Development Framework is adopted.

Cabinet considered a report which set out the background and reason for the Motion and provided a detailed analysis of the severe implications the moratorium would have if agreed.

Cabinet noted that the Council had no power to direct Developers to defer their applications and that the Council had already written to some and had received negative responses.

Cabinet discussed the report and expressed concern that a Moratorium on development in Staines-upon-Thames would have a severe impact on the Council's revenue budget and delivery of much needed affordable housing.

Cabinet agreed that it was important that the Council listen to the views of all residents to ensure the right balance was struck between delivering affordable housing and meeting the needs of the wider community. This would be achieved through an Issues and Options consultation exercise.

Cabinet expressed the view that the Council needed to ensure that decisions were made in an open and transparent way with members having oversight of development projects at all key stages, through a cross-party sub-committee of the proposed Policy and Resources Committee as agreed at Extraordinary Council held on 21 January.

Cabinet agreed that they would like the assets team to critically review the viability of all development projects in Staines-upon-Thames to see if there was scope to amend any of the schemes whilst ensuring they remain financially viable.

Alternative options considered and rejected by Cabinet:

- To put on hold proposed Council developments of Staines Town Centre until the Staines Development Framework has been adopted.
- To proceed, without delay, with proposed Council developments of Staines Town Centre.

Resolved: That a Moratorium on Council schemes in Staines-Upon-Thames should take place until such time as three things take place, with the intention that these will be completed prior to the Annual Council meeting in May 2021;

1. That the Strategic Planning team undertake an Issues and Options consultation exercise for the Staines Development Framework.
2. That a sub-committee, which was agreed at Extraordinary Council on 21 January 2021, is included in the recommendations of the Committee System Working Group to be reported to Extraordinary Council, currently scheduled for 25 March 2021.
3. That the viability of all the developments are reviewed by the assets team.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council will have the opportunity to pause, reflect, realign, and listen to residents' views without the severe consequences a two-year delay would bring.

The Council will reach its decisions with more transparency and accountability and seek to achieve balance between the Borough's housing need and the wider wishes of the local community.

NOTES:-

- (1) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are reminded that under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16, the “call-in” procedure shall not apply to recommendations the Cabinet makes to the Council. The matters on which recommendations have been made to the Council, if any, are identified with an asterisk [*] in the above Minutes.**
- (2) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are entitled to call in decisions taken by the Cabinet for scrutiny before they are implemented, other than any recommendations covered under (1) above.**
- (3) Within five working days of the date on which a decision of the Cabinet or a Cabinet Member is published, not less than three members [one of whom must be the Chairman] of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are able to "call in" a decision;**
- (4) To avoid delay in considering an item "called in", an extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be convened within seven days of a "call in" being received if an ordinary meeting is not scheduled in that period;**
- (5) When calling in a Cabinet decision for review the members doing so should in their notice of "call in":-**

 - Outline their reasons for requiring a review;**
 - Indicate any further information they consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to have before it in order to conduct a review in addition to the written report made by officers to the Cabinet;**
 - Indicate whether, where the decision was taken collectively by the Cabinet, they wish the Leader or his nominee (who should normally be the Cabinet Member) or where the decision was taken by a Cabinet Member, the member of the Cabinet making the decision, to attend the committee meeting; and**
 - Indicate whether the officer making the report to the Cabinet or the Cabinet Member taking the decision or his/her representative should attend the meeting.**
- (6) The deadline of five working days for "call in" by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the above decisions by the Cabinet is the close of business on 2 February 2021.**