

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, 19 October 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillors:

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

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors H. Boparai and A. Gale

Councillor D. Saliagopoulos, The Mayor, in the Chair

81/23 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 July 2023 and the Extraordinary Council meetings held 27 July 2023 and 14 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

82/23 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell and Sexton advised that they were also Surrey County Councillors.

Councillor Nichols advised that he was a Director on the Knowle Green Estate Board.

83/23 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor provided the following announcements to the Council:

“I hope Members have enjoyed a good Summer. It is hard to believe that we are now in Autumn.

Since the last Council meeting my Consort and I have been around visiting the borough and beyond.

As you would expect, as we are so fortunate to have our River communities, we have attended many regattas and have met hundreds of young people and volunteers. We have some really great Rowing and Sailing Clubs in this borough. I particularly recall meeting a 95 year old gentleman who rowed in Lower Sunbury and was actually in the winning boat of the day! I had the honour of meeting Mr Alan Pascoe, ex Olympian, at his beautiful home in lower Sunbury. He opened his gardens for local fundraising. We have been meeting up with the other Mayors of Surrey and attending their Civic Services. I would like to thank my Committee who have been supporting me in the Mayor's Charities fundraising ideas. Alderman Robin Sider, BEM (who is here this evening I see in the public gallery!), Cllr Darren Clarke, and Cllr Michele Gibson. Also to our officers who have kept the wheel of the Mayorial role going. Our first Fundraiser is on Friday 3rd November ‘ a “Greek Night” at Thameside Brewery. If you have never seen a live Greek Band or indeed eaten Greek Food, then please do come along.

Its been an honour to have been invited, and have become, a Honorary Rotarian for Staines. Last week I attended the presentations of the Duke of Edinburgh Award to our young people in the borough. This Council chamber was full to the rafters - the biggest crowd I have ever seen in this Chamber. Parents and families watching the achievements of some very very talented young people in this borough. I also had a group of young Rainbow brownies visit - the evening was spent with the children learning how to put their hand up and speak on the microphone. Its given us an idea and I would like to encourage other schools and groups to come and meet me, and hold our taster meetings in this chamber. We need to encourage our young people to get involved in how the Council works and indeed with a view to becoming councillors in the future!

We visited our twinning town, Melun in France for their “Brie Festival”. I came away from there thinking we need to ensure that this continues - especially for the benefit of our young people with educational exchanges and cultural trips.

Finally, I have been visiting lots of our elderly population in the Care and Nursing Homes in the borough. I would recommend any member this evening, if you have a Nursing Home in your Ward, please go and meet them. You are made so welcome and I promise you they really appreciate hearing from local community leaders. We have a very busy Agenda this evening. I will be providing you with a you a more in-depth report at our December meeting as we are well into the halfway point of my appointment. Thank you very much Councillors and officers”.

84/23 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

“We recently issued our formal response to the Ministerial letters which we received from Rachel Maclean MP which instructed the Council to not withdraw its Local Plan from Examination. Our letter to the Minister explained that we do not believe intervention from Government is appropriate in this case and addressed the issues raised in her letter. The Council has secured agreement for a further pause in the process from the Local Plan Inspector and now awaits a response from the Minister. Whilst we anticipate the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) this Autumn, we are considering what other amendments and modifications may be required to the draft plan, so we can get a plan that is absolutely right for our Borough and its future.

The Spelthorne Civic Awards Trust is asking for nominations for individuals who have given a minimum of 12 years' voluntary service in the Borough so that they can be considered for a Civic Award. Candidates do not have to live in the Borough but their voluntary work should have benefitted Spelthorne residents. More information is on our website.

Surrey Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner are teaming up to give local residents the chance to have their say on policing in their local communities from 6.30 - 8.30pm on 1 November at Staines Rugby Club. Residents will have the opportunity to put their questions to the Commissioner Lisa Townsend, Chief Constable Tim De Meyer and the Inspector responsible for local policing in Spelthorne, Borough Commander Matthew Walton.

A new Customer Portal has been launched to allow residents to manage all their council accounts, requests, applications and payments in one place at a time that suits them. Creating an account saves residents time as their contact information is pre-filled on the forms and they can view the progress of previous requests. They can also sign-up for alerts for a range of services including bin collections and planning applications.”

85/23 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:

“I should like to place on record that I am particularly proud of the ‘Team Spelthorne’ achievements over the last 12 months, protecting and supporting our most vulnerable residents, as recently detailed in the issuing of an Annual Report.

On top of the wide array of excellent services we provide, Team Spelthorne has successfully supported over 3,000 residents with hospital discharges, prevented over 200 cases of homelessness and established a Food & Welfare Network in close partnership with our voluntary sector and food banks. Our ‘cost-of-living crisis’ work has encompassed setting up warm hubs

at our community centres and delivering over 3,000 activity sessions to reduce social isolation across the borough.

Our work was externally recognised when this authority received its report from the Local Government Association in February 2023. Our Corporate Peer Challenge Review acknowledged the ‘brilliant’ exemplary work that we undertake to keep our communities at the heart of everything we strive to do.

Spelthorne Borough Council has received a number of awards, including being named the All-England winner of the Future Ready category at the Federation of Small Businesses Local Government Awards. We were also shortlisted at the LGC Awards and at the MJ Awards for our work in tackling homelessness.

Spelthorne is a Council that cares for its residents, and I want to recognise the commitment and hard work of colleagues, volunteers, and partners over the past year, and thank Councillors for their continued support in driving forward and delivering services that are making a real difference to residents across the Borough.

Turning to a poignant annual event that provides an opportunity to reflect on the service and sacrifice of all those who have defended our freedoms and protected our way of life, Spelthorne Borough Council will be marking Remembrance Day on Friday 10 November at 11am and are holding a short ceremony outside the Council Offices. Madam Mayor, Councillors and local dignitaries are invited to attend along with colleagues.

Then on Sunday 12 November, Councillors and Officers will be representing the Borough at Remembrance Services in Ashford, Laleham, Littleton, Shepperton, Staines, Stanwell and Sunbury. Details of all these events are on our website”.

86/23 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 from Alderman Robin Sider:

“In this years South and South East in Bloom competition, both the Sunbury Walled Garden and the Cemeteries of Ashford, Sunbury and Staines each received a Gold Award in this fiercely contested and prestigious competition.

Will the Leader of the Council join me in congratulating Neighbourhood Services on these magnificent achievements and share my view that such awards clearly demonstrate the pride and commitment that council employees have to our Borough”

Response from the Leader:

“Alderman Sider, I would like to thank you for your question.

Yes, I would join you in congratulating Neighbourhood Services on their success in the South and South East in Bloom Competition. Such a great achievement and I know that the residents value the beautiful communal places that we have in our Borough. It is testament to our officers’ dedication and pride that they take in maintaining these areas and I am pleased that they have been given the recognition that they deserve”.

Question from Emma Pattinson:

“Having read the consultation report which was commissioned to support the Bathing Water Designation application to DEFRA for Shepperton Open Water Swim, will Spelthorne Council write a letter in support of that application?”

Response from Councillor Beecher, Chair of Environment & Sustainability Committee

“Thank you for your question, Ms Pattinson

This Council appreciates the benefits that open water swimming can bring to individuals and Shepperton Open Water Swim’s desire to designate Ferris Meadow Lake as bathing water for that purpose. Any such designation cannot, however, be separated from the River Thames Scheme which, as Councillors know, is a vital flood alleviation project aimed at protecting thousands of Spelthorne’s residents and businesses, from Staines to Sunbury. That Scheme will also be a significant green infrastructure project bringing leisure and biodiversity benefits to the Borough along its length. The Scheme is now fully funded and is moving towards a Development Consent Order Process (for planning permission) as it is deemed to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

Earlier this year, the River Thames Scheme was made aware of concerns regarding the proposed flow of the Spelthorne flood alleviation channel through Ferris Meadow Lake before entering the River Thames, and the effect this would have on open water swimming which has greatly expanded since the COVID pandemic. Whilst the number swimming in the lake has increased, it is our understanding that just 6.5% of those people live in our Borough, with other users coming from areas such as Elmbridge, London Boroughs and as far away as Portsmouth. In view of the concerns raised, the Scheme is currently undertaking a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of re-routing the Spelthorne section of the flood alleviation channel to avoid fully or partially connecting through Ferris Meadow Lake.

Until the results of the feasibility study are known we not in a position to know how any such diversion could affect our wider Borough and whether this would result in any significant additional costs to the Scheme. If Spelthorne was to support the designation of the lake as bathing water prior to the

outcome of that study, there is a risk that partners might look to this Council to increase its contribution to cover any additional costs of any associated diversion route needed. Taking this into account, together with the vital importance of the wider Scheme to protect this Borough's residents from flooding, it would be prudent for this Council to wait for the outcome of the feasibility study (which is expected in the first quarter of 2024) and a full assessment of the proposals for a Bathing Water Designation before we make any formal comment on whether we would support any such proposal. Once this information is received Councillors in this chamber will be in possession of all the information needed to debate this issue and respond more effectively to any application to DEFRA in relation to the Bathing Water Directive and whether we can offer support for such an application”.

87/23 Addendum to the 2023-24 to 2026-27 Capital Programme for Suspension of the Direct Housing Projects

Council considered a report that sought approval of the revised Capital Programme for 2023-24 to 2026-27.

It was proposed by Councillor Gibson, seconded by Councillor Sexton that the recommendations be amended to:

1. Council is asked to approve the proposed revised Capital Programme for 2023-24 to 2026-27, as set out in Appendix B, for suspension of the direct housing projects;
2. The recommendation is to approve the revised 4-year Capital Programme, and only that. That is a reduction of £283.4m in net capital spend over the 4 years from 2023-24 to 2026-27 from £338.4 million (net) to £55.1 million (net); and
3. Any transfers of capital to revenue will be agreed at a later date.

Council **resolved** to agree the amended recommendations.

Council **resolved** to approve the revised Capital Programme for 2023-24 to 2026-27.

88/23 Addendum Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023-24

Council considered a report that sought approval to revise the Authorisation Limit and the Operational Boundary within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

Council were asked to note the updates to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023-24 as set out in the report.

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the Authorisation Limit being reduced from £1,450m to £1,167m;
2. Approve the Operational Boundary being reduced from £1,350m to £1,067m; and
3. To note the update to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023-24 as set out in the report.

89/23 Members Allowances Scheme 2023-2024

Council considered a report that sought approval of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023-24, as set out in the report.

Council **resolved** to approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023-24.

90/23 Grants Funding Panel

Council considered a report that sought approval to include the Grant Funding Panel and the associated Terms of Reference within the Council's Constitution.

Council **resolved** to:

1. Approve the inclusion of the Grants Panel with the Terms of Reference as agreed by the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee in the Council's Constitution,
2. Approve delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee to agree the names of those members on the Grants Panel; and
3. Approve that the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to nominate a substitute from the panel to cover for them in their absence.

91/23 Reports from the Committee Chairs

Council considered the Chair's reports that outlined matters Committees had considered since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Nichols asked the following question of Councillor Williams, Chair of Economic Development:

"Can we be confident as councillors that the changes to the Local Enterprise Partnership Scheme due April 2024 is not going to cause detriment to businesses in Spelthorne?"

The Chair of the Economic Development Committee replied:

“Unfortunately, I am unable to give any reassurance at the moment, we will have to wait and see”.

Council **resolved** to note the Chair’s reports that outlined the matters the Committees had considered since the last Council meeting.

92/23 Motions

In accordance with Standing Order 16 the Council had not received any written Notices of Motions.

93/23 General questions

The Mayor reported that no general questions had been received.

94/23 Exclusion of Public and Press (Exempt Business)

It was proposed by Councillor Sexton, seconded by Councillor Bateson and resolved that the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following items, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose 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 being able to undertake even-handed negotiations and finalising acceptable contract terms.

95/23 Leisure Operator Procurements

Council considered a report that:

1. Asked Council to note the full evaluation process to identify the preferred Operator (Bidder B) as the Leisure Centre Operator,
2. Sought approval for Council to enter into a management agreement (subject to the required standstill period) with Bidder B to manage Sunbury Leisure Centre and the new Spelthorne Leisure Centre on behalf of the Council for a period of 10 years from the opening of the new centre and with the option (at the sole discretion of the Council and subject to satisfactory performance) to extend the contract for a further period of 5 years; and
3. Sought approval to authorise the Group Head of Assets to agree terms in respect of any necessary leasehold arrangements with the Preferred Bidder in respect of the new Spelthorne Leisure Centre and Sunbury Leisure Centre and to authorise the Group Head Corporate Governance to enter into a contract with the Preferred Bidder.

Council **resolved** to note recommendation No. 1 and approve recommendations 2 & 3 as outlined in the report.