

**Minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
3 June 2024**

Present:

Councillor J.R. Sexton (Chair)
Councillor C. Bateson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

M. Beecher	R.V. Geach	N. Islam
M. Bing Dong	M. Gibson	L. E. Nichols
J. Button	K.M. Grant	O. Rybinski
S.M. Doran	K. Howkins	H.R.D. Williams

Apologies: Councillors J.R. Boughtflower and M.J. Lee

57/24 Apologies and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors Boughtflower and Lee.

58/24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2024 and continued on 23 April 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

59/24 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Sexton advised that she was also a Surrey County Councillor.

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

60/24 Questions from members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

61/24 Terms of Reference

The Committee considered their updated Terms of Reference following a change to the structure of Committees agreed by Council in April 2024.

The Committee **resolved** to note the updated Terms of Reference.

62/24 Minutes of Former Committees

The minutes of the Administrative Committee meeting held on 8 February 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Economic Development Committee meeting held on 11 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Neighbourhood Services and Enforcement Committee held on 21 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Gibson raised concerns about the accuracy of the information provided in the minutes for the Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 20 May 2024. Approval of the minutes would be deferred to the next meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee while the points raised were investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

63/24 Spelthorne's Corporate Health and Safety Policy (2024-2026)

The Committee considered a revision of the Health and Safety Policy from the Principal Health, Safety and Insurance Officer. The Policy was reviewed biennially and had been re-formatted and updated to reflect changes in how health and safety practices were monitored and delivered by the Council.

The Committee noted the number of Unison representatives who were also health and safety representatives and encouraged the Principal Health, Safety, and Insurance Officer to recruit further Unison members to become representatives. The Committee confirmed that the policy covered members of the public who attended the Council offices, though tenants in Council owned properties were covered under a separate policy.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Adopt the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, and
2. Authorise the Chief Executive to agree minor variations to the adopted Health and Safety Policy.

64/24 2023-24 Revenue carry forward to 2024-25

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Accountant regarding two requests to carry forward revenue expenditures from 2023-24 to 2024-25.

The Committee queried if there were other ways the monies could be used, but it was confirmed the carry forwards requests would need to be fully spent by the end of June. If the Committee were to refuse the carry forward requests, the monies would go into a general fund for future use by the Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to approve the requests for £30,983 of 2023-24 revenue expenditure to be carried forward to 2024-25.

65/24 Revenue Outturn Report 2023-2024

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Accountant on the quarter four revenue outturn as at 31 March, including an addendum. The Chief Accountant recommended the underspend be allocated to reserves ahead of the predicted future budget deficit. The addendum had been provided as after agenda publication, it was identified that there was a reduced surplus due to a coding issue.

The Committee noted that it appeared a significant portion of the underspend related to staff vacancies, and queried if services had been affected. The Chief Accountant confirmed that temporary staff were being used to fill vacancies so that there was minimal, if any, impact on services. Further information was provided to the Committee on recruitment incentives and measures being considered to address staff vacancies. The Chief Accountant confirmed that if the Committee approved the transfer to reserves, the funds were not earmarked for specific projects, but the expectation was the funds would be used to cover future deficits.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Note a reduction in the surplus at outturn from £10,875k to £10,604k, a difference of £271k for the year to 31 March 2024,
2. Approve a reduction of £271k in the transfer to the Sinking Fund Reserves
3. Approve the following transfers to reserves
 - a. £3,000k to Business Rates (National Non-Domestic Rates) Equalisation Reserves
 - b. £6,604k to the Sinking Fund Earmarked Reserve
 - c. £1,000k to the General Fund Reserve
 - d. £1,400k S106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income received to reserves
 - e. £1,600k to Earmarked Revenue Reserves in respect of the unspent Afghans support grants

66/24 Capital Outturn Report 2023-2024

The Committee considered a report on the 2023-24 Capital Outturn from the Chief Accountant. The Chief Accountant highlighted projected underspend due to projects reaching completion, and two projects had been deferred and would be subject to future reports to the Committee. Other projects would be removed completely.

The Committee noted that a number of projects on the Capital Programme flagged for removal were historic. If the projects were to be revived, they would need approval by the relevant committee to proceed. Other projects were on hold while the Community Lettings Policy was reviewed.

The Chief Accountant acknowledged the underspend in the report relating to Benwell Phase One had been queried by a member of the Committee and those points raised relating to approved budgets and initial proposals for the project were currently being investigated.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Note the £1,608k projected underspend against its Estimated Capital Programme for 2023-24, as at 31 March 2024, and
2. Recommend to Council that the Capital Projects totalling £2,990k are removed from the 2024-25 Estimate Capital Programme.

67/24 Appointments to Outside Bodies 2024-25

The Committee considered nominations from political group leaders to outside bodies. The Council makes appointments to a number of organisations that are independent from the Council but have an impact on its service areas, and the appointments to these organisations help the Council maintain an effective partnership with them.

Councillor Nichols requested that his name be removed from consideration for the Surrey Environment Partnership.

Two nominations had been received for Ashford and St Peters Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Councillor Sue Doran, and Councillor Paul Woodward. A vote was taken, and the Committee **resolved** to appoint Councillor Sue Doran as the representative to Ashford and St Peters Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Two nominations had been received for the Heathrow Community Engagement Board: Councillor Sean Beatty, and Councillor Suraj Gyawali. A vote was taken, and the Committee **resolved** to appoint Councillor Sean Beatty as the representative to Heathrow Community Engagement Board.

Two nominations had been received for the Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group: Councillor Sean Beatty, and Councillor Paul Woodward. A vote was taken, and the Committee **resolved** to appoint Councillor Sean Beatty as the representative to the Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group.

Two nominations had been received for the Surrey Environment Partnership: Councillor Tony Burrell, and Councillor Lisa Brennan. A vote was taken, and the Committee **resolved** to appoint Councillor Tony Burrell to the Surrey Environment Partnership.

Two nominations had been received for the Surrey Traveller Community Relations Forum: Councillor Karen Howkins, and Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos. A vote was taken, and the Committee **resolved** to appoint Councillor Karen Howkins to the Surrey Traveller Community Relations Forum.

The Committee **resolved** to approve the remaining representative appointments to Outside Bodies for the 2024-25 municipal year, as proposed by group leaders.

68/24 Membership of the Commercial Assets Sub-Committee

The Committee received the nominations from political group leaders for members to sit on the Commercial Assets Sub-Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to agree the membership of the Commercial Assets Sub-Committee.

69/24 Financial Reporting Working Group

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive to re-establish the member working group focused on financial reporting. The working group would work with finance officers to help them identify how reports could be made easier to understand for councillors, and ensure key points were effectively summarised. It was suggested that at least three members be appointed as part of the working group.

A member of the committee noted the working group met during the day which made it difficult for those councillors who worked to attend.

The Committee nominated Lawrence Nichols, Howard Williams, Michele Gibson, John Doran, and Sean Beatty to be members of the working group focused on financial reporting.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Approve the re-establishment of a Member Working Group focused on Financial Reporting
2. Agree the Terms of Reference for the Working Group
3. Agree to appoint Councillors Lawrence Nichols, Howard Williams, Michele Gibson, John Doran, and Sean Beatty to sit on the working group.

70/24 Forward Plan

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan for future committee business.

71/24 Exclusion of Public & Press (Exempt Business)

It was proposed by Councillor Beecher, seconded by Councillor Bateson and **resolved** to exclude the public and press for the discussion of this agenda item, 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 finalizing acceptable contract terms.

Meeting adjourned at 21:00.

Councillor Rybinski left the meeting at 21:03.

Meeting reconvened at 21:07.

72/24 Annual Investment Strategy 2024/25

The Committee received the Asset Investment Strategy which set out the priorities and key focuses for proactive management of the Council's Investment and Regeneration Portfolio during 2024/25. The Asset Management Consultant presented the strategy which included the business plans for each asset and focused on the approaches taken for each asset to meet strategic objectives.

The Committee requested further commentary on specific tenants and plans for sites which was provided.

The Committee **resolved** to note the content of the Asset Investment Strategy which sets out the priorities and key focuses for proactive management of the Council's Investment and Regeneration Portfolio during 2024/25.

73/24 Local Authority Housing Fund Acquisitions

The Committee considered a recommendation from the Development Sub-Committee on the acquisition of properties through the Local Authority Housing Fund.

The Committee expressed their support and thanks to the team involved in the acquisitions through the fund.

The Committee **resolved** to make a recommendation to Council for the approval of acquisitions funded with the assistance of the Local Authority Housing Fund.

74/24 Council Medium Term Financial Support of Knowle Green Estates (KGE)

Due to the presence of external attendees, the Chair used their discretion for the Committee to hear this item before item 7 on the agenda.

It was proposed by Councillor Bateson, seconded by Councillor Williams and **resolved** to exclude the public and press for the discussion of this agenda

item, 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 finalizing acceptable contract terms.

The Committee received a presentation from the non-executive directors of Knowle Green Estates and considered the information set out in the report and the addendum.

The Committee **resolved** by majority to

1. Note the corrected figures and clarifications in the addendum to the report.
2. Make recommendations to Council as set out in the report.

In accordance with Standing Order 21.6, Councillor Nichols requested his abstention be recorded.

75/24 Urgent Actions

The Committee received those urgent actions which had been taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader since the last Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 15 April 2024.

The Committee **resolved** to note the Urgent Actions.

76/24 Corporate Policy and Resources Chair's Updates

There were none.

Meeting ended 21:42

77/24 Actions Arising from Meeting

The following actions arose from the meeting:

- The Committee would be provided with further information about recruitment of Health and Safety Officers who were also Unison members
- The Committee would be provided with further information regarding the portacabins mentioned in the Capital Programme
- The Committee would be provided with further information related to Communications House, the Summit Centre, and the Elmsleigh Centre.
- The Committee would be provided with a list of properties acquired through the Local Authorities Housing Fund to date

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