

**Minutes of the Council**  
**24 April 2025**

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

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

**Apologies:** Councillors M.M. Attewell, R. Chandler, D.L. Geraci, A. Gale, S. Gyawali, S.C. Mooney and D. Saliagopoulos

**30/25 Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 February 2025 and the Extraordinary Meetings held on 18 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

**31/25 Disclosures of Interest**

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

## **32/25     Announcements from the Mayor**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“I am delighted to share a few highlights from my recent engagements around the Borough. But before I begin today’s announcement, I would like to pause for a moment of reflection and remembrance.

On the 21st of April, the world lost a deeply spiritual and guiding figure with the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. As Mayor of Spelthorne, and on behalf of our Borough, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community and to all those whose lives have been touched by his words, his humility, and his unwavering commitment to peace, compassion, and justice.

Pope Francis was not only a religious leader but a moral voice for the world—a voice that reminded us of the power of love, forgiveness, and unity in a time when these values are needed most.

Let us hold a moment of silence in his honour. Would you please all stand.

### **The Chamber observed a minute’s silence**

Thank you very much and will you please all be seated. May the Pope’s legacy continue to inspire us in our work and in our communities.

I have the pleasure to report on my activities since our last meeting. Over the past months, I have continued to actively engage with residents, community groups, and organisations within and outside our boroughs fulfilling my civic responsibilities and promoting the values of service, unity, and pride in the Borough.

### **Civic Awards Ceremony**

Let me begin with a very special occasion, the Civic Awards Ceremony, where I had the privilege of recognising 18 outstanding individuals who have gone above and beyond to serve our community. The Civic Award remains the highest distinction conferred by the Spelthorne Civic Award Trust and the event celebrated a broad range of contributions – from volunteering and neighbourhood support to youth engagement and environmental stewardship.

### **King’s Award for Voluntary Service**

I also had the great pleasure of hosting the King’s Award for Voluntary Service presentation for our brilliant Litterpickers Group. Alongside the Surrey Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff, we honoured the group’s tireless work in keeping Spelthorne clean and beautiful. A well-deserved recognition. Tomorrow evening another well deserving group from Spelthorne, The Revelaires will be awarded the Kings Award for voluntary service this year.

### **Supporting the Business Community**

New businesses in Spelthorne are growing, and in view to supporting Local Business Community, I was delighted to open two new and exciting ventures in our Borough. The first one is

- Walk on the Wild Side, a Reptile Kingdom in Ashford Church Street
- The Magpie pub in Sunbury following a full refurbishment.
- And the brand-new £1.2 million Stanwell Community Centre, managed by Stanwell Events—a fantastic space that will benefit local residents for years to come.

### **Celebrating World Poetry Day**

World Poetry Day was another cultural highlight. In partnership with the Surrey Poets Laureateship, we celebrated “*Spelthorne: 50 Years of Memories*”. It was moving to hear poems from schools, local poets, and residents, and I was delighted to award prizes to the most touching and creative entries.

### **Staines Pancake Race.**

Next was the Staines pan cake Day, Spelthorne businesses were well represented at the Pancake Race in Staines Town Centre, organised by the Rotary Club. Our Spelthorne council teams participated and nearly won! And I must give credit to both teams, Maxine and Hind did very well. Also, I discovered that our Deputy Chief Executive isn't just a financial expert, he is quick runner too!

### **International Women's Day**

To mark the International Women's Day, I joined the Women at Work Group for an inspiring celebration of women's achievements and their vital role in our community. It was a powerful and uplifting event and it was a pleasure to be part of such a positive and empowering gathering.

### **Spelthorne in Bloom**

Another wonderful initiative I was proud to launch is Spelthorne in Bloom, which is now underway. I look forward to seeing the creative floral displays brightening up the Borough as we head into summer.

### **Fund Raising Activities**

I also had the pleasure of enjoying afternoon tea at Squire's Garden Centre, which was a wonderful opportunity to fundraise and connect with residents in a warm and relaxed setting.

### **Elvis Night**

We hosted an Elvis Night to fundraiser in support of my nominated charities, and it was a great evening of music, laughter, and generosity. Thank you to all who attended and continuing supporting my nominated charities

## **Engaging with Neighbouring Boroughs**

I was pleased to represent Spelthorne at several events beyond our Borough. These included charity events hosted by the Mayors of Runnymede and Elmbridge, as well as a wonderful Civic Day in Epsom and Ewell. These occasions help to strengthening our regional ties and building friendships with neighbouring councils, thus strengthening the bonds between our communities.

**Looking Ahead to some key upcoming events**, there are a few major events I would like to share with you:

- On 25 April, we will present the Kings Award for voluntary service to the Revelaires.
- On 26th April, we hold a civic ceremony to celebrate the 35 years of twinning with Melun and 15 years of twinning with Grand Port. It will be a proud moment of international friendship. In the evening, we are hosting the Mayor's Ball, a celebration of our community, our charities, and our partnerships—including our twinning ties with Mauritius and France.
- On 08 May, we will mark VE Day with a ceremony at the Council Offices at 10.45am honouring those who served and sacrificed for our freedom.
- On 15th May, we will gather for the Mayor's Race Night at Kempton Park Racecourse, a fun-filled evening at the Panoramic Restaurant—all in support of my chosen charities.
- And on 18th May, I invite you all to join me for the Mayor's Charity Walk—a great way to get active and support good causes across Spelthorne.

It has been a vibrant few weeks. So, as you can see, it has been a busy time, but also a truly rewarding one. Thank you to everyone who continues to give so much to our community. It is a privilege to serve as your mayor, and I look forward to the weeks ahead.

## **33/25     Announcements from the Leader**

The Leader made the following announcements:

It is with great sadness that I share the passing of former Ashford Common Councillor Bob Noble, who was a friendly, hardworking and dedicated councillor. On behalf of the council and councillors, I would like to send my heartfelt condolences to his family and friends.

I continue to meet with my fellow Leaders from Surrey's district and borough councils to review the findings from the ongoing work into local government reform in the county. Like Spelthorne, the majority of district and borough councils support a three-unitary model, agreeing a preferred geography of Spelthorne to join with Runnymede and Elmbridge.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape local government and results of a recent Surrey wide resident's survey are expected to be published soon and will form part of the evidence in the proposal. Unfortunately, Surrey County Council continues to explore a two-unitary approach. Both the two and three-unitary options will be included in the final report, which will be submitted to government in May. Residents have made it clear: they want decisions made close to the people they impact and by councils that understand their communities.

I would like to reinforce the message that the Council has agreed to an important positive change which affects Houses of Multiple Occupation across the Borough. The Article 4 Direction for all wards in Spelthorne will come into effect in under a year, which means that smaller sized houses will require planning permission. Although for Staines Ashford North & Stanwell South, and Stanwell North wards, it will come into effect earlier, on 29 August. It will ensure that issues such as parking, noise, and impact on the character of the area are considered before a planning decision is made.

In responses to residents' concerns about antisocial behaviour we are introducing a Public Space Protection Order, this will cover issues such as possession of catapults, use of face coverings such as masks and balaclavas and antisocial use of bicycles, e-bikes, skateboards and e-scooters. This PSPO will give the Council and Police more powers to tackle some of the behaviours that have become a problem in recent years. While not a complete solution, it will provide the Council and the police with more powers to address these challenges.

Earlier this month I had the honour in attending the Spelthorne Civic Awards, where we recognised 18 residents for their voluntary service in the Borough. Collectively they have contributed more than 200 years of service to the Borough and represent the best of our communities. I think we can all agree that the volunteers are an inspiring testament to the community spirit in Spelthorne and this recognition is well deserved.

We are also celebrating the outstanding work of two exceptional volunteer groups. The Spelthorne Litter Pickers were formally presented with their King's Award by the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey last week. This Friday, the Revelaires, (a local music and entertainment group), will also be presented with their award at the Riverside Arts Centre. Our thanks and congratulations go to both groups for their efforts in supporting communities in the Borough and in making Spelthorne a cleaner and greener place to live.

### **34/25     Announcements from the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:

Spelthorne's response to the Best Value Inspection Report was sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the 28th March. Communication with the Ministry during the Westminster Easter recess, which commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> April, generated a surprising response.

The Ministry extended an invitation to provide a further update on the Best Value recommendations in the interests of giving the Minister the most accurate and up to date position possible. This opportunity was grasped with the draft shared with the Group Administration in advance of its dispatch on 17<sup>th</sup> April, from me as Chief Executive.

A copy of that submission was referenced and attached to the All-Councillor Briefing minutes that were circulated to all members of this Chamber on Tuesday of this week.

What it communicates is the significant advancement that Spelthorne has made since the publication of the BVI Report both in taking the recommendations seriously and the numerous workstreams already underway that are gaining significant traction.

Recognising that much of the Minister's intervention deliberation revolves around whether the authority has the capacity and competence to act quickly in addressing the BVI recommendations, the submission also detailed the work of our newly formed Reorganisation & Transformation Board which will be meeting for the fourth time next Wednesday, on the 30<sup>th</sup> April.

The Board comprises of all Group Leaders from across this Chamber working in tandem with senior managers driving an 'Improvement and Recovery Plan' incorporating a regeneration site disposal strategy that is already bearing debt reduction fruit.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Ministry and await the considered view on the appropriate level of intervention which the Minister has yet to confirm.

### **35/25     Questions from members of the public**

The Mayor reported that, under Standing Order 14, no questions had been received from a member of the public.

### **36/25     Items carried over from the Council meeting held on 27 February**

## 2025

The Council meeting held on 27 February 2025 had to be adjourned before the following 4 items had been considered. These items were deferred to this meeting.

a     **Amendments to the Constitution**

Council **resolved** to approve the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Grants Panel and Financial Regulations in the Constitution as set out in this report.

b     **Appointment of Vice-Chair Standards Committee**

Council **resolved** to approve the appointment of Martin Hull as the Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for two years, until February 2027.

c     **Reports from the Committee Chairs**

Council considered the Chairs' reports which outlined the matters their Committees had considered since the last Council meeting.

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Button made the following statement:

It was agreed at the last audit committee meeting that I would inform members of the work of the audit committee over the last few months. I had intended to deliver this update at the last council meeting, but as you know the meeting was cut short.

You will be aware that up until the end of last year, we had not received an external audit report since 2017/18 – that's 6 years. We are not alone in this; nationally there were nearly 1,000 outstanding audits of local authorities. There are many reasons for this, including lack of qualified auditors, and the increased complexity of local authority accounts. Also, in Spelthorne KPMG took a very long time to sign off the 2017/18 audit. Last year the government enacted legislation to clear the backlog: so that all outstanding audits for years up to 2022/23 had to be completed by December last year. This has resulted in "disclaimed" opinions, which basically means that the auditor was unable to offer an opinion on the accounts, due to the lack of time they had to carry out a full audit. Obviously this is unsatisfactory, as we councillors rely on independent, external audit opinions to give us confidence in the annual accounts. But it has cleared the backlog, allowing us to receive timely, full audits going forwards. We received 5 "disclaimed" opinions from the external auditor for the 5 years up to 2022/23.

For the year 2023/24, our external auditor Grant Thornton has also issued a disclaimed opinion, but has produced an extensive annual audit report, which was published in January this year. This highlighted many issues: both at a detailed accounting level, and higher level issues regarding governance, financial stability and efficiency and effectiveness of the council. As a result of this report, officers and members of the audit committee created an action plan to address the issues, which will be reviewed and updated at every audit committee meeting going forward. This has since been updated to include issues from other external reports, including the PIR from October 2022, the CIPFA report and the recent BVI report, as many of the issues appear in more than one of these reports, and tracking them is much easier if they are all in one report.

The committee was heartened to hear the finance team has already taken up many of the recommendations from the external audit report, including extra training and the appointment of a new chief accountant. The draft statement of accounts has been updated accordingly. The expectation is that the audit report for the year 2024/25 will be far shorter as most of the issues will have been addressed. As a result of the improvements already being shown, the committee felt able to sign off the statement of accounts for 2023/24”.

Council **resolved** to note the statement of the Chair of the Audit Committee and the Chair’s reports.

d **Motions**

In accordance with Standing Order 16 the Council received one written Notice of Motions for the meeting held on 27 February 2025..

Councillor Williams moved and Councillor Bateson seconded the following motion:

Home delivery services via motorcycles, e-bikes and pedal cycles grew during Covid lockdowns and remain popular. However, they also raise some unwanted consequences.

In Spelthorne, high streets and shopping centres face growing need for parking spaces by delivery riders and, too often, that is leading to inconsiderate, dangerous and illegal parking on the pavement to the detriment and safety of pedestrians and there is currently no agreed response from Spelthorne Borough Council.



Therefore this Council agrees to:

Ask that the Spelthorne Local Planning Authority(LPA) consider the requirements for motorcycle and e-bike parking in new retail developments and change of use applications, and include any necessary policy and supplementary planning documents to support this.

Write to fast-food delivery companies to highlight the issue of delivery riders parking on pavements and issues caused by riding on pavements.

Convene a round-table meeting with all delivery companies to discuss best practice guidelines in Spelthorne.

Work closely with partners, the Police and Surrey County Council to enforce current parking restrictions, and to identify measures to discourage all motorised vehicles from accessing the footway.

Highlight parking areas in Spelthorne that can be accessed by delivery riders and work to identify possible new alternative parking areas.

The motion was carried.

### **37/25 Grant Application by the Spelthorne Business Forum**

Council **resolved** to approve a grant application made by the Spelthorne Business Forum.

### **38/25 Amendment to the Terms of Reference for Audit Committee**

Council **resolved** to approve the change to the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee to increase the number of Independent Members on the Committee from one to two

### **39/25 Calendar of Meetings 2025 - 2026**

Council **resolved** to approve the Calendar of Meetings for 2025-2027 as set out in Appendix A of the report.

### **40/25 Motion to Censure**

Council considered a motion to censure Councillor Saliagopoulos for her conduct in respect of the matters detailed by the Independent investigator in

her report to the Standards Sub-Committee of 10 April 2025 which related to a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Councillor Williams requested a named vote.

<b>For</b>	Councillors Buck, J Doran, Bateson, Beatty, Beecher, Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Dunn, Geach, Gibson, Grant, Nichols, Rutherford, Sexton, Turner, Williams - <b>18</b>
<b>Against</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Abstain</b>	Councillors Bhadye, Bing Dong, Boparai, Boughtflower, Brennan, Clarke, Howkins, Islam, Lee, Mathur, Rybinski, Weerasinghe, Woodward - <b>13</b>

Council **resolved** to censure Councillor Saliagopoulos.

#### **41/25     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.

#### **42/25     Motions**

No motions were received for this meeting of the Council.

#### **43/25     General questions**

The Mayor reported that no general question had been received in accordance with Standing Order 15.

The meeting closed at 20.55