

**Minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Committee
17 June 2025**

Present:

Councillor M. Beecher (Chair)
Councillor K.M. Grant (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

S.N. Beatty	D.C. Clarke	J.A. Turner
S. Bhadye	S.M. Doran	H.R.D. Williams
T. Burrell	J.R. Sexton	P.N. Woodward

Substitutions: Councillors C. Bateson (In place of J.P. Caplin)

Apologies: Councillors M. Bing Dong, N. Islam and A. Mathur

22/25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

23/25 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

24/25 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

25/25 Approval to Conduct Statutory Consultation on Spelthorne Design Code

The Committee considered the publication version of the Spelthorne Design Code and whether it should be published for a six-week consultation. The consultation would give residents and stakeholders a further opportunity to share their views on the Design Code before it was considered for adoption by the Committee.

The Chair of the Spelthorne Design Code Task Group explained the purpose of a Design Code and how it would support the Local Plan. A cross-party group of councillors had regularly met, supported by Andy von Bradsky, to develop the Design Code with input from local residents.

Andy von Bradsky advised the Committee that there was an expectation for all local authorities to produce a design code. As advisor to the Task Group, he felt the Design Code reflected a successful collaboration between members, officers, and residents.

The Joint Interim Team Lead for Strategic Planning provided the committee with an overview of community engagement, including work on the Citizen's Panel which was made up of borough residents who were blind selected to represent the current population of the borough. Members were also advised that a digital version of the Design Code was being produced to assist planning applicants understand which parts of the code would be relevant to their application.

The Committee thanked those involved in the process. The Committee acknowledged that if the Design Code was adopted, training on implementing the code would be provided for members and officers.

The Committee noted that the Design Code would be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that supported the Local Plan. Officers confirmed that the Design Code SPD had been tested to ensure it complied with the requirements of the new Local Plan and were confident that what was set out in the Design Code could be implemented.

The Committee noted references in the Design Code to groundwater and expressed concern regarding groundwater flooding. Some members of the Committee referenced a recently published article on groundwater in Staines by Dr J Paul and suggested this should be acknowledged in the Design Code. The Committee were advised that responsible bodies for groundwater would be Surrey County Council or the Environment Agency, and current advice suggested groundwater would be dealt with through individual planning applications until national planning policy was updated to address this. The Committee felt that reference should be made to the article so developers accessing the Design Code would be aware of it, but the reference should be caveated to explain the Council did not commission the research. The Committee expressed support for this approach.

Meeting adjourned 19:54

Meeting reconvened 20:01

The Committee **resolved** to agree that the publication version of the Spelthorne Design Code be published for a six-week public consultation under Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012, with an amendment to reference the recently published

article by Dr J Paul in a footnote with a caveat that the Council did not commission the report.

26/25 Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2024

The Committee considered the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2024 from the Principal Planner and Principal Planning Officer. As only 61% of the borough's housing needs have been delivered over the last three years, the Council was required to produce an Action Plan to identify actions to address under delivery against the housing requirement in the area.

The Committee noted the performance of the Council against neighbouring authorities and the discrepancy in numbers of homes delivered amongst the Surrey boroughs and districts. Officers advised this was due to certain local authorities adopting their local plans which boosted their housing numbers and delivery. The Committee also noted the majority of homes being delivered in the borough were one bedroom units. Officers explained this was likely due to most housing in the borough being delivered on urban sites. It was anticipated with the adoption of the Local Plan that more larger homes would be delivered.

The Committee **resolved** to

1. Approve the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2024; and
2. Agree publication of the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2024 on the Council's website.

27/25 Grey Belt Assessment Advice Note

The Committee considered a report from the Joint Interim Strategic Planning Managers advising on an update to National Planning Policy which introduced "Grey Belt," land within the Green Belt that was either previously developed or did not contribute strongly to its core purposes. This meant that certain Green Belt sites may now be open to appraisal for development. The report and appendices set out a step-by-step framework to assist Planning Development Management in determining whether developments met the appropriateness test set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Without a consistent approach, there was a risk of inconsistent decision-making and legal challenge, and adoption of the advice note would ensure a robust and standardised approach to sites considered "Grey Belt." The advice note had been checked by Counsel.

The Committee explored the types of sites that could be considered "Grey Belt" under the criteria. Officers acknowledged there were a number of sites in the borough this could be applied to, but it was difficult to anticipate what sites would come forward for assessment.

The Committee noted that one of the maps grouped Staines-upon-Thames and Egham, and requested clarification on this as Egham was not in the

borough. Officers advised that as there was no green belt between them, it was considered one developed area.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Accept and adopt the Grey Belt advice note for Development Management officers and the Planning Committee, to assist and guide decision making on relevant sites and applications.

28/25 Project Green Horizon

The Committee considered a request for support for the Project Green Horizon programme which aimed to reduce the Council's carbon footprint through projects under four key action areas. Members were asked to support the approach and projects in principle, with more detailed reports on specific projects returning to the appropriate committee(s) for approval.

The Committee debated specific projects set out and their estimated capital investment and carbon reduction, but acknowledged that further information regarding project costings and impact would be provided to members before approval was sought on particular projects. The Committee suggested amendments could be made to the report clarify this.

The Committee acknowledged the aim of the Project Green Horizon Programme and its support for the Council's climate objectives.

The Committee **resolved** to support the initiation of the Project Green Horizon Programme and approve the initiation/undertaking of the first three projects under the programme, subject to the amendments suggested at the meeting being incorporated.

29/25 Green Initiatives Fund Bid - Hydromx Pilot Project

The Committee considered a request for funding from the Green Initiatives Fund to finance a Hydromx pilot project at the Greeno Day Care Centre. There was potential for Hydromx to reduce heating energy consumption, which would contribute to cost savings and carbon reduction for the Council.

The Climate Change Officer explained how Hydromx worked and how the project aligned with the Council's Corporate Priorities, Climate Change Strategy, and the Green Horizon Programme.

The Committee expressed their support for the project.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve the Hydromx Pilot Project; and
2. Approve as Revenue expenditure the spend of £10,100 from the Green Initiatives Fund (GIF).

30/25 Updates from Task and Finish and/or Working Groups

The Committee received an update on the work of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task Groups, and verbal updates on the work of the Climate Change Working Group and the Design Code Task Group.

The Committee **resolved** to note the updates.

31/25 Forward Plan

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