

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, 22 December 2016 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	K. Flurry	A.J. Mitchell
C.B. Barnard	P.C. Forbes-Forsyth	S.C. Mooney
R.O. Barratt	M.P.C. Francis	D. Patel
I.J. Beardsmore	N.J. Gething	J.M. Pinkerton OBE
J.R. Boughtflower	A.L. Griffiths	O. Rybinski
R. Chandler	A.C. Harman	J.R. Sexton
C.A. Davis	I.T.E. Harvey	R.W. Sider BEM
S.M. Doran	N. Islam	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
S.A. Dunn	A.T. Jones	B.B. Spoor
Q.R. Edgington	J.G. Kavanagh	H.R.D. Williams
T.J.M. Evans	V.J. Leighton	

Councillor A.E. Friday, The Mayor, in the Chair

In Attendance:

Murray Litvak – Chair, Members' Code of Conduct Committee

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors Miss Sue Faulkner, C.M. Frazer, M.J. Madams, D. Saliagopoulos and H.A. Thomson and the vice-chair of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee, Miss Sue Faulkner.

277/16 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Edgington sought clarification on the arrangements for providing responses to supplementary questions and how these should be recorded in the minutes. Officers agreed to investigate the process and provide advice in due course.

278/16 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

279/16 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“I am pleased to report that a successful reception was held for the Spelthorne Business Community at the London Irish Hazelwood Centre in Sunbury on Friday 11th October and it was attended by more than 50 representatives of local enterprises. There was also a fundraising event for our charities at the Shahin Indian Restaurant in Sunbury on Monday 5th October which raised over £400.00. I would like to record my gratitude to both London Irish and the Shahin Restaurant for their support.

Our next function will be a screening of the film "Everest" at Shepperton Studios on 11th January in aid of our charities. Tickets are £10.00 each and further details are available from my Secretary, Sheila Kimpton.

I recently attended the annual Surrey Sports Awards, and on behalf of everyone here I would like to send congratulations to Andy Bennett from Littleton Sailing Club for winning the Outstanding Service to Sport award.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce the winner of the annual office Christmas decoration competition. It was a very close call for first place but just pipping the others to win the trophy for a second time was Committee Services.”

280/16 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

“Thank you, Mr Mayor. Firstly Congratulations to Councillor John Kavanagh and his fiancée Kayleigh on their recent engagement.

End of Year Report to Council December 2016

This has I believe been a historic and transformational year in the history of Spelthorne. Upon being elected as Leader I promised we would hit the ground running - we did.

Towards a Sustainable Future

We immediately met staff and Unions and reassured them of our positive future plans. We aimed to improve morale and I hope we have succeeded. Under the direction of Councillor Colin Barnard, we resurrected Towards a Sustainable Future which had been stalled for 3 months by my predecessor, at a cost of about £35,000. Barring some appointments at Deputy Group

Head level, staff restructure has now been completed, currently saving about £147,000 per annum.

Throughout the last 10 months we have worked tirelessly to improve staff morale and the relationship between staff and us, holding several staff meetings. Following a political cabinet agreement, we have given political support to the Head of Paid Service to returning to Local Pay negotiation. I understand the Unions are very happy and this should assist staff retention. We continue to have regular meetings with staff.

Corporate Plan

Early on we finalised a new Corporate Plan which had lapsed at the end of December 2015. Our Corporate Priorities are:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- A Clean and Safe Environment, and
- Financial Stability of the Council - without this the other objectives would not be achievable

Cross Party working

We have sought to engage constructively with Lib Dem and Labour members and have received positive support for our initiatives in return. Unfortunately, our new local party, the Spelthorne Residents Independence Party, have chosen not to positively engage with us. I think this is detrimental to those who elected them.

I am grateful for Lib Dem and Labour support in areas which have benefitted Spelthorne.

Landlord Rent Guarantee Scheme

In May, we launched our new initiative to support landlords and encourage them to let to our tenants – the Landlords Rent Guarantee Scheme. We now have the first landlords signed up and the scheme is active. This will benefit those in need of decent accommodation in our Borough.

Lord Lieutenant

In May, we welcomed the Lord Lieutenant, Michael More-Molineux, to the Borough and he was very impressed. So impressed he also joined us for the Mayor's Civic Service.

Spelride buses

In October, we took delivery of four new Spelride buses which are greatly appreciated and a real benefit to, in particular, our less mobile residents.

Business Improvement District

In November, a referendum was held amongst Staines businesses who voted by a very significant margin in support of the introduction of a Business Improvement District in Staines. This will create a bonus of some £1.5m over five years for Town Centre improvements.

Economic Development

To reflect our location and aspirations towards economic development we established a new Economic Development committee under the chairmanship of Councillor Colin Davis, famous for adding the "upon Thames" to Staines, to examine how we can best further the economic and business development in Spelthorne.

Following from that we have recently launched our new corporate tag line - "Spelthorne Means Business".

Heathrow Expansion

I was personally delighted when the Government recently announced the replacement of the former 07/23 runway (which was closed in the 1990s). This is excellent news for the local economy and will have a massive benefit to our residents, in particular the 3,600 who work directly at Heathrow, as well as the thousands more who rely indirectly upon it, and those who will in future work there.

We are also working closely with Labour controlled Slough who have a very similar recognition of the crucial impact Heathrow has on their Borough. I am of course mindful of noise, pollution, road and rail concerns but also vividly recall aircraft of 20 or so years ago which used to create much more noise and pollution. We will nevertheless be working with Heathrow to see that they honour their commitments in these areas.

Joint Committee

We are making progress towards moving from the Surrey orientated Local Committee towards a Joint Committee which is expected to finally give us a say in spending on roads, education etc.

There has also been a lot of time and effort expended into looking to see if we, as part of Surrey, should become part of a devolved administration, known as 3SC which also includes East and West Sussex. This is currently still under consideration.

Property

Back in March we sought to buy Dolphin House for conversion to 75 flats but were gazumped at the last minute. Since then I have implemented a strict "need to know" policy to reduce the risk of re-occurrences.

In May, we agreed the purchase of Harpers Hotel which is in process of being upgraded and continues to be used for emergency housing, but now just for the needs of Spelthorne. Once completed this is likely to benefit us in the region of £230k per annum as well as help homeless local families and provide more emergency accommodation locally.

We are finalising plans for the Bugle site. This will involve demolishing it and rebuilding probably 12 flats that will be retained for long term investment. We are also working on plans to see if it is practicable to turn the rear area including the lakes into a small country park.

In June, we started the process that culminated in the purchase of the main part of the BP Campus, the largest property investment by a UK local authority and the site is the biggest privately owned business park in the UK. As we all know the net revenue benefit is in the region of £3.3m per annum, money that we now have available to protect services and put back into the community. This of course has been the high point of our year.

This was a ground breaking transaction and is being cited as an example of innovation and best practice across the UK. Many are envious of our achievement.

I am delighted to announce that last Thursday we completed on the remaining section of the BP site, the South West Corner. This will add a further £730k net revenue benefit.

We have today exchanged (or we expect tomorrow to exchange) on an office building in Sunbury which will contribute a further £320k net revenue benefit per year.

We are currently exploring two further possible purchases. We are aiming high, and our objective is to secure investments that will generate a minimum of £5m net revenue income per year by the end of the financial year.

My final property related announcement concerns Bridge St. There was a "long stop" date for completion of this sale, of 31st October 2016. The purchaser, Bellway, failed to complete then and were subsequently served a notice to complete which expired at midnight last night. They have not confirmed their intent to complete and therefore the sale is off. I know different members have different views on this but in the New Year we will be applying ourselves to reassessing matters and deciding on the best route forward.

There is in fact one more 'hot off the press' item; I learnt 3 hours ago that we have let 45,000 sq ft of the former BHS shop site in the Elmsleigh Centre to Primark, who will be spending £7m refitting it ready to re-open in September 2017.

We are facing a large Government revenue support grant cut and this positive and decisive action means we can continue to protect and offer the services

we are elected to provide. A £3.2m cut to a budget is a vast gap that we have now covered. Furthermore as we took early action we now have a small surplus for a year or so.

We are looking ahead and planning for the future. We foresee further cuts in 3-4 years from now of about £1.8m per annum and are acting now to prepare. We have already covered much of this cost with new property acquisitions and expect that, by the end of the next calendar year, we will have done enough to cover these costs fully. Again, protecting our community from cuts because of our entrepreneurial, caring Conservative approach.

If Towards a Sustainable Future is about securing the financial self-sufficiency of Spelthorne by 2020, we will achieve that goal well ahead of target, thus securing the financial security of our community for a generation.

As I have just stated, we have an objective of achieving property investments that will generate £5m per annum of net revenue benefit by the end of this financial year, and with completion of the Sunbury office, will have reached £4.2m of that. Our much improved financial position has given us much greater confidence and boldness.

Windfall Grant

As mentioned we currently have a small window of opportunity having covered some of the Government cuts in advance of their imposition. I was delighted that we have so quickly moved to a position where we are able to offer a one-off windfall grant of £20,000 per ward as a result of the BP deal. It is great that we are able to give something back to our residents. As a guideline, I anticipate this being for capital projects of community benefit and to be able to "see" it in two years' time, and to be for general community benefit.

Summary - Thanks

As I am sure you all agree we have achieved a lot in the last 10 months and I want to thank you all for your hard work and support. It would not have been possible without you all. This has been a truly team effort.

In summary we have:

- Staff restructure and saved £147,000
- Restored staff morale and confidence
- Introduced our Key Corporate Plan
- Developed Cross Party working
- Rent Guarantee
- Spelride Buses
- Business Improvement District
- Economic Development
- Heathrow Support
- Joint Committee

- Achieved much with regard to property not least generating £4.2m of net revenue benefit per year and in turn plugged our revenue support grant gap
- Re-let the BHS site
- Introduced a windfall grant of £20,000 per ward

I have to thank in particular Councillor Harman, my deputy, Councillor Williams our finance portfolio holder, the rest of my Cabinet and Councillor Mooney, our Group Chairman.

I would also like to thank Spelthorne Conservative Association Chairman Mike Brennan for his unstinting support and guidance.

We have also had massive and crucial support from so many staff, without whom this would not have been possible. I cannot finish without thanking my good friend the Chief Executive Roberto Tambini. Our close working relationship and his hard work, counsel and advice throughout 2016 has been absolutely fundamental to our successes this year.

I am very much looking forward to continuing to lead our successful administration throughout 2017. We know there will be challenges to surmount but we are in a very strong position, and united we will succeed. I believe that this is a great time to be a resident of Spelthorne and our future is bright under this Conservative administration led by myself and team.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a very happy and blessed Christmas and successful 2017.

281/16 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive presented the Mayor, on behalf of the Council, with a copy of a new book about the Pinewood Group which was published to mark their 80th anniversary.

282/16 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

283/16 Petitions

There were none.

284/16 Changes to Committee membership 2016-2017

Details of the changes to Committee membership for the remainder of the 2016-2017 municipal year were circulated on the agenda for the meeting. The political allocation of seats was shown at agenda item 9 (Appendix A) and the members to serve on the various Committees was shown at Appendix B.

It was moved by Councillor I.T. Harvey and seconded by Councillor A.C. Harman and

Resolved that:

- a) The allocation of seats is agreed as shown on Appendix A.
- b) The councillors to serve on Committees is agreed as shown on Appendix B.

285/16 Supplementary Capital Estimate for property acquisitions

The Council considered the Cabinet recommendation from its meeting held on 21 December 2016 on the approval of a supplementary capital estimate for property acquisitions.

Resolved that Council approves a supplementary capital estimate for property acquisitions within the Borough of £80m for the remainder of 2016/17.

286/16 Calendar of meetings 2017-2018

The Council considered the Cabinet recommendation from its meeting held on 21 December 2016 on a calendar of meetings for the Municipal Year 2017-2018.

Resolved that Council approves the calendar of meetings for 2017-2018.

287/16 Reports from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor I.T. Harvey, presented the reports of the Extraordinary Cabinet held on 25 October 2016 and the Cabinet meetings held on 23 November 2016 and 21 December 2016 which outlined the matters the Cabinet had decided since the last Council meeting.

288/16 Report from the Chairman of the Licensing Committee

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor R.W. Sider BEM, presented his report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting. Councillor R.W. Sider BEM also recorded his thanks to those members and officers who had supported the work of the Committee throughout the past year.

289/16 Report from the Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee

The Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee, Mr Murray Litvak, presented his report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

290/16 Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor C.A. Davis, presented his report which outlined the matters the Committee had considered since the last Council meeting. Councillor C.A. Davis also recorded his thanks to those members and officers who had supported the work of the Committee throughout the past year.

291/16 Reports from the Chairman of the Planning Committee

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley, presented his reports which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley also recorded his thanks to those members and officers who had supported the work of the Committee throughout the past year and encouraged all councillors to attend forthcoming training sessions on Planning scheduled for early 2017.

292/16 Motions

In accordance with Standing Order 17 the Council received one written Notice of Motion.

Councillor I.T. Harvey moved and Councillor C.A. Davis seconded the following motion:

“Mindful of the massive, positive, economic impact that a vibrant and viable Heathrow has on the economy of Spelthorne, and in particular the 3,600 families who rely directly upon it for their income, this Council warmly welcomes the recent Government announcement of the third runway. We are of course mindful of environmental and noise concerns and will work with Heathrow and other stakeholders to ensure those are mitigated.”

Councillors debated the motion.

Councillor Harvey requested that a recorded vote was taken. The Mayor then invited councillors to vote on the motion proposed by Councillor Harvey.

Councillor Forbes-Forsyth was disqualified from taking part in the vote as she was absent from the Council Chamber during part of the debate.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (27)	Councillors I.T. Harvey (Leader); A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader); M.M. Attewell; C. Barnard; R.O. Barratt; J. Boughtflower; R. Chandler; C.A. Davis; T. Evans; K. Flurry; M.P.C Francis; A.E. Friday (Mayor); N. Gething; A.L. Griffiths; N. Islam; A. Jones; J.G. Kavanagh; V.J. Leighton (Deputy Mayor); A.J. Mitchell; S.C. Mooney; D. Patel; J.M. Pinkerton; O. Rybinski; J. Sexton; R.W. Sider; R.A. Smith-Ainsley and H.R. Williams.
AGAINST (5)	Councillors I.J. Beardsmore; S.A. Dunn; S.M. Doran; Q Edgington and B. Spoor.

The motion was carried.

Resolved that mindful of the massive, positive, economic impact that a vibrant and viable Heathrow has on the economy of Spelthorne, and in particular the 3,600 families who rely directly upon it for their income, this Council warmly welcomes the recent Government announcement of the third runway. We are of course mindful of environmental and noise concerns and will work with Heathrow and other stakeholders to ensure those are mitigated.

293/16 Questions on Ward Issues

The Mayor reported that one question on a ward issue had been received, in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillor Flurry.

1. Question from Councillor K. Flurry

“Can the Leader assure the Council that there will be no more cuts to the fire service within the next five years? These are important issues for the residents of Stanwell North, as they now find that despite having an airport in their back garden, they will be the furthest from a fire station.”

Response from Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council

“Thank you for your question, Councillor Flurry. Regrettably, I can give no such assurance. As Councillor Flurry is aware, Surrey County Council is the authority responsible for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service over whom I have no control and I therefore suggest he raises this issue with the relevant divisional member, who I believe is Councillor Robert Evans. I can however assure him that we are pro-actively engaging with Surrey County Council with regards to their ongoing fire provision consultation.”

In accordance with Council Standing Order 15.2, Councillor K. Flurry asked the following supplementary question:

“I would like to know what the proposed response times would be for the second fire engine to arrive at a fire, taking the furthest point, which is probably Oaks Road in Stanwell? I understand that as a four man crew they cannot enter property that is on fire until the second engine arrives so the response time should be calculated on the second engine’s arrival.”

Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council, gave the following response to the supplementary question during the meeting:

“I am very concerned by the plans as well. Those of you who went to the consultation three years ago in Sunbury following the first set of cuts will have noted that I was forthright in my concerns then too. Ultimately this is a Surrey County Council matter but I am making our concerns very clear, I saw the Leader of Surrey last week to express these concerns and request further information.

At Spelthorne we are doing everything we can and I can announce that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be holding a meeting to specifically explore this situation on 7th February 2017.”

Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council, provided the following written answer to the supplementary question after the meeting:

“I have passed your question about response times to the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and have asked them to respond to you directly once the information you have requested is available.”

294/16 General questions

The Mayor reported that five general questions had been received, in accordance with Standing Order 15, from Councillor Edgington.

1. Question from Councillor Q.R. Edgington:

“Can the number of signatories required for a petition to be considered by the full Council be reduced?”

Response from Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council:

“Thank you for your question, Councillor Edgington. The Council welcomes petitions as an important way in which people can let us know their concerns.

I believe that the current threshold for a petition to be debated at Council is set at an appropriate level and ensures that those issues of greatest significance to local residents are recognised and treated with the importance that they deserve. There are no current plans to review these arrangements.”

In accordance with Council Standing Order 15.2, Councillor Q.R. Edgington asked the following supplementary question:

“Given that the current requirement for a petition to go to full Council on a local issue is a third of most wards – 1000 signatures – isn’t this undemocratic?”

Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council, provided the following written answer to the supplementary question after the meeting:

“No.”

2. Question from Councillor Q.R. Edgington

“Can the Leader talk to the Leader of Surrey County Council and urge him to address the increasingly dangerous road safety, congestion and parking issues on and around Wheatsheaf Lane, Staines before a fatality takes place?”

Response from Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council:

“As Councillor Edgington is fully aware, the correct route for such matters is for a ward councillor to raise highways related issues with the relevant divisional member, who I can advise you is Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos.”

In accordance with Council Standing Order 15.2, Councillor Q.R. Edgington asked the following supplementary question:

“Is he scared of talking to the Leader of Surrey County Council? Does he have no concern for the residents of this Borough about this safety issue? He should talk to the Leader of Surrey County Council.”

Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council, gave the following response to the supplementary question:

“The correct route on a highways matter is to the divisional member. I’ve advised you that in this case the divisional member is Councillor Saliagopoulos. I am not scared of the Leader of Surrey and held a meeting with him last week.”

3. Question from Councillor Q.R. Edgington

“What benefits are the Council looking forward to enjoying from Brexit?”

Response from Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council:

“It is too early to speculate on the possible benefits that Spelthorne Borough Council may receive from the Country’s decision to leave the European Union. Furthermore, as an experienced politician, I am sure you have your own views on this.”

In accordance with Council Standing Order 15.2, Councillor Q.R. Edgington asked the following supplementary question:

“How about planning for the future? Can the Leader ask the Chief Executive to speak to the Spelthorne Residents Independent Party and we will provide some benefits for residents of the Borough.”

Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council, gave the following response to the supplementary question:

“We are planning for the future. This includes the purchase of properties which I outlined in my end of year report; we also consider Heathrow expansion to be fundamental to our future which is why we are supporting it.”

4. Question from Councillor Q.R. Edgington:

“What is the current Policy of Infilling for the Borough? And can copies of the policy be laid around for members of the Council and members of the public attending the meeting.”

Response from Councillor N. Gething, portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Development:

“As Councillor Edgington is fully aware we have comprehensive planning guidance which deals with the range of issues raised by new development and provides a clear basis to assess particular development forms. All these documents have been made available to all councillors and they are also on the Council’s web site.

Policy HO1c of the Council’s Core Strategy and Policies DPD (96 pages) responds to the underlying demand for housing and says the Council will ensure provision is made by: “encouraging housing development, including redevelopment, infill, conversion of existing dwellings and the change of use of existing buildings to housing, on all sites suitable for that purpose taking into account other policy objectives.

Such other objectives would include for example the Council’s policies on the Green Belt, Flooding and Design but other policies may also be relevant subject to the particular circumstances of a site.

Policy EN1 of the Core Strategy deals specifically with the design of new development and is supported by a 41 page Supplementary Planning Document on ‘Design of Residential Extensions and New Residential Development’.”

In accordance with Council Standing Order 15.2, Councillor Q.R. Edgington asked the following supplementary question:

“Is there a specific policy?”

Councillor N. Gething, portfolio holder for Planning and Economic Development gave the following response to the supplementary question:

“Your colleague in the Spelthorne Residents Independent Party is a member of the Planning Committee and she should be able to brief you on the contents of that policy and explain the issue.”

5. Question from Councillor Q.R. Edgington:

“Does the Leader think that the Principal Opposition Parties namely The Liberal Democrat Group and the Spelthorne Residents Independent Party Group are treated reasonably and fairly in Spelthorne?”

Response from Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council:

“All opposition political groups in Spelthorne are treated reasonably and fairly and in accordance with the law and the Council’s Constitution which is applied consistently by the Council officers who are of course impartial.”

In accordance with Council Standing Order 15.2, Councillor Q.R. Edgington asked the following supplementary question:

“Can the Leader provide evidence of all attempts he has made to constructively engage with the Spelthorne Residents Independent Party?”

Councillor I.T. Harvey, Leader of the Council, provided the following written answer to the supplementary question after the meeting:

“Your party is treated fairly by Spelthorne Council as required by statute. I presume you are not suggesting that any staff, or indeed the Council’s Constitution are discriminating against you?”

I have already stated in my end of year report that I have sought to engage positively with opposition and minority parties, who, with the exception of yours, have cordially and constructively embraced this. I believe this has benefited all concerned, in particular the residents we are all elected to represent. It is a shame you have not similarly engaged. You have ignored attempts to communicate by both my deputy and myself.

At the July Council meeting you asked why Cllr Forbes Forsyth, the other member of the Spelthorne Residents Independent Party Group, did not serve on any committees. Notwithstanding that it was you as Leader that did not allocate any committees to her, I did place her on the Planning Committee. Subsequently there have been three Planning Committee meetings that she was due to attend, and she attended none, nor submitted apologies for any.

Following the Council meeting, I enquired of committee services to ensure that you and your Spelthorne Residents Independent Party Group are

receiving fair and equal support. I am assured and satisfied that you are more than fairly treated by them.”

295/16 Appointment of representative Trustees

(1) Staines Parochial Charity

It was proposed by Councillor I.T. Harvey and seconded by Councillor A.C. Harman to re-appoint Mr A. Forrester as a Council representative trustee of the Staines Parochial Charity for a further 4-year term of office until December 2020.

Resolved that Mr A. Forrester be re-appointed as a Council representative trustee to serve on the Staines Parochial Charity for a further 4-year term of office until December 2020.

(2) Laleham Charities – Hodgson and Reeve

It was proposed by Councillor I.T. Harvey and seconded by Councillor A.C. Harman to re-appoint Mr B. Morgan and Mr S. Bishop as Council representative trustees of the Laleham Charities – Hodgson and Reeve for further 4-year terms of office until December 2020.

Resolved that Mr B. Morgan and Mr S. Bishop be re-appointed as a Council representative trustees to serve on the Laleham Charities – Hodgson and Reeve for further 4-year terms of office until December 2020.