

EXECUTIVE

- * Councillor Joss Bigmore (Chairman)
- * Councillor Caroline Reeves (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Tim Anderson | * Councillor John Redpath |
| * Councillor Jan Harwood | * Councillor John Rigg |
| * Councillor Julia McShane | * Councillor James Steel |

*Present

Councillors Chris Blow, Angela Goodwin, Angela Gunning, Ramsey Nagaty, Deborah Seabrook, Tony Rooth, Paul Spooner, James Walsh and Catherine Young were also in attendance.

EX50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

EX51 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EX52 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

EX53 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader thanked all residents of the Borough, including Council employees for their commitment to abide by the lockdown restrictions. He reflected that the lockdown had been hard on residents and local business, but at least there was an end in sight on this occasion. Whilst it was unclear at this stage into which Tier the Borough would emerge next week; Guildford case numbers had been showing a steady decline and the Leader was hopeful there would be significant easing of the restrictions locally.

The temporary lane closures on Bridge Street put in place by Surrey County Council were expected to be removed next week. The Leader considered that the traffic impact outweighed any benefit from increased pavement width and that Guildford should be as welcoming as possible to support retailers.

Future Guildford, the Council's transformation project was in its final stage. This fundamental review of the Council's organisational structure and ways of working was on track to deliver almost £9m of annual savings to the budget. The Leader considered the next challenge would be to demonstrate that the Council would maintain the high quality of service provision that Guildford residents expected.

In reference to the Christmas lights turned on last week, the Leader hoped that everyone who had not been able to enjoy the event in person had been able to via the GBC Christmas video available through social media channels, and any funds raised would be directed to the Mayor's Charities.

The Leader provided an update on the recovery of the Mayor, Cllr Richard Billington. The Mayor had informed the Leader that his operation had been successful in removing the majority

of his tumour and that he had an appointment with specialists this week to discuss further treatment.

The Leader relayed a personal message from the Mayor as follows,

“I knew I had good friends but I was surprised by just how many, Lynda and I have been overwhelmed with your messages of support and they helped us get through some of the darker times. I was especially touched by my family at Guildford Borough Council, officers and councillors across the political spectrum you have been a big part of my convalescence and we will be forever grateful for the kindness you have shown us.”

EX54 WEYSIDE URBAN VILLAGE PROGRAMME - FINANCIAL GATEWAY REVIEW

The Executive considered a report setting out the current financial position and updated business assumptions of the Weyside Urban Village development (WUV) at the point of the planning application gateway. At this stage in the development the Executive was asked to note an overall reduction in anticipated costs of £24.8 million and an estimated end of project deficit reduction of £1.6 million to just £400,000.

Approval was also sought for the transfer of £10.2 million from the provisional capital programme budget to the approved capital programme budget to cover infrastructure fees and payments that the Council was obliged to make to Thames Water (TW) under the TW Agreement.

The Council's Legal Team would assess the planning application prior to submission and Deloitte's would be undertaking an independent financial audit. It was noted that there would be project updates to the Executive and the community at the point of every project gateway.

The increasing momentum of the project after such a long period of assembly was welcomed. The need for additional housing of all different types in the Borough was noted. The Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current financial position of Weyside Urban Village at the planning application gateway as outlined in the report submitted to the Executive, be endorsed.
- (2) That £10.2m be transferred from the provisional capital programme to the approved capital programme for infrastructure fees and payments which the Council is obliged to make to Thames Water under the TW Agreement.

Reasons:

- (1) To report to councillors the financial position of the WUV at the planning application gateway.
- (2) To ensure that there is sufficient funding in the approved programme to cover the phase 1 Infrastructure fees and the payments which the Council is obliged to make to Thames Water under the Thames Water Agreement in the current year.

EX55 OFF-STREET PARKING BUSINESS PLAN 2021-22

The Executive considered a report updating on progress made in delivering the recommendations approved in January 2020, highlighting the improvements completed and the work being progressed to support green initiatives with regard to the climate emergency and sustainability.

Since March, the town centre had seen a reduction in footfall due to the impact of the Covid19 pandemic. Consequently, a rethink of parking services management was considered appropriate by bringing forward decisions on pricing strategy to increase confidence, footfall and revenue. It was proposed that new 'Shopper' car parks be designated with rates adjusted to provide greater value for those visitors spending longer periods in the town centre to shop and eat, whilst at the higher price point discouraging commuters from using the spaces all day. Commuter designated car parks would have a more appropriate pricing strategy. Approval was sought for changes to pricing from mid-December 2020.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic alongside changing commuting behaviours including increased home-working on the Park and Ride service was noted. However, it was further noted that the Park and Ride service provided the least expensive of all parking options for commuters and those visiting the town centre. Longer term plans for the Park and Ride service would be a matter for all stakeholders including Stagecoach and Surrey County Council and it was acknowledged that current circumstances were extraordinary and not a basis upon which to make long term decisions. Park and Ride services would play a part in the regeneration plans of the Borough Council.

It was noted that the report had been considered by the Joint Executive Advisory Board and the comments and recommendations arising from that meeting were set out in the Supplementary Information Sheet. The Board had recommended the adoption of Option 3. The Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) To continue with the proposed short stay car park price increase as set out in option 2, but to authorise the Waste Parking and Fleet Services Manager, in consultation with the relevant lead councillor and Director of Resources, to review the charge in January 2021 and to cancel the increase if the recovery from Covid is likely, in their view, to be negatively affected by this increase.
- (2) To make no changes to Sunday tariffs for all car parks.
- (3) To reallocate Leapale Road as "short stay" and bring prices into line with neighbouring short stay surface car parks.
- (4) To introduce a new shopper offer, Monday to Saturday, based on the flat rate option 3 in paragraph 12.3 of the report submitted to the Executive.
- (5) To note the performance of Parking Services in 2019-20, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (6) To continue with cash car park payments for the present but keep under review as part of ongoing developments in this area.

Reasons:

- To respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- To support local business and residents
- To support the recovery and stabilisation of the town

The Executive considered a report outlining the extent, nature, and spend on consultants and agency workers within the Council over the past five years and set out some key findings. It was noted that over the past five years the Council had spent a combined total of £36.5 million on agency workers and consultants across both revenue and capital budgets. Of that spend, £24.5 million was on engaging consultants and £11.97 million employing agency workers. Expenditure on consultancy recruitment had increased twenty-four fold over the time period covered by the report and were generally employed to cover specialist placements on capital projects. Agency workers were usually employed to fill temporary gaps or shortages and recruitment had increased by over three-fold. Comensura had been the Council's usual provider of agency staff, although use of other agencies had become more commonplace and less controlled than previously. Recruitment had occasionally been undertaken without a formal governance process being applied.

The report advocated that there should be a thorough assessment of in-house expertise including a mandate with a full business case set out for approval prior to recruiting external consultants. It was proposed that consultant recruitment should be subject to a rigorous procurement process that would include tendering. It was further proposed that a formal agreement with Comensura to include set costs, terms and conditions be relaunched for agency staff. Any exceptions to using Comensura staff would be put to the Corporate Procurement Board. There would be reported updates in six and twelve-months.

This report had previously been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 October 2020 and the matter would also be referred back for updating on progress.

An additional recommendation to implement all of the proposals set out in the report was included on the Supplementary Information Sheet.

Accordingly, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the key findings in the report submitted to the Executive be noted.
- (2) That the options in section 6 of the report be implemented.

Reason:

To better control costs and provide a more robust governance approach to spend in this area.

EX57 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2021-22

Households with an income too low to cover household costs were helped by the Council to pay their Council Tax with a support scheme. The Executive noted that the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme helped around 4,500 households by providing £5.7 million of support. The cost of the LCTS was shared with Surrey County Council, Guildford's share being around 10%.

The Council had a statutory duty to annually consider if it should make any changes to the LCTS scheme. To make any changes the Council was obliged to consult with interested parties, but it was good practice to consult even if there were no changes proposed. A stakeholder consultation carried out during September to October received a low response rate, but Surrey County Council and the Police supported the changes proposed for 2021.

In 2020-21 there were minor changes to the scheme. For 2021-22 the following changes with a revenue cost of £65,000 were proposed:

- Increase Personal Allowances and Premiums to match inflation.
- Increase Non-Dependant Deductions to reflect an expectation that their contribution to the household expenses should increase each year.
- Remove the cap on Band E entitlement for 2021-22, to provide additional help during the pandemic.

There would be an increased discretionary hardship fund to support any applicant suffering adversely from the consequences of savings to the Local Council Tax Support put in place over the past eight years, in addition to the proposed changes for 2021-22. It was proposed that the fund be increased from £40,000 to £60,000 for 2021-22.

During 2020 the government had provided COVID19 Council Tax Hardship Funds allowing the Council to support taxpayers with additional Council Tax discounts. It was proposed that any funds remaining at the end of the year would be carried over into 2021.

The Council was required to approve a scheme for the 2021-22 financial year by 31 January 2021 to enable annual bills to be calculated correctly. It was noted that the review of the LCTS scheme for 2022-23 would be included on the work programme for the Service Delivery Executive Advisory Board in 2021.

The Executive

RECOMMEND (to Council: 8 December 2020):

- (1) That the current Local Council Tax Support scheme be amended for 2021-22, as set out in detail in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, with effect from 1 April 2021.
- (2) That the Council maintains a discretionary hardship fund in 2021-22, increases it to £60,000, and carries forward any residual 2020 COVID19 Council Tax Hardship Funds.

Reasons:

- (1) To ensure that the Council complies with government legislation to implement a LCTS scheme from 1 April 2021.
- (2) To maintain a discretionary fund to help applicants suffering from severe financial hardship.

EX58 PARISH COUNCILS: CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS GRANT AID - APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE 2021-22

The Executive considered a report setting out details of the applications received from parish councils for financial assistance through the Concurrent Functions Grant Aid Scheme for 2021-22, for which a base budget of £90,000 had been recommended.

The Executive had been asked to approve the budget for 2021-22 at this time because the parish councils needed to be aware of the level of grant aid available to them so that they could build the sums into their budget calculations for the coming year. They would fix their budgets and precept requirements for 2021-22 in December and early January, enabling this information to be included in the Borough Council's final budget approval process in February 2021.

Parishes had been asked to complete a detailed application form and written estimate for each project and to identify how the project meets at least one of the fundamental themes within the Council's Corporate Plan. A total of 40 requests had been received from 17 of the 23 parish

councils totalling £83,314, and a panel of officers had evaluated each of the bids. One bid had subsequently been retracted, which had brought the total for approval down to £80,814.

Having considered the report, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Concurrent Functions Grant budget for 2021-22 of £80,814 be approved, subject to final confirmation at budget Council in February 2021.
- (2) That the parish council requests for grant aid for 2021-22, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.

Reasons:

- to assist parish councils with expenditure on concurrent function schemes in 2021-22.
- to enable parish councils to take account of financial assistance from Guildford Borough Council when calculating their precept requirements for 2021-22.

EX59 SELECTION OF THE MAYOR AND THE DEPUTY MAYOR 2021-22

The Council would be asked at its meeting on 8 December to consider nominations for the Mayorality and Deputy Mayorality of the Borough for the municipal year 2021-22.

In February this year the Council had agreed to nominate Cllr Dennis Booth as Deputy Mayor for 2020-21. However, due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Government passed Regulations that permitted councils to continue with appointments that would otherwise have to be made at an annual meeting until the next annual meeting in 2021. Following consultations with Cllrs Billington, Moseley, and Booth and political group leaders, the Council agreed on 19 May that Cllrs Billington and Moseley would continue in their respective roles as Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Guildford for the municipal year 2020-21.

Councillor Andrew Gomm had formally nominated the current Deputy Mayor, Councillor Marsha Moseley for the Mayorality of the Borough for 2021-22. The Council will therefore be requested to consider formally that nomination.

Following an invitation to Group leaders to submit nominations for the Deputy Mayorality for 2021-22, the Executive noted that the only nominee was Councillor Dennis Booth.

The Executive

RECOMMEND (to Council 8 December 2020):

- (1) That the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Marsha Moseley be nominated for the Mayorality of the Borough for the 2021-22 municipal year.
- (2) That Councillor Dennis Booth be nominated for the Deputy Mayorality of the Borough for the 2021-22 municipal year.

Reason:

To make early preparations for the selection of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the municipal year 2021-22.

EX60 TIMETABLE OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2021-22

The Executive, having considered a report setting out the proposed calendar of meetings for the next municipal year.

RECOMMEND (to Council on 8 December 2020):

That the proposed timetable of Council and Committee meetings for the 2021-22 municipal year, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, be approved.

Reason:

To assist with the preparation of individual committee work programmes.

EX61 GENERAL FUND OUTLINE BUDGET 2021-22 AND BUSINESS PLANNING 2021-22 TO 2024-25

The Executive considered a report that set out the current position of the 2021-22 outline General Fund budget and the business planning assumptions for 2021-22 to 2024-25. The report asked the Executive to note the position and to agree the proposed strategy for savings and efficiencies in order to set a balanced budget in the medium term.

In order to prepare both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outline budgets for 2021-22, it was necessary to understand the parameters. Setting parameters for the whole term of the plan was beneficial in the calculation of projections over the medium term. It was proposed that working assumptions were used in the preparation of projections for the following three years. The Council would make the final decision on the estimates for 2021-22 at its meeting on 10 February 2021.

It was usual in terms of building the budget to use the current year as a base for moving forward and then adjust for known changes from growth and savings. The current financial year was likely to generate a net overspend of around £7million (this will be confirmed as the year progresses) due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the shortfall in additional expenditure incurred and the loss of income received when compared with support from Central Government. Reserves would need to be utilised to address this position requiring the Council to replenish its reserves over the next three years.

The report explained that best assumptions had been made about the level of Government funding, but that the Council would not know the amount of retained business rates until Central Government released the provisional local government finance settlement which was provisionally indicated to be December 2020. An 1.94% increase in Council Tax had been assumed which was the maximum increase the Council could levy without being required to set a referendum.

The draft Council Tax base had been set at 57,159.40, which was 0.84% lower than 2020-21. The reduction was due to the collection rate figures and a rise in bad debt that had also been affected by the pandemic. This had reduced the resources available by approximately £85,000 and would have an impact on the Collection Fund for 2021.

The current position on the 2021-22 outline budget showed a shortfall between the likely resources and the proposed net expenditure of £2 million. In addition, the draft projection for 2021-22 to 2024-25 showed a medium term budget shortfall (gap) of £4.38 million. Due to the shortfall between the Council's likely income and its current anticipated expenditure no new growth bids had been invited for increases in service provision for 2021-22. This was consistent with the Council undergoing a programme of transformation under 'Future Guildford' which was seeking to reduce expenditure. However, some assumptions had been included to allow for loss of income within the 2021-22 budget with regard to the on-going impact of COVID19. Any

Capital and investment bids would be considered as part of the capital and investment strategy report in January 2021.

The financial monitoring report for the first six months of 2020-21 would be reported to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee on 26 November 2020. The projected net expenditure on the General Fund for the current financial year was estimated to be £6.8 million more than the original estimate. The main factor contributing to the forecasted position in 2020-21 was the cost and loss of income arising from the COVID19 pandemic. The Council had approved an emergency budget in May 2020 to allow the net cost of the COVID19 pandemic to be taken from the Council's reserves. It was anticipated that at the end of March 2021, the Council would need to draw down £7 million of reserves and that this would require the Council to plan to replenish some of its reserves in the medium term over the three years to 2024-25.

A pay inflation rate of 0% had been assumed as it was expected the Government would announce a public sector pay freeze. A 0% increase was also assumed for sales, fees and charges income due to Covid-19, aside from an increase in fees for the crematorium and parking charges as set out in an earlier report to the Executive.

The Government had given little indication of its intentions and the outcome of the Spending Review was awaited, albeit the Local Government spending announcements would be slightly later, expected around 15 December. A 'rollover' one-year settlement for 2021 was expected that was similar to that of 2020. It was expected that the Fair Funding Reviewing and the Business Rate Retention Scheme would be delayed again until April 2022.

There had been little information from Government regarding the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and it was assumed in the budget that there would be no award for 2021. Previously around £1 million was taken by the NHB into the base budget. The savings from Future Guildford would compensate for the loss of the NHB for 2021. There were also funds available through the Housing Revenue Account to fund new and affordable homes. It was possible that additional funding might be available from Homes England.

The Capital Programme had been reviewed and updated. The revised figures were included in the Supplementary Information Sheet. Reprofiting of the Capital Programme had resulted in £700,000 less budget gap than that originally estimated.

The proposed use of reserves had not been specified in the emergency budget passed in May. For 2021 the use had been specified in the report. Reserves from the General Fund would drop from £44 million to £27 million but underlying reserves that had to be legally maintained or ring fenced (SPA/SANG) would mean that the actual level of reserves would be £17 million. It was recommended not to use further reserves during 2021-22 but try to rebuild. It was proposed that there be contributions to the Car Parks Maintenance Reserve, IT Reserve and Business Rates Equalisation Reserve (BRE). Funds from the BRE would then be transferred to the Collection Fund.

A savings strategy had been included in the report, which had also been presented to the Joint Executive Advisory Board (JEAB) its meeting on 11 November and the advice from the JEAB had been included in the Supplementary Information Sheet.

Public consultation on the budget had been discussed at the JEAB. It was confirmed that an external polling company had been commissioned at a cost of around £10,000 to undertake a telephone survey of a representative sample of residents to provide guidance of residents' prioritisation of services. The consultation would also be available to all residents online available from 30 November until the New Year.

It was noted that a significant cost to the Council was the suspension of leisure services delivered by the Spectrum due to Covid-19 and that this was not sustainable and had a serious impact on the Council's finances.

Having considered the report, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budget assumptions used in the preparation of the 2021-22 outline budget and three year forward projections, be approved.
- (2) That the current position on the outline budget for 2021-22 and the budget shortfall anticipated over the 3 years to 2024-25, be noted.
- (3) That the savings strategy for 2021-22 through to 2024-25 (referred to in Section 13 of the report and Appendix 3) be approved.
- (4) That the proposal to Council to make the contributions to/from the Council's various earmarked reserves for specific purposes as set out in section 9 of the report be approved as part of the budget report in February 2021.
- (5) That the use of the Council's earmarked reserves as set out in section 10 of the report to fund the cost of the COVID19 Pandemic be approved, in line with the supplementary estimate agreed by Council in May 2020.

Reason:

To assist the Executive in the preparation of the General Fund estimates for 2021-22.

The meeting finished at 8.50 pm

Signed

Chairman

Date