

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

26 April 2021

- * Councillor Angela Gunning (Chairman)
- * Councillor Catherine Young (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Jon Askew | * Councillor Steven Lee |
| * Councillor Christopher Barrass | * Councillor Masuk Miah |
| Councillor Ruth Brothwell | * Councillor Maddy Redpath |
| * Councillor Graham Eyre | * Councillor Will Salmon |
| * Councillor Diana Jones | |

* Present

Councillors Joss Bigmore, Chris Blow, Julia McShane, Ramsey Nagaty and George Potter were also in attendance.

SR7 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Catherine Young was appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2020-21 municipal year.

SR8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence.

SR9 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

SR10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Advisory Board held on 12 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

SR11 INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC SERVICES DIRECTOR

The Leader of the Council introduced Dawn Hudd, recently appointed Strategic Services Director, together with her presentation regarding the Directorate's role, responsibilities and future work streams. The Director's background in economic development and key tasks were noted.

The presentation was divided in to the following five Sections which formed the Directorate, namely, Strategy and Communications; Planning Policy; Regeneration and Corporate Programmes; Asset Management; and Democratic Services and Elections.

Strategy and Communications

The Strategy and Communications Section consisted of the following teams and the presentation outlined the main functions and Key Priorities 2021-22 for each team:

- Strategic Planning and Risk Management
- Performance, Governance and Reporting
- Communications

- Innovation and Economic Development
- Voluntary Sector Support

The Director advised that this was a diverse Section which was fully occupied with the implementation of the new corporate programme of portfolio governance. There was a need to ensure that all existing programmes and projects, in addition to emerging projects, were aligned to the governance process.

The following points arose from related questions, comments and discussion in respect of this part of the presentation:

- The Council's increased use of technology to communicate with residents during the COVID-19 pandemic was welcomed as a means of contact going forward and a database of residents who were acceptable to receiving Council correspondence and communications electronically was being developed. Work was also taking place with colleagues across the Council to establish a central database of local contacts for businesses operating in the area to enhance communications.
- In terms of risk management, every service manager undertook a risk assessment of their particular service area and identified risks would differ according to the nature of the service area. Low level risks could include staff shortages, absence of grant funding to pursue projects and ICT failures. Each plan and project was subject to an individual risk management framework. In addition, a Corporate Risk Management Framework was currently being developed to identify significant risks to the Council as a whole. The pandemic had led to an increased focus on risk assessment and management.

Planning Policy

This part of the presentation commenced with an explanation of the route that planning policy documents followed towards adoption. This process flowed from the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance through the South East Plan Policy NRM6 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) towards the Development Plan, which consisted of a number of emerging and adopted documents, to deliver adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) ultimately. In addition to describing adopted and emerging planning policy documents, the presentation listed annual monitoring tasks, which featured updating and publishing certain documents in set timescales, other tasks and a summary of priorities. The Director drew attention to the motion recently passed by the Council to review the adopted Local Plan: Strategy and Sites document and highlighted the importance of working closely with the Town Centre Master Plan Team to ensure that emerging documents supported the Guildford Economic Regeneration Programme and future updates of the Local Plan. Design was a priority and meeting the high design and other standards set by the Council when pursuing its own projects and planning applications was emphasised.

Responses arose from questions stemming from this part of the presentation as follows:

- In terms of resources to undertake the detailed work associated with developing and reviewing planning policy documents, a mandate would be prepared to assist with identification of resource requirements. External consultants with the appropriate expertise could be appointed to assist if necessary.
- Any community was able to initiate and develop a Neighbourhood Plan and in the absence of a parish, it was for an interested community group to define its neighbourhood area, form a representative Neighbourhood Plan Forum and develop its Plan. It was emphasised that Planning Committee members should be aware of the

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content and status of Neighbourhood Plans when determining planning applications. Refresher training may be required in this area.

- Reference was made to the significance of permitted development rights and the importance of the recent councillor briefing in that respect.

Regeneration and Corporate Programmes

The corporate programmes consisted of economic regeneration programmes together with significant or complex capital and infrastructure projects, including housing and transport delivery. They were projects and programmes of work that were currently under way or in the pipeline within the Regeneration and Corporate Programmes team and were all in the process of being baselined and prioritised under developing governance which would have an impact on which were progressed, deferred or commenced in 2021-2022.

Two significant projects were the Guildford Economic Regeneration (GER) and Weyside Urban Village (WUV) programmes. In addition to the strategic objectives of economy, housing and transport, the GER programme included goals to improve environmental quality and secure a digital platform offering connectivity fit for the 21st century. Quality of design was key to the WUV programme and further to its successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government pilot to develop a quality design code, the Council had received funding and positive feedback.

Key projects expected to complete in 2021-2022 were Walnut Bridge, North Street / Friary Quarter Land Transactions, Guildford West Railway Station and the Sustainable Movement Corridor. Ash Road Bridge was a key infrastructure project at the design phase this year. Key housing projects consisted of Guildford Park Road and Bright Hill whilst there was ongoing work with developers of strategic sites at Wisley Airfield, Blackwell Park and Gosden Hill Farm.

The following points arose from related questions and discussion:

- Although the GER programme constituted a wider piece of work than the Town Centre Master Plan and was expected to expand to include locations such as the upper High Street secondary retail area at the appropriate time, the current aim was to limit this first stage of the programme to a manageable level in order to resolve challenging issues such as flooding prior to expanding the programme.
- A written reply and update would be provided in response to a query as to whether the WUV programme was likely to be further delayed and, if so, whether there was an associated contingency plan relating to the proposed new sewage treatment works.
- There was a robust governance structure around the WUV programme which included a strategic board with councillors amongst its membership and all councillor briefings at appropriate points. The Council's dual role of developer and local planning authority was recognised.
- The bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund and the planning application relating to the WUV programme were based on the proposed provision of 1,500 homes and any reduction in that number could impact on viability and the level of grant received. The density and mix of the development would be determined by the Planning Authority.

Asset Management

A focus for this team was tackling climate change and a two-fold Energy and Carbon Reduction High Level Action Plan, which covered Council assets and operations in addition to Borough-wide initiatives, had been implemented with a view to achieving this. A Carbon Footprint and Emissions Trajectory Report had been developed and would come before the

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EAB for consideration in due course. The presentation highlighted climate change mitigation projects and the focus for the year ahead. Whilst the Council was increasing its use of solar photovoltaic panels to reduce its carbon emissions, these equated to a small percentage of the overall emissions in the Borough and therefore it was necessary to work in partnership with others to achieve more significant reductions.

Other aspects of the team's work featured commercial estate intensification, implementation of the Industrial Estate Strategy which was also due for consideration by the EAB later in the year, property acquisition, asset improvements, programmed maintenance, restoration works and upcoming works.

Arising from related questions:

- Further information regarding opportunities to collaborate with Surrey County Council in respect of the Lockwood Centre at Slyfield Industrial Estate would be provided.
- Upcoming works in relation to the Guildhall would feature external decorations, internal decorations and lantern light repairs. Improvements to the internal accessibility of the building would be a matter for the Heritage and Culture Section which operated it.

Democratic Services and Elections

The EAB was advised of the key priorities for the year for the Democratic Services, Elections / Electoral Registration and Mayoral Support teams. It was noted that the High Court judgment concerning the legality of continuing to hold remote meetings beyond the current regulation expiry date of 6 May 2021 was awaited.

The following information was provided in response to associated questions:

- It was anticipated that the Council would be able to recruit sufficient staff to assist with the operation of the forthcoming Elections and Count despite the pandemic.
- As there were multiple Elections in several areas which could slow the voting process potentially leading to queuing at polling stations, consideration would be given to the issue of publicity encouraging people to vote at less busy times of the day where possible to avoid congestion.
- There had not been a noticeable increase in applications for postal votes. However, the level of postal vote take-up in the Borough was already high at approximately 25% of voters due to a previous all postal vote pilot.

The presentation slides would be forwarded to EAB members.

SR12 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

It was confirmed that a special meeting of the Executive followed by an extraordinary meeting of the Council were now scheduled to take place on 30 September 2021 to consider the Regulation 19 consultation relating to the Local Plan.

SR13 EAB WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that the Council Tax CAB Protocol item scheduled for consideration by the Executive on 21 September 2021 differed from the Fundamental Review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme item listed on the EAB's Work Programme for discussion at its meeting on 14 June 2021.

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The meeting finished at 8.40 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman