

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Guildford Borough Council held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 17 December, 2020

Councillor Richard Billington (Mayor)

* Councillor Marsha Moseley (Deputy Mayor)

Councillor Paul Abbey	Councillor Ted Mayne
* Councillor Tim Anderson	Councillor Julia McShane
* Councillor Jon Askew	* Councillor Ann McShee
Councillor Christopher Barrass	* Councillor Bob McShee
* Councillor Joss Bigmore	* Councillor Masuk Miah
* Councillor David Bilbé	* Councillor Ramsey Nagaty
* Councillor Chris Blow	* Councillor Susan Parker
* Councillor Dennis Booth	* Councillor George Potter
* Councillor Ruth Brothwell	* Councillor Jo Randall
* Councillor Colin Cross	* Councillor John Redpath
Councillor Graham Eyre	* Councillor Maddy Redpath
Councillor Andrew Gomm	Councillor Caroline Reeves
* Councillor Angela Goodwin	Councillor John Rigg
* Councillor David Goodwin	* Councillor Tony Rooth
* Councillor Angela Gunning	* Councillor Will Salmon
* Councillor Gillian Harwood	* Councillor Deborah Seabrook
* Councillor Jan Harwood	* Councillor Pauline Searle
* Councillor Liz Hogger	* Councillor Paul Spooner
* Councillor Tom Hunt	* Councillor James Steel
* Councillor Gordon Jackson	* Councillor James Walsh
* Councillor Diana Jones	* Councillor Fiona White
* Councillor Steven Lee	Councillor Catherine Young
* Councillor Nigel Manning	

*Present

CO56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Mayor, Councillor Richard Billington, and from Councillors Paul Abbey, Christopher Barrass, Graham Eyre, Andrew Gomm, Ted Mayne, Julia McShane, Caroline Reeves, John Rigg, and Catherine Young.

CO57 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

CO58 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

On behalf of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor expressed her gratitude to the Vivace Chorus for putting on the Mayor's Christmas Concert on Sunday 13 December, and to everyone who tuned in and donated. The current total on the Mayor's charity page was: £1,657.48 (of which £770 directly related to the concert). The concert was available to watch on YouTube and Facebook until Sunday 20 December.

CO59 LEADER'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Leader gave an update on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic locally and the recent announcement that much of the UK, including Guildford, would be moving to tier 3 at the

weekend. The Leader urged everyone to take care over the Christmas period particularly bearing in mind the proposed temporary relaxation in the restrictions.

The Council had made plans for increased staff availability over the Christmas period should we have to deal with any emergency situations or should there be further changes to the restrictions.

The Leader announced a small update to the Executive portfolios, with responsibility for heritage moving from the Environment portfolio to the Economy portfolio.

The Leader commented on two consultations running at the moment, with the online surveys to allow the public to comment on the emerging plans for the North Street development and to express their priorities for next year's budget. Councillors were asked to ensure as many residents participate in these surveys as possible.

In relation to the main business on the agenda for this extraordinary meeting, the Leader announced that a new cross-party working group would be constituted at the 5 January meeting of the Executive to consider the next stages of the electoral review.

CO60 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no questions or statements from the public.

CO61 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

CO62 PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

At its last meeting on 8 December 2020, the Council had considered a draft Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The Council agreed to refer the matter for further consideration by the Corporate Governance Task Group at its meeting held on 14 December 2020 for the purpose of:

- (a) giving further consideration to the requirements of the review generally and in particular to that referred to on pages 4-5, 13, and 21 of the LGBCE's guidance to councillors;
- (b) reviewing the contents of the Council Size Submission; and
- (c) consideration of the forecast increase in electorate by 2026

and reference back to this extraordinary meeting of the Council for final approval of the Council Size Submission.

At its meeting on 14 December, the Task Group was provided with details of the Council's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours and forecast increase in electorate by 2026 and had reviewed the contents of the draft Submission. The proposed revised draft Submission, as recommended by the Task Group including tracked changes, was set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Council. This now stated a preference for maintaining the current Council Size of 48 Councillors, based on the retention of all out elections every four years.

The Chairman of the Corporate Governance Task Group, Councillor Deborah Seabrook proposed, and Councillor Liz Hogger seconded, the adoption of the following motion:

- (1) That the Council Size Submission, attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Council, and its stated preference for maintaining a Council size of 48 Councillors, be approved and presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- (2) That the Democratic Services and Elections Manager, in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Task Group, be authorised to make such minor alterations to improve the clarity of the revised draft Submission document as the Council may determine.

Under Council Procedure Rule 15 (o), Councillor Seabrook as the mover of the original motion, indicated that, with the consent of her seconder and of the meeting, she wished to alter her motion as follows:

Alter paragraph (1) of the motion so that it reads (*changes shown in italics*):

“(1) That, *subject to the amendments below*, the Council Size Submission, attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Council, and its stated preference for maintaining a Council size of 48 Councillors, be approved and presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:

- (a) On page 17 of the revised draft Submission (page 30 of the Council agenda), after “*There are no plans to introduce area planning committees.*”, add the following paragraph:

“All councillors are involved in the planning process dealing with enquiries from residents regarding planning applications. Planning Committee members will have a significantly greater involvement as they deal with those applications referred to the committee for determination, most of which are locally sensitive or controversial. Meetings of the Planning Committee often take three hours or more to complete and committee members can expect to need several hours to read and understand the plans, respond to residents’ representations, and visit particular sites. Planning applications in respect of strategic sites identified in the Local Plan, will carry even greater sensitivity and will require a significant time commitment from councillors on the Committee, in addition to the normal business.”

- (b) On page 28 of the revised draft Submission (page 41 of the Council agenda), under “Alternatives”

- (i) amend the first paragraph as follows:

*“In considering the appropriate Council size, we have looked at the implications of reducing the number of councillors to ~~44 fewer than 48~~ but feel that this would not provide sufficient Councillor capacity to undertake the range of roles set out in this proposal or offer sufficient community leadership. It is also recognised that the Borough will continue to see significant population growth *in view of the anticipated housing development, for example at the various strategic sites identified in the Local Plan.* ~~and~~ We therefore *believe that* a reduction in number of councillors would result in an increase in electorate represented by each councillor and an increase in councillor workload in terms of casework and community leadership.”*

- (ii) substitute the following in place of the second paragraph:

“We have also looked at a comparable increase in councillor numbers (an increase of three councillors was awarded to Guildford in 1998 and the borough’s population has increased by 25% since then). An increase of, say, four to 52 councillors would still

mean each councillor represents 2279 each by 2026 (128 electors per councillor more than present 2151) and more thereafter. However, the financial implications of a general increase in councillor numbers would be hard to justify in the current difficult financial climate. As stated above, once the warding review has been undertaken and the need for possible adjustments in councillor numbers taken into account to achieve appropriate revised ward boundaries, we reiterate that this should be by an adjustment by way of an increase in councillor numbers rather than a reduction, for the reasons articulated in this Submission.”

- (c) On page 29 of the revised draft Submission (page 42 of the Council agenda), add the following paragraph to the “Conclusion” immediately before “*The Council also wishes to continue with all-out elections every four years*”:

“On the basis of the Commission’s expectation (as stated in their guidance) that the Council makes a submission for a council size that we believe is right for our authority and which enables the Council to “represent communities in the future and ensure that governance arrangements reflect our long term ambitions”, and takes into account future trends, we believe that the Council size should be at least 48”.

The Council agreed to accept the alteration to the original motion, as indicated above. The motion, as altered, therefore became the substantive motion for debate.

Following the debate on the substantive motion, the Council

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, subject to the amendments below, the Council Size Submission, attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Council, and its stated preference for maintaining a Council size of 48 Councillors, be approved and presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:

- (a) On page 17 of the revised draft Submission (page 30 of the Council agenda), after “*There are no plans to introduce area planning committees.*”, add the following paragraph:

“All councillors are involved in the planning process dealing with enquiries from residents regarding planning applications. Planning Committee members will have a significantly greater involvement as they deal with those applications referred to the committee for determination, most of which are locally sensitive or controversial. Meetings of the Planning Committee often take three hours or more to complete and committee members can expect to need several hours to read and understand the plans, respond to residents’ representations, and visit particular sites. Planning applications in respect of strategic sites identified in the Local Plan, will carry even greater sensitivity and will require a significant time commitment from councillors on the Committee, in addition to the normal business.”

- (b) On page 28 of the revised draft Submission (page 41 of the Council agenda), under “Alternatives”

- (j) amend the first paragraph as follows:

“In considering the appropriate Council size, we have looked at the implications of reducing the number of councillors to ~~44 fewer than 48~~ but feel that this would not provide sufficient Councillor capacity to undertake the range of roles set out in this proposal or offer sufficient community leadership. It is also recognised that the

Borough will continue to see significant population growth in view of the anticipated housing development, for example at the various strategic sites identified in the Local Plan. and We therefore believe that a reduction in number of councillors would result in an increase in electorate represented by each councillor and an increase in councillor workload in terms of casework and community leadership."

(ii) substitute the following in place of the second paragraph:

"We have also looked at a comparable increase in councillor numbers (an increase of three councillors was awarded to Guildford in 1998 and the borough's population has increased by 25% since then). An increase of, say, four to 52 councillors would still mean each councillor represents 2279 each by 2026 (128 electors per councillor more than present 2151) and more thereafter. However, the financial implications of a general increase in councillor numbers would be hard to justify in the current difficult financial climate. As stated above, once the warding review has been undertaken and the need for possible adjustments in councillor numbers taken into account to achieve appropriate revised ward boundaries, we reiterate that this should be by an adjustment by way of an increase in councillor numbers rather than a reduction, for the reasons articulated in this Submission."

(c) On page 29 of the revised draft Submission (page 42 of the Council agenda), add the following paragraph to the "Conclusion" immediately before "The Council also wishes to continue with all-out elections every four years":

"On the basis of the Commission's expectation (as stated in their guidance) that the Council makes a submission for a council size that we believe is right for our authority and which enables the Council to "represent communities in the future and ensure that governance arrangements reflect our long term ambitions", and takes into account future trends, we believe that the Council size should be at least 48".

(2) That the Democratic Services and Elections Manager, in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Task Group, be authorised to make such minor alterations to improve the clarity of the revised draft Submission document as the Council may determine.

Under the Remote Meetings Protocol, a roll call was taken to record the vote on the substantive motion, the results of which were 30 councillors voting in favour, 5 against, and 2 abstentions, as follows:

For

Cllr Jon Askew
Cllr Tim Anderson
Cllr David Bilbé
Cllr Chris Blow
Cllr Dennis Booth
Cllr Ruth Brothwell
Cllr Colin Cross
Cllr Angela Goodwin
Cllr David Goodwin
Cllr Angela Gunning
Cllr Gillian Harwood
Cllr Liz Hogger
Cllr Gordon Jackson
Cllr Diana Jones
Cllr Nigel Manning

Against

Cllr Joss Bigmore
Cllr Jan Harwood
Cllr Tom Hunt
Cllr John Redpath
Cllr James Steel

Abstentions

Cllr Steven Lee
Cllr Marsha Moseley

For

Cllr Ann McShee
Cllr Bob McShee
Cllr Masuk Miah
Cllr Ramsey Nagaty
Cllr Susan Parker
Cllr George Potter
Cllr Jo Randall
Cllr Maddy Redpath
Cllr Tony Rooth
Cllr Will Salmon
Cllr Deborah Seabrook Cllr
Pauline Searle
Cllr Paul Spooner
Cllr James Walsh
Cllr Fiona White

Against

Abstentions

CO63 REVIEW OF ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES: 2020-21

The Council received the report of the proper officer (Democratic Services and Elections Manager) on the review of the allocation of seats on committees, following receipt on 11 December 2020 of notice in writing from Councillors David Bilbe, Richard Billington, Graham Eyre, and Paul Spooner that they wished to be treated as members of the Conservative group and, subsequently, written notice from the leader of the Conservative group, Councillor Nigel Manning, that he would be happy to treat those four councillors as members of that group.

These notices also had the effect of simultaneously ceasing the membership of Councillors Bilbe, Billington, Eyre, and Spooner of the Conservative Independent Group on the Council.

The political balance on the Council was now:

Guildford Liberal Democrats: 17
Residents for Guildford and Villages: 16
Conservative Group: 8
Guildford Greenbelt Group: 3
Labour: 2
Independent: 1
Vacancy: 1

Under Council Procedure Rule 23, whenever there was a change in the political constitution of the Council, the Council must, as soon as reasonably practicable, review the allocation of seats on committees to political groups.

The report included a suggested numerical allocation of seats on committees to political groups that would best meet, as far as reasonably practicable, the requirements for political balance for the remainder of the 2020-21 Municipal Year.

Upon the motion of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Joss Bigmore, seconded by Councillor Nigel Manning, the Council

RESOLVED: That, in the light of the change in the political constitution of the Council described in the report submitted to the Council, the proposed revision to the calculation of the numerical allocation of seats on committees to political groups and the independent councillor for the remainder of the 2020-21 Municipal Year, as set out in the table below, be approved:

Committee	Lib Dem	R4GV	Con	GGG	Lab	Ind
Total no. of seats on the Council (1 vacancy)	17	16	8	3	2	1
% of no. of seats on the Council	36.17%	34.04%	17.02%	6.38%	4.26%	2.13%
Corp Gov & Standards Cttee (7 seats)	2	2	1	1	1	0
Employment Cttee (3 seats)	1	1	1	0	0	0
Service Delivery EAB (12 seats)	4	5	2	1	0	0
Strategy and Resources EAB (12 seats)	4	4	1	1	1	1
Guildford Joint Cttee (10 seats)	4	3	2	1	0	0
Licensing Cttee (15 seats)	6	5	2	1	0	1
Overview & Scrutiny Cttee (12 seats)	4	4	2	1	1	0
Planning Cttee (15 seats)	5	5	3	1	1	0
Total no. of seats on committees (Total: 86)	30	29	14	7	4	2

CO64 COMMON SEAL

The Council

RESOLVED: That the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to any documents to give effect to any decisions taken by the Council at this meeting.

The meeting finished at 7.53 pm

Signed

Mayor

Date