

## EXECUTIVE

- \* Councillor Joss Bigmore (Chairman)
- \* Councillor Julia McShane (Vice-Chair)

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| * Councillor Tim Anderson | * Councillor John Rigg   |
| * Councillor Tom Hunt     | * Councillor James Steel |
| * Councillor John Redpath | * Councillor Cait Taylor |

\*Present

Councillor Deborah Seabrook was also in attendance.  
Councillors Angela Goodwin, Tony Rooth, Fiona White and Catherine Young were in remote attendance

### **EX69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **EX70 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **EX71 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

With regard to the minute of the Leader's Announcements concerning the Covid Development Grant, the Lead Councillor for Economy commented that the £390,000 quoted related only to Covid Business Development Grant Scheme and, with this, Covid packages processed by the Council now totalled more than £47.5 million.

### **EX72 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to officers who had participated in supporting residents and county council partners in responding to the impact of storm Eunice. Staff had given their time freely over the weekend to make calls to check on the wellbeing of vulnerable residents, some of whom were without power or water and to assist with the clearance of debris, fallen trees and making areas safe. Throughout the council had maintain services including bin collections and meals on wheels. The few bins that were not collected on the Friday as the storm gathered were collected on the Saturday. Stoke Gardens had seen a wall collapse that had been made safe and the garden remained open. The Leader expressed regret at the loss of trees across the borough and other damage caused by the storm but was thankful that no one had been injured.

The Government had lifted all remaining Covid restrictions but the Leader was mindful that there were still Covid fatalities and urged residents to keep safe by getting vaccinated, get tested if experiencing symptoms and to consider wearing face coverings when in crowded places and to ventilate rooms. Those who were vulnerable were not always visible and it was important to keep them safe.

From April residents living in Council Tax Bands A to D were likely to receive £150 council tax rebate from the Government to help with the cost of living and energy price rises. The rebate

was separate and would not appear on council tax bills. Those who paid by direct debit would receive the rebate directly into their accounts. For those who did not pay by direct debit there would be guidance to follow on how to claim.

The 2022 Guildford in Bloom competition had been launched with the main competition complemented by a schools' competition. The theme for this year would be the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

An event would be held on the 4 June which was the Jubilee weekend at Guildford Castle with a picnic, music and other entertainment in partnership with Guildford Fringe Festival and Experience Guildford.

There was a new display at Guildford Museum called 'Soldiers of Surrey – stories from the Queens Royal Regiment'.

Finally, the Leader thanks the departing Monitoring Officer, Diane Owens for her service to the council.

### **EX73 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The intention of the document was to collate and track progress of all recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Executive throughout the year, and to log the Executive decisions on the submitted matters. The Executive's agreed response to the recommendations would be fed back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to relevant officers.

The standing agenda item was noted by the Executive. There were no further comments.

### **EX74 PETITION: MAKE GUILDFORD PESTICIDE-FREE**

On 4 August 2021, an e-petition was launched on the Council's website requesting the Council to make Guildford pesticide-free.

The e-petition and supporting paper petition attracted over 500 signatures and in accordance with the council's procedure rules was debated by full Council on 7 December 2021. Following the debate, the Council resolved: "That the Executive be requested to urgently consider and approve the proposed chemical reduction measures in 2022 set out in Appendix 6 to the report submitted to the Council, and to commit the Council to working with Surrey County Council in developing a joint pesticide policy."

The Lead Councillor for Environment introduced the item and set out the proposals in the report.

It was noted that during clearing of a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in the borough pesticides were used. It was noted such activities were not always within the control of the council but there would be engagement and partnership work to reduce usage as set out in the appendices. The Leader agreed to explore the possibility of imposing conditions with regards to the use of pesticide at planning application stage.

There were legal restrictions on the use of pesticides as set out by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and in certain areas the council had stewardship arrangements with Defra that jointly agreed the best management approach.

It was acknowledged that the council was legally required to record the detail of the use of Glyphosate. It was suggested that the record should be in the public domain and easily accessible.

There was an endorsement of developing a close partnership with Waverley Borough Council and the Pesticide Action Network and it was noted that a meeting organised by Surrey Wildlife Trust would shortly be held involving all key partners and all other local authorities in Surrey. On agreement of the recommendations this would become an ongoing event.

The Leader thanked the members of the public that had raised the petition and brought the matter to the attention of councillors. A copy of the report would be emailed to the organisers for their information.

#### RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed chemical reduction measures in 2022 as set out in Appendix 6 of the report and to commit the Council to working with Surrey County Council (SCC) in developing a joint pesticide policy.

#### Reason:

To implement the resolution as agreed by the Council at its meeting on 7 December 2021.

### **EX75 NORTH STREET DEVELOPMENT SITE, GUILDFORD**

The Executive considered a report that updated on the progress of the North Street development site and set out a high level specification for the bus interchange and the proposed pedestrianisation of North Street. In addition, the report sought authority to transfer £150,000 of funds from the provisional to the approved capital programme so as to progress the project.

The Lead Councillor for Regeneration introduced the report.

Since July 2019 the Council had been in negotiations with the developer St Edward to agree terms for the sale of its land within the North Street development site in order to facilitate the construction of a residential led mixed-use scheme to include a refurbished bus interchange and pedestrianisation. Following the Executive meeting on 26 October 2021 a working group of stakeholders had been formed. The working group included St Edwards representatives, the Guildford Business Improvement District, M&G who were owners of the Friary Shopping Centre and Stagecoach; four ward councillors and officers from Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council. As agreed by the Executive the working group would make recommendations in respect of the design of the refurbished bus station including the associated access and public realm improvements and the proposed pedestrianisation of North Street. There had been three meetings of the working group where architects Scott Brownrigg, Murdoch Wickham and St Edwards had presented.

Agreement of a high-level specification for the refurbished bus interchange and the pedestrianisation of North Street was required to enable the exchange of the sale contract for the sale of the council's land and the redevelopment of the North Street site to proceed.

In paragraph 4.5 of the report it was stated there would be a £500,000 shortfall on the budget due to the proposed taxi rank and roadway re-arrangements that were found to come with a much higher cost than anticipated. The Lead Councillor Regeneration announced that the

developer had absorbed this cost and consequently the figures detailed in paragraph 4.6 should be adjusted accordingly.

The Lead Councillor stressed that the proposals were at high level specification stage and that more detailed proposals would be put to the Executive, involve full consultation and planning processes in due course.

The Executive,

RESOLVED:

1. To agree the working group's recommendation for the design and high-level specification for the refurbished bus interchange.
2. To agree the working group's recommendation for the design and high-level specification for the proposed pedestrianisation of North Street.
3. To move £150,000 from the 2022-23 provisional capital programme to the approved capital programme to fund the ongoing work on the North Street Project.

Reason:

To maintain progress with the North Street development project.

#### **EX76 USE OF RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS POLICY**

The report was introduced by the Lead Councillor for Resources.

Between 2018 and 2021 the council had a significant issue with identifying and then delivering schemes within the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) within the HRA. Whilst some of the smaller sites had been successful, a number of larger schemes in the Housing Investment Programme in the HRA capital programme had, for various reasons, seen significant slippage in delivery which resulted in the council needing to repay £2.7million in Right to Buy (RTB) receipts to government during Quarter 4 2018-19, and throughout 2019-20. This had caused much concern both within and outside of the council. The Executive agreed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 to develop and adopt a formal Use of Right to Buy Receipts policy.

The Council had not repaid any receipts in 2020-21 and 2021-22 due to a significant HRA property acquisition programme, increased awareness of the need to spend the receipts within the timescale and better monitoring arrangements. This approach was set out in the draft policy document submitted to the Executive. The Lead Councillor Resources explained that although the policy was very detailed that level of rigour was required to ensure that the council's forward management of RTB was comprehensive and robust. The policy could be reviewed and streamlined in the future.

There was gratitude to officers for the report from members of the Executive.

The Executive,

RESOLVED to approve the Use of Retained Right to Buy Receipts Policy.

Reason:

To facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in the borough and try to mitigate the risk of repaying RTB receipts to government in the future.

**EX77 GRANT OF LICENCES FOR AMENITY LAND ADJACENT TO BEEHCROFT DRIVE**

The report included an appendix that was classified by the Monitoring Officer as exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The Executive declined to discuss this appendix and the meeting remained in open session.

The existing access arrangements from Beechcroft Drive onto the A3 had long been identified by residents and public authorities alike as being compromised and dangerous. A permanent alternative vehicular access route had not been achieved, despite investigations and discussions taking place over a number of years.

The Executive considered a report that sought authority to enter into licence agreements with the freeholders of Beechcroft Drive to provide residents with an alternative access route via the Council's amenity land, at less than best consideration.

The Lead Councillor for Resources introduced the report and described the licence agreements as a pragmatic move. It was noted that the University had already issued licences to residents and urged the Executive to agree the recommendations and complete the access route.

Consequently, the Executive,

RESOLVED:

1. The Strategic Services Director, in consultation with the lead Councillor for Resources, be authorised to negotiate and enter into all property documentation required to grant licence agreements with the freeholders of Beechcroft Drive for less than best consideration.
2. The allocation of £11,000 revenue to cover the Council's legal costs associated with the drafting and execution of the licences relating to Beechcroft Drive was approved.

Reason:

This recommendation would provide the residents of Beechcroft Drive with an alternative access route to avoid having to enter/exit the residential street via the A3, as well as formalising the arrangement which relates to the Council's own land ownership.

**EX78 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of agenda item 10 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the 1972 Act.

**EX79 THE ACADEMY OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND THE RIVERSIDE CENTRE**

The Executive considered a report which set out the proposed agreement between the council and the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) who were tenants of the Council owned Riverside Centre, on Town Wharf. The ACM wished to give up their leasehold interest in the subject property which was surplus to their requirements following the relocation of their student union elsewhere.

RESOLVED, the officer recommendation to enter into a deed of surrender on the lease for the Riverside Centre was approved.

Reason:

The ACM was a local education provider that brought students and benefits into the Town Centre and which leased several properties from the Council.

The meeting finished at 7.50 pm

Signed .....

Chairman

Date .....