

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Guildford Borough Council held at Council Chamber, Millmead House, Millmead, Guildford, Surrey GU2 4BB on Tuesday 10 April 2018

* Councillor Nigel Manning (Mayor)

* Councillor Mike Parsons (Deputy Mayor)

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| * Councillor David Bilbé | * Councillor Jennifer Jordan |
| * Councillor Richard Billington | * Councillor Nigel Kears |
| * Councillor Philip Brooker | * Councillor Sheila Kirkland |
| * Councillor Adrian Chandler | * Councillor Julia McShane |
| * Councillor Alexandra Chesterfield | * Councillor Bob McShee |
| Councillor Nils Christiansen | * Councillor Marsha Moseley |
| * Councillor Colin Cross | * Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith |
| * Councillor Geoff Davis | * Councillor Susan Parker |
| * Councillor Graham Ellwood | Councillor Dennis Paul |
| * Councillor David Elms | * Councillor Tony Phillips |
| * Councillor Matt Furniss | * Councillor Mike Piper |
| * Councillor Andrew Gomm | * Councillor David Quelch |
| * Councillor Angela Goodwin | * Councillor Jo Randall |
| * Councillor David Goodwin | * Councillor David Reeve |
| Councillor Murray Grubb Jnr | * Councillor Caroline Reeves |
| * Councillor Angela Gunning | * Councillor Iseult Roche |
| * Councillor Gillian Harwood | * Councillor Tony Rooth |
| Councillor Liz Hogger | Councillor Matthew Sarti |
| Councillor Christian Holliday | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Liz Hooper | * Councillor Paul Spooner |
| * Councillor Mike Hurdle | * Councillor James Walsh |
| * Councillor Michael Illman | * Councillor Jenny Wicks |
| * Councillor Gordon Jackson | * Councillor David Wright |

*Present

Honorary Freeman Jen Powell and Honorary Aldermen K Childs, T Patrick, N Sutcliffe and M A H M Williamson were also in attendance.

CO97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nils Christiansen, Liz Hogger, Christian Holliday, Dennis Paul, and Matt Sarti, and from Honorary Aldermen Mrs C F Cobley, Mrs S Creedy, Mrs C F P Griffin, J Marks, and L Strudwick.

CO98 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

CO99 MINUTES

The Council confirmed, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2018. The Mayor signed the minutes.

CO100 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor read a letter written by Ms Lisa Wright who wished to clarify a statement she had made at the extraordinary meeting of the Council on 21 November 2017 relating to the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

The Mayor informed the Council that he had sent a letter of condolence to the family of Simon Barnes, who was the Chief Executive of the Surrey County Agricultural Society, who had passed away peacefully last week following a relatively short illness.

The Mayor reported that tickets had sold well for his final fundraising event of the year, the 'Red, White & Blue' Royal Birthday Ball', which was being held on Saturday 21 April 2018 at Guildford Harbour Hotel.

The Mayor had commissioned the 'Mayor's trophy for Sportsmanship', to be awarded each year at the Guildford Lions Raft Race, and would be presented for the first time at this year's Race on Saturday 7 July.

CO101 LEADER'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Leader made a statement in respect of the Local Plan Inspector's questions and the Council's response. The Council's detailed responses to the eight core questions would be circulated to all councillors and uploaded to the Council's website.

CO102 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Statements

The following persons addressed the Council meeting in respect of Agenda Item 10 – Minutes of the Executive (specifically minute EX84 – West Lodge, Blacksmith Lane, Chilworth):

- (1) Gavin Morgan (on behalf of Guildford Heritage Forum)
- (2) Maggie Scott (on behalf of Chilworth2gether, and member of the St Martha Parish Council West Lodge Working group)

The public speakers expressed concern over the Executive's decision to dispose of West Lodge, and its justification for that decision. It was suggested that in order to make the property suitable for owner occupation, it would be necessary to demolish a substantial part of the Listed Building. Furthermore, it was argued that the proposal to dispose of the only building on the Gunpowder Mills site that provided shelter, electricity, drinking water, and a toilet was counter intuitive.

It was also suggested that the Council should maintain a separate list of heritage assets, and explore with St Martha Parish Council options as to how the property might be used and maintained in the future as a heritage asset.

The Lead Councillor for Finance and Asset Management responded to the statements and indicated that any purchaser of West Lodge would be aware of its Listed Building status and would need appropriate consents from the Council to demolish any part of it. The Lead Councillor reiterated that local organisations, including St Martha Parish Council, were given every opportunity to come up with sustainable proposals for West Lodge and none were received. Councillors were also reminded that, in the current financial climate, the Council did not have the resources to maintain West Lodge in the future.

CO103 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- (a) Councillor Angela Gunning asked the Lead Councillor for Social Welfare, Heritage and the Arts, Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith, the following question:

"2018 marks the centenary of women achieving the vote - albeit initially only property owners aged over 30. Many Guildford women participated in the previous decades of campaigning – both as suffragists and suffragettes.

It is very disappointing to see that Guildford Museum apparently has currently no plans to celebrate this historic achievement.

Can we know why?

To rectify this omission can we please have an exhibition and/or an event devised as quickly as possible to take place before end 2018?

The Lead Councillor's response was as follows:

"I am very happy to allay Councillor Gunning's concerns and confirm that Guildford Museum will indeed be marking the anniversary of women achieving the vote.

Heritage team staff are already planning and curating the temporary exhibition, Women's work, to open at the Museum in November 2018. This will draw on photographs, from the Guildford Museum collection, depicting women at work during World War I – largely in roles previously only occupied by men. While the images are interesting in themselves and provide a record of life in Surrey during World War I, they also show how WWI disrupted the status quo at home and contributed to furthering women's suffrage. The exhibition will be accompanied by a programme of activities. We are also providing copies of some of these images for display during the Suffragette Centenary Dinner at the Watts Gallery in December.

In addition, we are planning to show the exhibition, the March of the Women, Surrey's Road to the Vote, a touring exhibition being curated by the Surrey History Centre. This will explore and chronicle the contribution of Surrey's people to both sides of the suffrage debate <http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/march-women-surreys-road-vote/>. The exhibition will launch at the Surrey History Centre in November 2018 and tour Surrey museums after this."

Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith
Lead Councillor for Social Welfare, Heritage, and the Arts

In a supplementary question, Councillor Gunning asked the Lead Councillor why we were commemorating the March of the Women in November 2018, when the event actually took place in 1913 and the centenary was recognised in Guildford in 2013. The Lead Councillor responded by stating that the order in which the exhibitions were curated was a matter for the Heritage team, but indicated that she would investigate whether an alternative time for this event would be appropriate.

- (b) Councillor Tony Rooth asked the Lead Councillor for Economic Development and Tourism, Councillor David Bilbé the following question:

"In light of the fact that, as at 2pm on Wednesday 4 April 2018, the Village was still closed with the containers remaining on the site, may I ask the Lead Councillor for Economic Development and Tourism, by reference to the Report made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6 March 2018 (paragraphs referred to below):

- (a) whether the Council has now negotiated the sale of the containers, at what financial return and when will they be removed from the site? (paragraph 13);*
- (b) whether the Council is now required to pay £138,000 in business rates with effect from 1 April 2018? (paragraphs 14 and 15);*
- (c) what is the estimated supplementary estimate required to be approved for the 2018-19 budget? (paragraph 19)*
- (d) what are the accrued, current and ongoing costs and other financial implications in relation to the site (paragraph 20);*

- (e) *what viable options for the future of the site (and their estimated financial outcomes) are being progressed as a matter of urgency in order to reduce or remove additional cost of the site to the Council and its taxpayers over and above the approximately £1,200,000 already spent?"*

The Lead Councillor's response was as follows:

"In response to part (a) of the question:

We are still in discussions with two potential buyers but have yet to agree a price or calculate the cost of removal. One will require the containers circa June 2018 and the other has not yet confirmed when they would require the containers.

In response to part (b) of the question:

Business rates of £138,040 are payable for the year at the start of the year. Should we remove the containers during the year then we can apply to have the business rates repaid for the remaining period. It will also cost c.£10,000 to disconnect and "cap" services from the units (power, water, waste WiFi etc). Any income achieved from the sale of the containers would be a capital receipt from which we can pay reasonable removal/disposal costs.

In response to part (c) of the question:

The supplementary estimate will depend on when the containers are removed and business rates repaid.

In response to part (d) of the question:

The cost to the Council in 2017-18 was £345,252 (the final accounts are yet to be closed). The costs for 2018-19 are as indicated in the response to part (b) above. There are no other ongoing costs as the site will be locked and secure.

In response to part (e) of the question:

There are no plans for other uses of the site in accordance with previous decisions of the Council."

Councillor David Bilbé

Lead Councillor for Economic Development and Tourism

In a supplementary question, Councillor Rooth asked the Lead Councillor to confirm, given that business rates were now payable with effect from 1 April 2018, whether the cost of closing the Village will increase by approximately £380 per day, plus £10,000 in respect of disconnection of utilities until such time as the site was fully cleared and secured, and that these costs would be added to the £1,222,715 already spent on the project.

The Lead Councillor confirmed that that was the case. He also clarified that the Executive and officers (through the Leader and Managing Director) were critically aware of the urgency and the timescale with respect to the removal of the containers, bearing in mind that there were two potential buyers for them and that the Council did not wish to "double handle" the containers by removing them just to avoid business rates.

CO104 ADOPTION OF EFFINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillors were reminded that neighbourhood plans were statutory development plans produced by parish/town councils or neighbourhood forums. The Council considered a report on the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan, which had been produced by Effingham Parish Council for the Effingham Neighbourhood Area (Effingham ward and parish).

To meet the requirements of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“the Regulations”), the Council subjected the Plan to a six-week consultation and an examination, after which the Plan was amended in line with the recommendations of the examiner. The Plan was then the subject of a referendum of qualifying voters within the neighbourhood area on 22 February 2018. A majority voted to accept the plan.

By virtue of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Regulations, the Council must make (adopt) the Plan as soon as reasonably practicable after the referendum is held and, in any event, not later than the last day of the period of 8 weeks from the day after the referendum.

The Council did not need to make the neighbourhood plan if it considered that to do so would be a breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any EU or human rights obligations. Officers were of the view that making the Plan would not breach those obligations and that the Council must therefore decide whether or not to make the Plan.

Under recent changes to the Regulations, the Plan formed part of the statutory development plan and carried full weight in planning decisions as soon as it was approved at a referendum, rather than when it is made. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

Upon the motion of the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Paul Spooner, seconded by Councillor Caroline Reeves, the Council

RESOLVED: That the Council makes the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan.

Reason:

To meet the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

CO105 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS FOR THE FIVE YEAR PERIOD FROM 2018-19

The Council considered a report on the appointment of external auditors for the five year period from 2018-19. Councillors noted that with effect from the 2018-19 audits of accounts, Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) were responsible for appointing an auditor to principal local government and police bodies that had chosen to opt into its national auditor appointment arrangements. At its meeting on 6 December 2016, the Council had resolved to opt-in to the appointing person arrangements made by PSAA.

Grant Thornton UK LLP had been successful in winning a contract in the procurement process and had been recommended by PSAA as the Council’s auditors for a period of five years from 2018-19. This appointment was made under Regulation 13 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015, and had been approved by the PSAA Board at its meeting on 14 December 2017.

Grant Thornton had also been appointed as auditors to nine Surrey Boroughs/ Districts and Surrey County Council. There were no issues in respect of independence or any other reasons that would have prevented the appointment of Grant Thornton as auditors.

The matter had also been considered by the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee on 29 March 2018 as part of its consideration of the item on the External Audit Plan for 2017-18 and the Committee had endorsed the recommendation to appoint Grant Thornton.

Upon the motion of the Lead Councillor for Finance and Asset Management, Councillor Michael Illman, seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Matt Furniss, the Council

RESOLVED: That, following conclusion of the tendering exercise conducted through Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, Grant Thornton UK LLP be appointed as the Council's auditors for a period of five years commencing with the audit of the 2018-19 Statement of Accounts.

Reason:

To comply with regulation 13 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015.

CO106 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE

In relation to Minute No. EX84 (West Lodge, Blacksmith Lane, Chilworth) of the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 20 February 2018, Councillor Susan Parker expressed concern over the Executive's decision to dispose of West Lodge and suggested that it was inappropriate to realise a capital receipt from a heritage asset. Councillor David Reeve asked for clarification on the extent of the deterioration of West Lodge, and as it was a Grade II Listed Building, why it was allowed to deteriorate to its current condition.

The Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer indicated that a written response to Councillor Reeve's questions would be provided and circulated after the meeting.

Councillor Caroline Reeves asked the Council to note her suggestion made at the Executive meeting that a separate list of Heritage Assets should be produced.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Spooner confirmed that the Council already had a separate asset category for heritage assets on its balance sheet which included assets such as the Gunpowder Mills, Castle Arch, St Catherine's Hill and Chapel, and various collections at the Museum and Guildhall. West Lodge was not classified as a heritage asset and never had been.

The Leader also emphasised the great deal of work undertaken with St Martha Parish Council and the local community regarding opportunities to acquire the site as a local asset for the parish.

The Council

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 20 February 2018 be received and noted.

CO107 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 7.45 pm

Signed
Mayor

Date