

Executive

* Councillor Julia McShane (Chairperson)

* Councillor Tom Hunt (Vice-Chair)

* Councillor Angela Goodwin

* Councillor Carla Morson

* Councillor Catherine Houston

* Councillor George Potter

* Councillor Richard Lucas

* Councillor Merel Rehorst-Smith

*Present

Councillors James Jones, Richard Mills, Joanne Shaw, and Howard Smith were also in attendance.

Councillors Dawn Bennett, Ruth Brothwell, Stephen Hives, Vanessa King, James Walsh, Dominique Williams, Fiona White, and Catherine Young were in remote attendance

EX28 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

EX29 Local Code of Conduct - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

EX30 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

EX31 Leader's Announcements

New Exhibition at Guildford House

The Leader announced that a new exhibition would open at Guildford House Gallery this weekend from 25 November 2023 to 6 January 2024. The display featured a selection of artworks from the Guildford House Open Competition 2023. Promising a captivating experience for any contemporary art lover, this exhibition was for all ages.

Festive Family Fun Day

The Leader announced that the annual Festive Family Fun Day returned to the town centre last weekend, launching the start of Christmas in Guildford. A full programme of free entertainment ran throughout the day. It had been well-

attended and very positive comments were received on the day. The event had been funded by Experience Guildford and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Christmas bin collections

The dates for Christmas bin collections were now on the Council's website: www.guildford.gov.uk/Christmasbincollectiontimes

Guildford Design Awards

The Guildford Design Awards were currently taking place and the Council had several buildings nominated for awards including The Guildhall, Walnut Bridge and Midleton Enterprise Park. The Leader wished everyone taking part good luck.

Tenant Drop-in Sessions

The Leader informed councillors that the first of our tenant drop-in sessions took place on Wednesday 22 November, and that if they knew of any tenants within their wards that would like to come and talk to us the next session would take place at The Hive on Park Barn Drive on Wednesday 29 November between 6.30pm and 8pm.

EX32 Review of Councillors' Allowances: Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Council appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) – jointly with Waverley in October 2022 to review the existing scheme of councillors' allowances and make recommendations for a new scheme. On 2 November 2023, the IRP concluded its review and the Executive received its report and recommendations which were attached as Appendix 1.

The Leader highlighted the correction set out in the Supplementary Information Sheet. On page 20 of the agenda, the figure quoted as the Employers' National Insurance contribution in the table in paragraph 9.1 (Financial Implications) was incorrect. It should have read "£18,153".

The Chairman of the IRP, Dennis Frost, was in attendance along with Panel member Rodney Bates (in remote attendance) to speak to the report. Mr Frost set out his experience of working on other IRPs and the experience of the other panel members. He had been a member of the Guildford IRP which last reviewed the scheme in 2019. Mr Frost thanked officers for their support to the IRP.

During the course of its review, the IRP had received and considered twenty-five completed questionnaires from members and had interviewed fourteen members to arrive at the final recommendations which included a rise in the Public Service Discount (PSD) from 35% to 40% and a 2.5% increase to the Basic Allowance (BA). If adopted, this would be the highest BA of all of the Surrey

districts and boroughs. The IRP argued this was justified when taking in account the latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) median hourly rate for Guildford and the average number of hours that Guildford members spent undertaking council business. It was noted that the hourly rate for Guildford had risen by over 12% in the past year.

There were recommended changes to some of the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) awarded to councillors undertaking additional roles such as the Leadership, portfolio holders, chairs and vice chairs of the various committees, notably an increase in the Leader's Allowance to 250% of the BA and a small reduction for portfolio holders. The IRP had taken a particular interest in how the role of the Mayor was supported through the Allowances Scheme and sought to spend more time looking in depth at this role with a view to reporting back in a year's time. The Panel recommended the Council adopt a scheme where a councillor could only receive one SRA, as this was described as fair and best practice.

Mr Frost observed the demographic of the membership had changed since 2019 and consequently there was a different recommendation for the Dependent Carers' Allowance (DCA) than in 2019. The Panel had recommended a new level which was an alternative lump sum of £500 be made available annually to parents of children under 12 years old and to registered carers rather than the submission of a series of claims and small expenses payments throughout the year. This was described as fair and equitable and less bureaucratic.

The Panel judged its recommendations to the council as an overall increase of 3.9% compared to the current budget, significantly less than the rate of inflation.

The Leader took questions for the IRP from non-Executive councillors. Councillor Brothwell, who was a chair of an Executive Advisory Board (EAB), noted that the SRA for this role would be reduced under the IRP's recommendations. The reason supporting the recommendation was that the EABs had rarely met during recent months. Councillor Brothwell argued that the EABs were scheduled to meet monthly and that cancellations were beyond the influence of the chairs and vice-chairs. The Panel members present replied that should the EAB meetings return to the previous frequency then the matter could be reviewed and that this was set out in the report.

Councillor Young suggested there might be a means by which the vice-chair of a committee might receive a proportion of the chair's remuneration when the chair was absent. Councillor Young was Chairman of the Licensing Committee and, having noted the recommended reduction in the one-off payments received by Licensing Sub-Committee Chairs, enquired should the one SRA rule be adopted

would this include the payments made to the Licensing Sub-Committee Chairs. The Panel members present responded to say that on the occasions when a deputy stepped up to take the Chair this would be a level of detail on which the Panel could not advise but might rather be a matter for the two individuals concerned to resolve between themselves. With regard to the one-off payments made to the Licensing Sub-Committee Chairs the Panel was of the view that the current amount was too generous and should be reduced to be in line with other Surrey councils, it was noted that some councils made no payment at all for this responsibility. It was reiterated that one SRA was fair and best practice.

The matter of the role of the IRP in stimulating diversity on the council was raised and the increase in flexible options for those with caring responsibilities was welcomed. The Chairman of the IRP considered the Panel's role in increasing a more diverse membership was limited and that the council itself should be leading in this regard. The proposed reductions for certain SRAs were questioned but was upheld by Mr Frost as evidenced through member interviews.

The Lead Councillor for Finance and Property thanked the Panel for its report which was described as clear, well-reasoned and much appreciated. Further appreciation was given to the Panel for taking into account the Council's current financial position by recommending an increase substantially below the rate of inflation. In addition, there was concern that there should be any increase at all at the current time.

Members of the Executive reflected that the BA was a crucial enabler for residents from diverse backgrounds to assume the role of councillor and consequently to provide representation for all communities. In addition, the report illustrated the elevated levels of public duty and commitment to voluntary service displayed by members of the Council via the recommended increase in the PSD to 40%.

Executive members welcomed the innovative approach to the DCA with the two different levels which sought to support and enable carers to participate in the democratic process and to represent their communities.

Overall, the report was well-received by the Executive, however in consideration of the Council's financial position, members of the Executive voiced concern about supporting any recommendations to increase the Councillors' Allowances Scheme at the current time. It was suggested a further review might be undertaken of Panel's recommendations in 12-months' time when the financial picture might be clearer. It was further proposed that the current indexation linking the Scheme to officer pay awards be suspended for the same 12-month period resulting in a freeze of allowances expenditure for 2024-25.

The Executive did have reservations concerning some of the recommendations of the IRP, notably the adoption of the One SRA Rule, but overall, it was the financial circumstances of the council that was at the forefront of the debate.

On 5 December 2023, Council was to consider the IRP's recommendations for a new scheme of allowances, together with any recommendations of the Executive, prior to determining a new scheme of councillors' allowances to come into effect on 1 April 2024. Consequently, the Executive agreed the following,

Recommendation to full Council (5 December 2023):

That the Council:

- (1) defers consideration of the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the review of councillors' allowances for a period of 12 months;
- (2) retains the current scheme of allowances without indexation, which effectively freezes councillors' allowances at their current level for the 2024-25 financial year; and
- (3) thanks the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work.

Reason:

In view of the current situation with regard to the Council's current financial position and the Council's determination to resolve those difficulties, now was not the right time to be increasing councillors' allowances.

EX33 Guildford & Waverley Transformation & Collaboration Programme

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development introduced the report.

Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils agreed to enter a collaboration in July 2021, starting with the appointment of a Joint Management Team (JMT) as a way of bringing forward further business cases for collaboration. The intention was to provide a robust partnership to provide better value for residents.

The report before the Executive set out the progress made so far and made recommendations in respect of future collaboration options, including options analyses, governance, and financial matters.

A transformation programme was proposed as the means for fostering future closer collaboration between the councils, whilst maintaining the independence and sovereignty of both authorities. Agreement of the report's recommendations

would empower officers to proceed with the programme and to realise the benefits of the collaboration.

The Programme would support the five principles set out in the vision, notably, to remain accountable to their own residents; to enhance and protect the continued delivery of priority services in the face of financial challenge; to seek to achieve more together than could be achieved separately in response to the climate emergency; to harmonise internal processes and external service delivery except where there is a good reason not to and to build a stable basis for any future collaboration proposals.

The Executive was content with the report and the recommendations set out therein and consequently,

RESOLVED:

- (1) To note and endorse the Guildford and Waverley Partnership Vision statement, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive.
- (2) To note the progress made to date with regard to the Guildford and Waverley collaboration initiative, as set out in Appendix 2 and section 7 of the report.
- (3) To adopt the proposed Transformation and Collaboration Programme, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.
- (4) To approve a project to explore the potential benefits of co-locating Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council staff within shared premises or single HQ, resourced separately from this Transformation and Collaboration Programme, and to receive a report for consideration with an options appraisal and recommendations.
- (5) To approve a project to explore a single shared officer structure between Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council, resourced through the initial Transformation and Collaboration budget allocations, and to receive a report for consideration with an options appraisal and recommendations.
- (6) To agree the additional resources as set out in section 10 of the report (£100,000 of revenue and £100,000 of capital. For Guildford Borough Council this would be funded from flexible use of capital receipts and the Finance Recovery Reserve. For Waverley Borough Council this would be funded from the invest to save reserve) to support the initial start-up of this

programme and notes how the revenue funding will be spent to secure officer support as set out within Appendix 4.

- (7) To note that the initial benefits realisation work with the joint Executive Heads of Service had been carried out by the Organisational Development and Finance Teams, with a rough order of magnitude for savings through collaboration projects at £700,000 but that this figure was expected to increase over time as the detail of more plans is developed.
- (8) To note that the required level of funding to support the delivery of the programme in the longer term cannot be made available at this time, necessitating a phased and prioritised approach in the first instance (focusing more on staff terms and conditions and immediate savings opportunities and less on the broader and more complex questions of the operating model for both authorities).
- (9) To consider, in February 2024, how the broader programme can be fully funded and taken forward when the budgets of both Councils are agreed (and adopting a revised programme structure in line with that increased level of funding at that time).
- (10) To approve the principle of the Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council Executives working in partnership on matters relating to the Transformation and Collaboration Programme.
- (11) To approve the principle of Simultaneous Executive Meetings (SEMs) for the Executives of Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council to consider matters relating to the Transformation and Collaboration Programme.
- (12) To delegate authority to the Joint Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services to schedule regular meetings, as required, simultaneously of the Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council Executives, in consultation with the Leaders of both Councils.
- (13) To invite Overview and Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise and comment upon the draft options appraisals, the recommendations and the costs and savings before these are finalised and brought back to the Executive for further consideration.

Reasons:

1. To articulate and set the framework and goals for the collaborative work between Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council and provide a direction of travel;
2. To enable collaborative work to continue with the resources available and allow officers to resubmit bids for funding to deliver the vision in future years;
3. To ensure Executive members of both Councils can jointly debate and decide matters coming to them relating to the Transformation and Collaboration programme, ensuring transparency and agile decision making across both authorities, whilst maintaining sovereignty of both councils;
4. To ensure decisions relating to sharing premises and staffing are subject to proper scrutiny; and
5. To support the plans of both councils to achieve financial sustainability, particularly for Guildford Borough Council in the light of the reset Budget 2023/24 report (Full Council 25 July 2023) and Financial Recovery Plan (Full Council 10 October 2023) and revised Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

EX34 Adoption of the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document

The report was introduced by the Lead Councillor for Planning, Environment and Climate Change. The Planning Policy officer team were commended for their work in producing the draft documentation.

The report recommended the adoption of the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It was noted that the SPD did not create new policy but rather provided guidance for existing Green Belt policy as contained in Policy P2 of the Local Plan: strategy and sites 2015-2034. The SPD had taken around a year to produce and had been considered by the Council's cross-party internal Planning Policy Board (previously the Local Plan Panel). Appendix 2, paragraph 4.2 of the report set out how the SPD had been shaped following the comments made by that Board, including an additional insert to make a distinction for the use of buildings for agriculture and forestry uses.

If adopted, the SPD would be a material consideration in planning decisions. Adoption of the SPD would also help applicants and decision makers in the submission and determination of planning applications by providing additional clarity and ensuring better consistency.

The Executive,

RESOLVED:

That the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document, as shown in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, be adopted.

Reason:

Adopting the new SPD would provide detailed guidance for adopted Local Plan: Strategy and Sites policy P2. This would help ensure clarity and consistency in decision making.

EX35 Recycling Policy Review

The Lead Councillor for Planning, Environment and Climate Change introduced the report. Officers were commended for undertaking a review of the existing service and for the recommendations that had arisen as a result.

The Executive heard there were proposals to make changes to the Council's recycling policy in a number of areas. A review of the policy had been driven from a service challenge procedure and was focused on making the service more cost efficient for the taxpayer without substantial environmental or customer service impact.

The recommendations covered five areas relating to the operation of recycling 'bring' sites; the provision of refuse and recycling sacks to properties without space for wheeled bins; the provision of indoor use food waste caddies; the provision of kerbside food waste caddies and the provision of recycling bins.

'Bring' sites predated kerbside collections and were now said to make twice as much work for collection teams since the recycled materials were identical. The sites were costly to maintain and also attracted fly-tipping. The proposal was to retain two 'bring' sites and to convert them to recycling points for adjacent flats which currently had no space to recycle. Arrangements would be made to close the sites in late January 2024. There would be communications with residents to give notice and advise them of the change.

The proposal to withdraw the provision of black bin sacks to those households without space to accommodate the usual large, wheeled bins would provide a saving as such bin sacks were widely available at a relatively low cost. The Council would continue to provide recycling sacks as these needed to be transparent for collection purposes and as such were not so widely available. Similarly, the small household caddies were widely available commercially and at less cost than if the Council were to charge residents for them. Once again, there would be a strong communications plan to advise residents.

It was noted that the recommendations had been considered by the Community Executive Advisory Board on 7 September 2023 with the feedback from that meeting being in agreement.

The Executive was in agreement with the proposals and consequently,

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the closure of the recycling 'bring' sites across the borough, converting two – Station Parade in East Horsley and Portsmouth Road in Guildford – to flats recycling collection points.
2. To cease the supply of refuse sacks to the 1,917 properties that currently received them but to continue the supply of recycling sacks.
3. To cease supplying 7L internal food waste caddies for use in residents' kitchens.
4. To continue to supply 23L external kerbside food waste caddies.
5. To continue the supply of recycling bins.

Reason(s):

Acceptance of the proposals to close the 'bring' sites, cease the supply of refuse sacks and cease the supply of 7L internal food waste caddies allows a reduction in costs to the taxpayer with relatively little operational or customer service impact. Continuing the supply of 23L external kerbside food waste caddies and recycling bins allows the current service provision to continue uninterrupted while we wait for the impending recycling service regulatory update.

EX36 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Financial Recovery Plan - November Update Report

The Lead Councillor for Finance and Property introduced the report and advised that progress continued to be made to address the Council's financial deficit. A key element to the progress was the outcome of the review of the Capital Programme. If approved by Budget Council in February this would remove £96.6m from the Approved and Provisional programmes which would reduce the Council's projected borrowing needs. Additionally, a further workstream within the Financial Recovery Plan was looking at the potential for asset disposals. A target sum of £50m of capital receipts was being sought which would help to further reduce the long-term borrowing needs of the Council. These disposal plans would be developed over the next few months, prior to the Council's budget being set in February 2024. This would also have an additional knock-on

effect of reducing the revenue costs for the running and maintenance of the Council's assets.

In addition to reducing the borrowing needs there would be a review of fees and charges to seek to improve the current income levels to the Council. It was reported that the work to date on the Financial Recovery Plan had reduced the July MTFP gap of £18.3m by £11m to £7.3m. Work would continue to address the deficit by means of further operational economies and asset disposals.

The Executive thanked officers and councillors for the hard work that had been undertaken to reach the current position but acknowledged that although excellent progress had been made, significant further work was still required to produce a balanced budget for 2024-25.

The Executive,

RESOLVED:

To note the updated MTFP position and the further work ongoing to produce a balanced budget for 2024-25.

Recommendation (to Council: 5 December 2023)

That the proposed changes to the Approved and Provisional Capital Programmes, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

Reasons:

To enable the Council to protect the current level of reserves and to set a balanced budget and a robust Medium-Term Financial Plan.

EX37 Capital and Investment Outturn Report 2022-23

The outturn report included capital expenditure, non-treasury investments and treasury management performance for the 2022/23 financial year.

The Lead Councillor for Finance and Property commended the report to the Executive.

It was noted that the council's portfolio was performing well and with a balanced portfolio that included light industrial. Consequently, the council was not so exposed to the fluctuations in office space and retail as other councils.

The Executive,

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Council: 5 December 2023

1. That the capital and investment outturn report be noted.
2. That the actual prudential indicators reported for 2022/23, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

Reasons:

1. To comply with the Council's treasury management policy statement, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on treasury management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.
2. As per the treasury management code although the scrutiny of treasury management (and indeed all finance) has been delegated to the Corporate Governance & Standards Committee, ultimate responsibility remains with full Council, this report therefore fulfils that need.

EX38 Housing Revenue Account - Revenue Outturn Report 2022-23

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was a separate ringfenced account that recorded all the income and expenditure associated with the provision and management of Council-owned residential dwellings and other properties in the Borough. The requirement to maintain a Housing Revenue Account was set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the requirements to publish final accounts was set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.

The Leader and Lead Councillor for Housing introduced the report.

The Executive heard that the outturn report set out a surplus for the year of £7.76m. This was £3.12m less than the budgeted surplus of £10.89m. The reconciliation was set out in paragraph 7.4. The variance was made up of three parts: Higher total expenditure net of revaluation movements resulted in £3.5m overspent predominantly in repairs and maintenance; rental income was lower by £1m due to voids and increasing interest rates.

The surplus had been transferred to two reserves. A contribution of £2.5m to the reserve for future capital and a contribution of £5.26m to the New Build reserve. The HRA working balance at year-end remained at £2.5 million.

HRA capital expenditure totalled £26.3m against an original budget of £53.9m. Of this expenditure, major repairs totalled £20.3m against a budget of £24.5m.

Provision of new housing was £6m expenditure against a budget of £27.5m due to delays of progression of schemes in the programme.

The Executive,

RESOLVED:

To note the final outturn position and to endorse the decision, taken under delegated authority, to transfer £2.5 million to the reserve for future capital, and £5.26 million to the new build reserve from the revenue surplus of £7.76 million in 2022-23.

Reason:

To allow the Statutory Statement of Accounts to be finalised and subject to external audit prior to approval by the Council.

EX39 General Fund Revenue Outturn Report 2022-23

The report gave the final position on the General Fund revenue account and Collection Fund for the 2022-23 financial year and explained the major variances from the General Fund revised estimate and the adjustments made in the accounts as a result of the balance sheet review.

The Lead Councillor for Finance and Property commended the report to the Executive.

The Executive,

RESOLVED:

To note the final outturn position and to endorse the decisions taken under delegated authority to transfer the amounts set out in the report from the Medium-Term Financial Plan reserve.

Reasons:

1. To note the final outturn position and delegated decisions taken by the Chief Financial Officer which will be included in the statutory accounts.
2. To facilitate the ongoing financial management of the Council.

EX40 Timetable of Council and Committee Meetings 2024-25

The Executive considered the report that set out a draft timetable of Council and committee meetings for the next municipal year, for recommendation to Full Council.

The Executive,

RESOLVED

Recommendation (to Council: 5 December 2023)

- (1) That the timetable of Council and Committee meetings for the 2024-25 municipal year, attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, be approved.
- (2) That the Executive Head of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised, in consultation with political group leaders, to approve the Timetable of Council and Committee Meetings in future years.

Reason:

To assist with the preparation of individual committee work programmes.

The meeting finished at 7.34 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman