

EXECUTIVE

* Councillor Joss Bigmore (Chairman)

* Councillor Julia McShane
Councillor Tim Anderson
Councillor Tom Hunt

* Councillor John Redpath
* Councillor John Rigg
* Councillor James Steel

*Present

Councillors Ramsey Nagaty, Paul Spooner, Fiona White and Catherine Young were also in attendance.

EX38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Anderson and Tom Hunt.

EX39 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EX40 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

EX41 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader congratulated all of those who had contributed to the recent Remembrance events. A service had been held to add the name of Lieutenant Nicholas London to the war memorial, a gathering with a minute's silence had been held on Armistice Day, 11 November and a full Remembrance Day Parade and Service on Sunday 14 November.

'Zero-Carbon Guildford' opened in the town centre on 20 November and was well attended with local members. Located at the bottom of North Street, 'Zero' was a climate emergency centre where local people could learn about eliminating waste, reduce emissions and protect the natural environment. The Leader urged everyone to make a visit to 'Zero'.

On Thursday 25 November Guildford would join in solidarity with others around the world in support of eliminating violence towards women. Tunsgate and the Guildhall would be floodlit in orange to send a message that violence towards women would not be tolerated. The Mayor, Councillor Marsha Moseley and the Deputy Leader, Councillor Julia McShane would be in attendance at the event. It was noted that the Safer Guildford Partnership had contributed funding in support of the South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service and contact details were available on the Council's website.

The Leader was pleased to inform councillors about forthcoming Christmas pantomimes and many other celebratory performances, including 'Dick Whittington' at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, various festive musical and comedy events at the Electric Theatre including 'A Christmas hug' performed by the People's Theatre and written by Councillor Steven Lee.

EX42 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2022-23

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS), otherwise known as Council Tax Reduction (CTR), helped around 4,500 households with low incomes in the borough to pay their Council Tax, by providing £5.8 million of support. The cost of providing the support was shared with Surrey County Council, with Guildford's share being about 10%. The Council was under a statutory duty to annually review its LCTS scheme, was obliged to consult with interested parties and to approve a scheme for the 2022-23 financial year by 31 January 2022, to enable annual bills to be calculated correctly.

The Executive considered a report setting out the proposals for the next financial year arising from the latest annual review. The report was introduced by the Leader of the Council in the absence of the Lead Councillor for Resources.

In 2021-22, the Council had agreed some small changes to the scheme to account for inflationary pressures. By increasing Personal Allowances, Premiums and Non-Dependant Deductions. The cap on Band E entitlement for 2021-22 was removed to provide additional help during the pandemic. The discretionary hardship fund was increased for 2021-22 in anticipation of an increase in unemployment levels and calls for help.

For 2022-23, it was once again proposed to increase Personal Allowances and Premiums which was forecast would have a revenue cost of £2,500. The discretionary hardship fund would be reset at £40,000 for the coming year as the economic outlook had improved.

The stakeholder consultation had been undertaken between 24 September and 13 October 2021. Surrey County Council and Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner were in agreement with the proposals and just one other response had been received. Whilst this was disappointing the submission was also supportive.

Councillors considered the complexities of LCTS at the Strategy and Resources EAB on 14 June 2021. The Board would like the recalculation linked to Universal Credit to be looked at. This was a complex matter and would be considered as part of the longer Future Options review.

The Leader commended officers for the quality of the report.

The Executive

RESOLVED: To recommend to Council at its meeting on 7 December 2021:

- (1) That the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme (which is on our website), be amended for 2022-23 as set out in detail in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, with effect from 1 April 2022.
- (2) That the Council maintains a discretionary hardship fund of £40,000 in 2022-23, and carries forward any residual 2020 and 2021 COVID19 Council Tax Hardship Funds.

Reasons:

1. To ensure that the Council complies with government legislation to implement a LCTS scheme from 1 April 2022.
2. To maintain a discretionary fund to help applicants suffering from severe financial hardship.

EX43 LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The Executive considered a report concerning the second part of Guildford's draft Local Plan. If adopted, the Development Management Policies (DMP) would, together with the adopted Local Plan: Strategy and Sites document (LPSS), supersede the existing Local Plan 2003 and become part of the Council's Development Plan. The report provided the more detailed policies to be used by Development Management in the determination of planning applications.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and noted that although there had been much detailed debate about the draft Local Plan policies, it was important to remember that the primary function of development management was to secure good development management for the future of the borough. The report set out a wide range of policies on environmental, heritage, design and more detailed infrastructure matters. The intention of the draft policies was to test planning applications and to deliver to exacting, sustainable and attractive standards. The draft policies would set the standard expected from development and also provide a reason to refuse planning applications should those standards not be met. The draft policies had been drawn up in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other national standards, but were specific to Guildford.

The report had been considered by the Joint EAB on 20 September 2021 and the recommendations of the Board were set out in Appendix 8. Councillor Ruth Brothwell had chaired the meeting of the Board and submitted some additional written comments that were read to the meeting by the Democratic Services and Elections Manager. The Board had proposed some 71 amendments to 26 policies and a small group of cross-party councillors had met to prioritise those which were of greatest concern. Officers had thereafter made some amendments to the report that was presented to the Executive. The Joint EAB was eager that Regulation 19 was carried forward and the final DMP for Guildford published to enable a proper review of the Local Plan and to continue with all the right emphases. The Joint EAB had commended the DMP to the Executive for submission to Council.

The Leader acknowledged the amount of work undertaken through interaction between officers, councillors and the public to reach the current point in the process. Following the Regulation 18 consultation there had been 16 two-hour meetings of the cross-party Local Plan Panel, other numerous councillor sessions and an additional period of time to fully review the recommendations of the Joint EAB. Although there had not always been consensus between everyone throughout the process, the Leader thanked all of those who had participated in the discussions.

In coordination with the Council's new Corporate Plan the policies would protect the environment strengthening the standards for new buildings in terms of carbon reduction commitments and requiring net gains in biodiversity of 20% which was greater than that set by Central Government. There would be new policies relating to parking, encouraging low-car or no-car developments areas well-served by public transport in order to increase air quality and encourage greater use of sustainable modes of travel. The Council would also enable the development of low-carbon or renewable energy sites to support the transition to cleaner energy sources.

Policies would support discounted house opportunities for first-time buyers or, if that were not possible then to require developers to allocate a greater percentage of the development as affordable. In addition, there were twenty new design policies to ensure new development held respect for its location and protect local character and heritage assets. There would also be protection for open spaces, public houses and community facilities.

If approved by the Executive, the report and the DMP would be presented to Full Council on 7 December for approval to proceed to the Regulation 19 Consultation stage.

There was a further recommendation to consult on the Parking Supplementary Planning Document at the same time as the Development Management Policies so as to add support to Policy ID11 and for future flexibility.

The Leader would undertake further discussion with Planning Policy officers with regard to the application of design codes on non-strategic development sites. Reference was made to the development on The Street in West Horsley as an example where three separate developers had been involved which had fragmented the approach to the site.

The Leader reflected that developers might find the policies onerous whilst environmentalists may suggest the Council had not gone far enough, but was content to commend the DMP report to the Executive as being thorough and evidence-based. Consequently, the Executive

RESOLVED: To recommend to Council at its meeting on 7 December 2021:

- (1) That the draft Local Plan: Development Management Policies document, subject to further investigation as to the merits of extending the requirement for design codes to all housing sites allocated in the Development Plan, be put before Full Council for approval for Regulation 19 public consultation and to approve a six-week period of consultation beginning in early January 2022.
- (2) That the draft Parking Supplementary Planning Document be put before Full Council for approval for public consultation for a four-week period beginning in January 2022.
- (3) That the Lead Councillor with portfolio responsibility for Planning Policy be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Strategic Services, to make such minor alterations to improve the clarity of the documents referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) above, as they may deem necessary.

Reasons:

The recommendations above are made to encourage the Council to:

- (1) Enable the draft Local Plan: Development Management Policies document to be published for public consultation.
- (2) Allow officers to undertake public consultation in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2015, the National Planning Practice Guidance, and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement 2020.
- (3) Undertaking a public consultation on the draft Local Plan is a statutory requirement placed on Local Planning Authorities under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ('Local Planning Regulations') and will enable the Council to move closer to adopting the second part of the Local Plan as required by law and policy.

EX44 REVIEW OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The report submitted to the Executive sought agreement for an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the new Local Plan: Development Management Policies. The LDS set the timetable for plan production and opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the process. The timetable at Appendix 1 to the report set out the timetable in respect of the process up to the adoption of the new Local Plan in early 2023.

The Executive,

RESOLVED: That the Local Development Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, shall have effect from 1 December 2021.

Reason:

To progress the new Guildford Borough Local Plan: Development Management Policies by having a Local Development Scheme with an up-to-date timetable for the Local Plan.

EX45 FINANCIAL MONITORING 2021-22

The Executive considered a report that summarised the projected outturn position for the Council's general fund revenue account, based on actual and accrued data for the period April 2021 to September 2021.

The report had been reviewed by the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee on 18 November 2021 and the comments arising were set out on the Supplementary Information Sheet.

In the absence of the Lead Councillor for Resources, the Leader of the Council introduced the report.

The meeting heard that the Covid pandemic continued to have a negative effect on the Council's finances and that steps would need to be taken to mitigate those effects and maintain a sound financial position. The general fund summary was set out in Appendix 1 of the report predicting a gross overspend of £2.6m. There was a positive effect coming from a reduction in minimum revenue provision, lower interest rates on the loans portfolio and receipts from North Downs Housing resulting in a net projected overspend of £1.76m. The main cause of the overspend was the reduction in car parking revenues estimated to be in the region of £3.7m which had been offset to some extent by Government's fees and charges reclaim scheme. However, the scheme had closed in June 2021 and there was no indication it would be resumed. There was a reduction in the value of the leisure management contract of £800,000. The direct Covid expenditure of £300,000 had been offset by Government for the full year. Finally, there was a £500,000 overspend in Planning which was partially due to staff expenditure to clear a backlog and also to provide cover for senior staff illness. On a positive note, the pre-application service would now be able to resume in the New Year and return services to normal functioning levels.

The report had set out ways in which the Council could prevent further impacts on reserves. There would be a capital return fund investment of £1.5m and the original investment would be reinvested in a suitable way. This would be a one-off opportunity to mitigate budget shortfall whilst the mid-term position remained the same with an additional £1.5m required to balance the budget for 2022-23.

The Leader reflected that with the fast-changing Covid scenario the Council should remain prudent and advised the Executive to agree the recommendations set out in the report. The Executive, consequently,

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the results of the Council's financial monitoring for the period April 2021 to September 2021, be noted.

- (2) That the actions set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report submitted to the Executive to achieve in-year savings to help reduce the overspend and mitigate the impact on reserves, be approved.
- (3) That the implementation of a “voluntary expenditure freeze” across services, be approved.

Reason:

To enable the Executive to respond to the scrutiny of the Council's finances.

EX46 GENERAL FUND DRAFT BUDGET 2022-23 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2022-23 TO 2025-26

The report before the Executive outlined the position of the 2022-23 draft general fund budget and the business planning assumptions for 2022-23 to 2025-26. The final budget position would be submitted to Full Council on 9 February 2022. The Savings Strategy for 2022-23 to 2025-26, which the Executive had approved on 22 June 2021, had set out the assumptions used in calculating the budget gap and therefore the quantity of savings required over the medium term. The core assumptions underpinning the draft budget had been reviewed and the revised assumptions were set out in the report.

In the absence of the Lead Councillor for Resources, the Leader of the Council introduced the report. The Joint Executive Advisory Board had considered the outline budget report at its meeting on 11 November 2021 and a summary of their comments were set out on the Supplementary Information Sheet.

The Leader highlighted the overview table in the executive summary of the report and described the inflationary underlying assumptions in the report as optimistic, pay as a result of inflation was realistic and any increase in fees and charge as under-ambitious. It was noted the assumptions for Council Tax income was accurate as Council Tax charges were constrained at below a 2% increase unless the Council called a referendum. The report included the best assumptions about the level of government funding that would be available. Anticipated rental income rises were modest. The Bank of England forecast was that inflation would fall in the coming year. The meeting heard that a 1% rise in inflation would mean a loss of £300,000 to the Council. Based on the assumptions in the report it was currently estimated there would be a budget shortfall for the forthcoming year of £1.7m and a cumulative shortfall of £5m up to 2026 but with a variance in the budget gap for the longer-term period of between minus £3m to minus £11m.

Because it was still early in the budget process, the report was clear that there were areas of uncertainty that would influence the final position.

Until the local government finance settlement was announced it was uncertain if the Government would proceed with recompensing local authorities for the planned rise in National Insurance contributions as had been stated. The cost of the increase would amount to a figure in the region of £300,000 and had been included in the assumptions until the offset was confirmed.

The report and the work of finance officers was commended and the Executive,

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the budget assumptions used in the preparation of the 2022-23 draft budget and three year forward projections be approved.

- (2) That the current position on the draft budget for 2022-23 and the budget shortfall anticipated over the three years to 2024-25, be noted.
- (3) That the savings identified as part of the savings strategy for 2022-23 through to 2025-26 (Sections 11,12,13 of, and Appendix 3 to, the report submitted to the Executive) which have been included in the draft budget, be approved.
- (4) That the in-year savings of £46,750 arising from the review of classical music, book festival, voluntary and CAB grants for 2021-22, which were not included as part of the 2021-22 budget, be approved.
- (5) That the additional growth items identified in section 11 and Appendix 3 which have been included in the draft budget, be approved.
- (6) That the proposal to Council to make the contributions to/from the Council's various earmarked reserves for specific purposes as set out in section 9 of the report as part of the budget report in February 2022, be approved.

Reason:

To assist the Executive in the preparation of the General Fund estimates for 2022-23.

EX47 PARISH COUNCILS - CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS GRANT AID APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE 2022-23

The Council's concurrent functions grant aid scheme provided financial assistance to parish councils. Concurrent functions were services which both the Borough Council and the parish councils were empowered to undertake. The grants took the form of grant funding up to a maximum of 50% and that percentage decreased for projects costed at over £10,000. The grant budget was £90,000. Parishes were asked to complete a detailed application form and written estimate for each project and identify how the project meets at least one of the fundamental themes within the Council's corporate plan.

The Executive considered a report setting out details of the 33 requests received from 17 of the 23 parish councils in the borough, which totalled £97,828. One bid had subsequently been retracted. The bids brought forward for approval therefore totalled £97,109, which was £7,109 over the base budget of £90,000. The Executive was requested to agree that the remaining balance be met from the Parish Council Urgent Schemes Reserves to achieve a balanced budget.

As a part of the Council's Savings Strategy, the Executive had been asked to consider reducing the scheme budget to £60,000 for 2022-23. The Leader suggested that this recommendation be referred to an Executive Advisory Board (EAB) for review before the Executive made a final decision on the matter. Following discussion, it was proposed that the EAB review should also include the scheme's award criteria.

Having considered the report and the applications, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Concurrent Functions Grant Aid budget for 2022-23 be set at £90,000, subject to final confirmation by the Council at its budget meeting in February 2022.
- (2) That consideration of future years' budgets for Concurrent Functions Grant Aid, from 2023-24, be referred to an EAB for further discussion together with a review of the award criteria, following the Director of Resources' recommendation to reduce it to £60,000 p.a.

- (3) That the parish council requests for grant aid for 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report submitted to the Executive, be approved.
- (4) That the remaining balance of £7,109 be met from the Parish Council Urgent Schemes Reserve.

Reasons:

- (1) To assist parish councils with expenditure on concurrent function schemes in 2022-23.
- (2) To enable parish councils to take account of financial assistance from Guildford Borough Council when calculating their precept requirements for 2022-23.

EX48 SELECTION OF THE MAYOR AND THE DEPUTY MAYOR 2022-23

At its meeting on 7 December 2021, the Council would be asked to consider nominations for the Mayoralty and Deputy Mayoralty of the Borough for the municipal year 2022-23.

The constitutional changes adopted by the Council in April 2014 as part of the review of the Civic Function in respect of the Mayoralty provided that the Council would normally elect the Deputy Mayor appointed at the annual meeting of the Council as Mayor at the next succeeding annual meeting. The Council was therefore requested to consider formally the nomination of the current Deputy Mayor, Councillor Dennis Booth for the Mayoralty of the Borough for 2022-23.

Following an invitation to Group leaders to submit nominations for the Deputy Mayoralty for 2022-23, the Executive noted that the only nominee had been Councillor Masuk Miah.

The Executive therefore

RESOLVED: To recommend to Council on 7 December 2021:

- (1) That the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Dennis Booth be nominated for the Mayoralty of the Borough for the 2022-23 municipal year.
- (2) That Councillor Masuk Miah be nominated for the Deputy Mayoralty of the Borough for the 2022-23 municipal year.

Reason:

To make early preparations for the selection of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2022-23 municipal year.

The meeting finished at 7.57 pm

Signed

Chairman

Date