

# Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at Pippbrook, Dorking, from 7.00pm to 7.59pm

Present:

Executive Members: Councillors Vivienne Michael (Leader/Chairman), Charles Yarwood (Deputy Leader), Lucy Botting, Simon Edge, Metin Huseyin, Duncan Irvine, David Mir and Corinna Osborne-Patterson

Non-Executive Members: Joe Crome, David Draper, David Harper, Chris Hunt, Paul Kennedy and Michelle Watson

## 5. Minutes

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

## 6. Apologies for Absence

None

## 7. Disclosure of Interests

None

## 8. Councillor Question Time

The Leader noted that, although the time allowed for questions had been extended from 15 to 30 minutes, the restriction of a maximum of two questions per Member remained unchanged. However, on this occasion, given the importance of the topic, she would allow Councillor David Harper three questions.

(1) The following question was submitted by Councillor David Harper:

“How much money is in the 'off-site compensation for affordable housing' fund and what is the plan to make effective use of it this year?”

Councillor Corinna Osborne-Patterson responded as follows:

“The amount of affordable housing contributions held by MVDC that has been derived from Section 106 planning agreements as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 was £2,374,000. So far for 2017/18 affordable housing contributions have been committed to schemes with the Circle Housing Group and Mount Green Housing Association which totalled £1,220,000.

MVDC continued to proactively look for other opportunities to invest affordable housing contributions in new affordable housing. In 2016/17 £320,000 was invested with housing associations.”

(2) The following question was submitted by Councillor David Harper:

“Could MVDC invite Woking (Conservative) or Enfield (Labour) Council to share best practice in setting up and investing in their own housing?”

Councillor Corinna Osborne-Patterson responded as follows:

“The Affordable Housing Position Statement February 2016, includes the following objective: ‘that the Executive undertake further work to assess the viability of the Council building, managing and maintaining affordable housing, particularly in light of the Transform Leatherhead regeneration project, which may provide development opportunities.’

A number of activities have taken place to progress this objective, including:

- Officers and the Leader of the Council attending relevant conferences on setting up housing companies.

- A joint multi-disciplinary officer event was held in partnership with Elmbridge Borough Council to improve knowledge and awareness amongst Officers of local authority housing companies. The event included presentations from: Local Partnerships (a joint venture between HM Treasury and the LGA that amongst its functions provides expertise on local housing companies and joint ventures); the Managing Director of Wokingham Homes (an established local authority housing company) and the Legal Manager from Guildford Borough Council who explained the early progress of Guildford's housing company.
- This was followed just recently by the Council commissioning the Housing and Finance Institute to assess the Council's role in the housing market using their Housing Business Ready tool. The assessment was led by Natalie Elphicke, the Chief Executive of the Housing and Finance Institute and co-author of the 2015 report written for the Department of Communities and Local Government - The Elphicke-House Report 'From statutory provider to Housing Delivery Enabler: Review into the local authority role in housing supply'. We will be receiving feedback and advice from this assessment and I look forward to sharing the outcome with Members. This work will be important background information to assist the Council with its strategic thinking on whether it should consider intervening in the housing market by using a local authority housing company and may also include, if appropriate, hearing from active established local authority housing companies as Councillor Harper suggests."

(3) The following question was submitted by Councillor David Harper:

"How is objective housing need assessed?"

Councillor Corinna Osborne-Patterson responded as follows:

"A briefing on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was given to Members on Monday 19 June 2017, which included information on how affordable housing need was forecast. A briefing note will be circulated to Councillors shortly summarising how the housing forecast figures are derived and responding to a request for how internal migration is calculated.

Whilst all contributing authorities provided information on their waiting list figures during the course of the SHMA and these figures were used to inform the context, they were not used to inform the calculation of objective housing need. The reason for this is that whilst all local authorities work within the same legislation and code of guidance framework to formulate their housing waiting list policies there is discretion to have locally tailored policies. Each individual local authority housing waiting list policy is, therefore different, for example regarding who does and does not qualify to join and how applicants are prioritised. This means that it is not possible to make robust and consistent statistical comparisons and projections of local authority waiting lists and is why waiting list figures are not included in the assessment of objective housing need."

## **9. Report of the Scrutiny Committee**

Prior to the update from the Scrutiny Committee Chairman, the Leader of the Council explained to Members the reasons behind the decision to delay consideration of the Claire and James House report until later in the year. It was advised that following debate of the report at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June, the Executive felt that in the interest of transparency it would be beneficial for all Members to be given the opportunity to view the detailed consultant's report that had informed the preferred options set out in the report considered by the Committee. In order for this information to be shared it had been decided to postpone final consideration of the report until later in the year.

The Scrutiny Committee met on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and considered two items which were included on the Executive agenda for 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, with the approval of the Leader, undertook to submit feedback on these items to the Executive during their consideration of each report.

## **10. The Swan Centre – Development & Asset Management Initiatives**

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Transform Leatherhead introduced the report. During the introduction it was advised that the consultation for Transform Leatherhead had

identified strong support amongst the local community for a major structural re-development of the Swan Centre. As any such project would be likely to cost a significant amount of money, it would require careful analysis of all possible options to ensure that Transform Leatherhead objectives were achieved, while also providing the best possible financial return for tax payers. As such it was recommended that funding of £190,000 should be allocated from the Transform Leatherhead Reserve to fund the production of a Development Strategy and Viability Strategy for the Swan Centre.

As well as undertaking the Viability Strategy, a number of short term improvements had also been identified and the report asked the Executive to recommend to the Council the addition of £1.215m to the Capital Programme 2017/18 for these works. The improvements had been identified on the basis that they would be unlikely to be compromised by any long term development of the Centre. It was highlighted that the amount of funding requested for the improvement work at the Swan Centre had been amended since consideration by the Scrutiny Committee to add a 10% contingency and funding for a Fire Safety Audit.

Initial works had already commenced to renew the lifts, improve the mall lighting, and introduce measures to deter pigeons, alongside a programme of essential maintenance including improved cleaning of the car park. The additional funding requested would be used to carry out further improvements including the relocation of the toilets, remodelling some parts of the interior of the centre and providing up to four additional retail units. These works would cost approximately £885,000 and could potentially provide an additional income of £69,000 per year, which equated to a return of 7.8%. Through the creation of new units, MVDC would have the opportunity to add to the existing mix of retailers in the Centre, which was currently fully occupied.

It was advised that the improvements to the car park would include

- Making the ramps easier to navigate by cutting back and chamfering/angling kerbs around the ramps, and painting them a bright colour
- Lining walls and columns with rubber at bumper height
- Creating wider bays
- Improving signage, lighting, and decoration.
- A new payment system to allow pay on exit without a barrier using 'check-in, check-out technology' – currently being used at The Royal Surrey Hospital.
- Re-allocation of the disabled spaces to create clusters around the lift cores on all level, but retaining the Shop Mobility spaces on Level 2.

In carrying out these improvements, it was hoped that it would enable the car park to achieve the national 'Park Mark' quality accreditation. The proposed enhancements would cost approximately £330,000 and provide an estimated financial return of £40,000 per year, which equated to a return of 12.1%

The car park would continue to remain allocated for short-term parking with a maximum stay of 4 hours, as its principal objective was to serve as parking for shoppers. However, as the top levels were under-utilised and there was un-met demand within the town for long-term parking, Officers were in discussions with tenants to permit some long-term parking bays on the top level. Any changes to the parking provision would also be informed by surveys conducted to understand demand at busy periods and would be after the completion of the improvement works.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee reported that they had welcomed the proposed improvements to the Swan Centre and suggested that the provision of CCTV in the car park should also be considered to improve customer safety. It was stated that this is likely to be cost prohibitive in the short-term, and the timing needs to have regard to any long-term works. . It was also reported that there had been concerns voiced by some members of the Scrutiny Committee about the size of the 4 additional units. It was confirmed that the units provided would be 2 kiosk type units and 2 units of approx. 1,600 sq ft which would provide a good opportunity for local businesses and would serve to enrich the retail offering at the Centre.

**RESOLVED:** That the allocation of up to £190,000 from the Transform Leatherhead budget to commission a Development Strategy and Viability Study for the Swan Centre, with supporting surveys be approved.

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:** That a £1.215m scheme be added to the capital programme for some short-term asset management initiatives to improve the centre, which include:

- a) phased works costing £885,000 to create up to 4 new units which are estimated to increase the rental income by £69,000 pa, (7.8% return).
- b) selected short-term works to improve the car park totalling £330,000. These works respond to public consultation by making the car park more user friendly, and are estimated to increase the income by £40,000pa, (12.1% return). This income has the potential to be increased further with the introduction of long-term parking, subject to the agreement of key stakeholders.

## 11. 2016/2017 Outturn Report

The Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Services introduced the report, highlighting that MVDC had made good progress against its priorities during the past year. Highlights included:

- the opening of the Deepdene Trail which had received over 11,000 visitors since September 2016
- MVDC was ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> best local authority in terms of recycling with a rate of 59%
- Progress continued to be made with a number of innovative partnership working arrangements with other local authorities. In conjunction with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Tandridge District Council, MVDC had set up the Southern Building Control Partnership to provide an enhanced Building Control service for residents. MVDC had also partnered with Tandridge District Council to provide a joint Environment Health service and had agreed to enter into a Joint Waste Service with a number of other authorities.
- MVDC's Housing team had been awarded the Silver Practitioners Standard for their work preventing homelessness. The team was now targeting to achieve the Gold Standard by the end of 2017/18.
- Customer Services Excellence was a nationally recognised standard which recognised customer service best practice in the public, private and third sectors. During the year, four Council services were assessed and all had met the standards with a number of areas of best practice highlighted. The teams that successfully completed Customer Services Excellence were the Customer Services Unit, Planning Policy, Environmental Services and Housing.
- There had been 260 referrals from GP's surgeries across the district to the Council's Exercise on Referral scheme at Dorking Sports Centre and Leatherhead Leisure Centre. To date, 115 people have completed the 10/12 week course and over 50% have subsequently joined as full members to continue with regular exercise at the leisure centres.
- Both Revenue and Capital Budgets were close to balancing with a slight overspend in the Revenue Budget of 0.25% of the total gross budget, but this had been expected as it had been picked up through budget monitoring of the during the year.

The Executive Member for Planning advised that although there had been a £187,000 overspend within the Planning Service budget for 2016/17, caused by the need to pay for temporary staff, the performance within the team had markedly improved over the past year. Since May 2017 the percentage of major application processed within the 8 week target was 93% and it was 99.2% for non-major applications.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing advised that there had been 108 referrals to the Exercise on Referral scheme since May 2017. The Surrey Youth Games had also been successful with 220 participants from Mole Valley. Thanks was also given to Councillor Joe Crome and the Leatherhead Youth Project for Big Lunch event in Leatherhead for the elderly and socially isolated.

The Executive Member for Communities, Services and Housing highlighted that the Council had been awarded £65,000 to develop a destination management plan for the rural areas of the district. This project was due to launch on 13<sup>th</sup> July and invitations would be sent to Members.

**RESOLVED:** That:-

1. the Council's performance and financial position for the period April 2016 to March 2017 be noted;
2. the requested carry forwards amounting to £503,000 of Capital Minor Works from 2016/17 to 2017/18 be confirmed;
3. the Strategic Risk Register and the action taken in mitigation is endorsed.

## **12. Future Mole Valley – Consultation on Issues and Options**

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report, advising Members that the proposed consultation formed the next stage of the Local Plan process. The consultation would be focussed upon housing need in the district and seeking public opinion on how these issues could best be addressed. The consultation had been designed to be understandable and allow members of the public to engage with the process. A website had been created for the Future Mole Valley project as it was recognised that a digital approach was one of the best methods of gaining public engagement. As well as the website, more traditional methods of consultation such as public meetings and mail outs would also be used to ensure that anyone who would want to had the opportunity to respond.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee put forward a number of presentational issues which had been highlighted during their discussion of the report including the suggestion that it would be useful to add relatable examples, such as football pitches, to help people envision the various land sizes outlined in the report. It was also suggested that the Accessibility Map needed further detail, such as place names, to make it more understandable. It was agreed that these amendments would be considered for the final document.

The Scrutiny Committee also raised concerns about a large part of the consultation being held in August during the school holidays. It was advised that the timing of the consultation was required to ensure that the timetable for setting the new Local Plan remained on track. Also as people were able to respond digitally, the timing of the consultation was probably less crucial than past consultations that had relied solely on traditional methods.

**RESOLVED:** That:-

1. a public consultation of not less than six weeks be held under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 on the document: 'Future Mole Valley – Issues and Options: setting a strategic direction for development'.
2. publicity for the public consultation follows the communications strategy outlined in section 4 of the report.
3. That the evidence documents detailed in paragraphs 2.1-2.2 of the report be published in support of the public consultation.
4. That a summary of representations be reported to the Executive Committee for consideration following conclusion of the consultation.