

PLANNING & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 30 JANUARY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Malcolm Alexander (Vice-Chairman), David Burbage, David Evans, David Hilton, Richard Kellaway, Malcolm Beer and Derek Wilson

Also in attendance:

Officers: Tanya Leftwich, Jenifer Jackson, Rob Stubbs and Alison Alexander

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Malcolm Alexander, welcomed everyone present to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures.

The Vice-Chair went onto explain that the meeting was being recorded and that the audio would be uploaded to the RBWM website.

The Vice-Chair requested that all mobile phones be switched off for the duration of the meeting.

The Vice-Chair requested nominations for the position of Chairman for the remaining of the municipal year:

- Councillor Richard Kellaway (proposed by Councillor Malcolm Alexander and seconded by Councillor David Evans) was nominated for the position of Chairman.
- Councillor Malcolm Beer proposed Councillor Leo Walters for the position of Chairman – it was explained to Councillor Malcolm Beer that as Councillor Leo Walters was no longer a full member of the Panel he could not be elected as Chairman.

Councillor Richard Kellaway was elected Chairman for the remaining municipal year.

Councillor Leo Walters requested to address the Panel and everyone present which the Chairman allowed. Councillor Leo Walters explained that a resident of the Royal Borough had called him on the 03 January 2017 to say he had made a Freedom of Information (FOI) request with the response having been released to the press on the 12 January 2017. Councillor Leo Walters went onto explain that he cared about the Green Belt in the Royal Borough and had been very surprised to hear that the draft Borough Local Plan (BLP) contained 86% of new housing and new development in the Green Belt in the Royal Borough. Councillor Leo Walters informed everyone present that as there was no reference to this figure in the Cabinet paper he believed the fact needed to be known by the public as it could have influenced the BLP.

Councillor Richard Kellaway suggested that as this had nothing to do with the Election of Chairman item that this discussion be taken outside of the meeting.

Councillor Leo Walters went onto state that the Head of Planning, Jenifer Jackson, had confirmed the 86% and that he had asked the Leader of the Council four times to meet with him to discuss this face to face, which had to date been denied. Councillor Leo Walters thanked the Chairman for allowing him to address everyone present.

Councillor David Hilton welcomed the new Chairman to the role and explained that every two weeks a meeting took place to discuss the progress of the BLP. Councillor David Hilton explained that he had questioned the 86% and had been informed that it was fundamentally wrong. The Lead Member for Planning added that Councillor Leo Walters statement was

fundamentally incorrect. The Lead Member for Planning explained that on the 03 November 2016 the Planning Inspector had advised that the Council needed to meet 100% of Objectively Assessed Need within its Royal Borough boundaries and that Councillor Leo Walters stating that it was 86% of land within the Green Belt was incorrect.

The Chairman welcomed the two registered speakers for this item to the meeting and invited Patrick Griffin and Pat Morrish to address the Panel:

- Patrick Griffin congratulated the new Chairman on his Chairmanship. Patrick Griffin went onto state that the previous Chairman, Councillor Leo Walters, had had the courage of his convictions and stood up for local residents. It was questioned whether the new Chairman would stand up for the same level of transparency. The Chairman responded to the question by stating that he was completely independent.
- Pat Morrish sadly noted that Councillor Leo Walters had been removed as Chairman from this Panel. It was noted that the previous Chairman had on the 17 November 2016 expressed his concern regarding the 37% of Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) as he had felt it to be too high. The FOI had revealed 86% of Green Belt (HO1) in the draft BLP – it was noted that as Councillor Leo Walters had publically reported his concern it could be seen that he had been removed as Chairman and from the Panel as a result. It was requested that the full FOI response be made available on the RBWM website.

The Managing Director & Strategic Director of Adults, Children and Health Services, Alison Alexander, responded by stating that the FOI could be made available on the RBWM website and should have been. The Chairman re-iterated that the Panel were keen that all FOI information was made available to the public on the RBWM website. Councillor David Hilton requested that information contained in the response from the Head of Planning dated 27 January 2017 to the email from Councillor Leo Walters dated 03 January 2017 be disclosed to all Members by the Head of Planning in order to be totally transparent which the Managing Director endorsed.

The Chairman explained that this meeting was not to look at the BLP but that a meeting in the future would have it on the agenda.

The Chairman went onto explain that the system in place with regard to meeting memberships was that the Leader of the Council could make changes to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel memberships and then it was down to the Panel to elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED; That Councillor Richard Kellaway be elected Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year (Councillors Malcolm Alexander, David Burbage, David Evans & David Hilton = For, Councillor Walters = Against & Councillor Beer = Abstained).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gerry Clark and the Lead Member for Neighbourhood Planning and the Ascot & The Sunnings.

Apologies were also received from the Strategic Director Corporate & Community Services, Russell O'Keefe.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on the 17 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan would go to Full Council in April.

The Lead Member for Planning informed the Panel that the 37% of the housing requirement mentioned on page 11 of the agenda only showed part of the story.

BUDGET 2017/18

The Head of Finance/Deputy Director Corporate & Community Services, Rob Stubbs, explained that the report set out the Council budget for 2017/18. Members were informed that the priority in setting the budget had been to ensure the continued delivery of quality services for all residents, especially the most vulnerable, whilst the Royal Borough remained a low tax council. The Head of Finance/Deputy Director Corporate & Community Services gave Members a brief presentation on the highlights of the proposed budget for 2017/18 which covered the following:

- Local Revenue Investments.
- Revenue recommendations.
- 17/18 Capital investment.
- Business Rates – for business.
- Context.
- Planning & Housing.

It was noted that the budget proposed a 0.95% increase in core council tax (£8.62) and a 3% adult social care precept at band D (£27.75) adding to the 2016/17 precept of £18.14.

The Head of Finance/Deputy Director Corporate & Community Services explained that Fees and charges could be found on page 106 of the agenda, Savings on page 132, Growth on page 145 and Capital (which centred on the BLP and Traveller Local Plan) on page 123.

The registered speaker, Margaret Morgan, was invited to address the Panel on this item.

Margaret Morgan requested that the Council explained the item in the budget that was described as Project CZ91 “P&OS-Ascot Roundabout War Memorial Fount 2014/15” for £67,000 (2016-17). It was requested that a breakdown of the expenditure included in Appendix G be provided.

Margaret Morgan went onto explain that a planning application that was submitted by the Borough for the Installation of water fountain with jets and lights was withdrawn in 2015. Members were informed that the RBWM had now submitted a planning application ([17/00188](#)) for the installation of a bronze War Horse statue on a stone plinth on Heatherwood roundabout. Margaret Morgan went onto explain that Kevin Mist had informed her that there was an approved budget of £80k allocated for the total cost of the scheme. It was questioned where this was included in the budget.

Margaret Morgan went onto explain that she was concerned about how council funds were applied and this was particularly important at a time of continued cut-backs resulting in damage to the provision of services to residents.

Margaret Morgan stated that she had been informed that the project was zero cost to the Council and suggested saving £40k on a plinth when it could be placed directly on the grass.

The Chairman explained that this was not a Planning matter, and as such the Head of Communities & Economic Development, Kevin Mist, would be happy to meet with Margaret Morgan on his return from annual leave to discuss this matter further. It was requested by the Panel that the written response from the Head of Communities & Economic Development to Margaret Morgan regarding the breakdown of expenditure for Project CZ91 and where the £80k allocated funds for the bronze War Horse statue could be found in the budget be attached to the minutes.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- That page 156 (Appendix M) showed the capital programmes during the year.
- That all Business Rate local reliefs would be maintained.
- That appropriate income and cost budgets had been inflated by 2% (based on RPI in September 2016).
- The Apprentice Levy was primarily about training and the charge was 0.5% of the Council's Payroll cost to fund this.
- That the £300k budget for the Borough Local Plan examination costs was the Head of Planning's best estimate.
- That the £100k budget for 'Traveller Local Plan' was to have it recommissioned jointly with other Local Authorities.
- Councillor David Hilton stated his delight at page 81 of the agenda and asked where the other £140k was listed. The Finance Partner - Corporate Services & Operations, Mark Lampard, explained that it equated to the 3.5 new posts and additional investment.
- The Chairman explained that he had received an assurance that there were adequate resources to deal with the volume and magnitude of planning applications.
- That affordable housing was located within the capital schemes (regeneration).

The Panel requested that the generic terms in the budget be updated to reflect the planning terms (e.g. Project CI32 Planning Policy Supplementary Planning Document be updated to the Borough Design Guide).

The Panel requested that with regard to the 'temporary accommodation for homeless residents' written confirmation of the number of residents affected and the number of those who had utilised the services (e.g. halfway house, B&Bs, etc) be provided at the next meeting.

The Chairman congratulated the Finance Team, and stated that he had found the presentation tonight very readable and clear.

The Chairman went onto thank Councillor Leo Walters for his time as Chairman and for his enthusiasm about the Green Belt in particular.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet that they recommended to Council that they noted the report and approved the:

- i) Detailed recommendations contained in Appendix A which includes a Council Tax at band D of £915.57, including a 0.95% increase of £8.62.**
- ii) Adult Social Care Precept of 3% (an increase of £27.75 on the £18.14 precept included in the 2016/17 budget) to be included in the Council's budget proposals, making this levy the equivalent of £45.89 at band D.**
- iii) Fees and Charges contained in Appendix D are approved.**
- iv) Capital Programme, shown in appendices F and G, for the financial year commencing April 2017.**
- v) Prudential borrowing limits set out in Appendix L.**

- vi) **Business rate tax base calculation, detailed in Appendix O, and its use in the calculation of the Council Tax Requirement in Appendix A.**
- vii) **Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Members for Finance and Children’s Services is authorised to amend the total schools budget to reflect actual Dedicated School Grant levels.**
- viii) **Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance is authorised to make appropriate changes to the budget to reflect the impact of the transfer of services to Achieving for Children and Optalis.**
- ix) **Responsibility to include the precept from the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority in the overall Council Tax charges is delegated to the Lead Member for Finance and Head of Finance once the precept is announced.**

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the following future meeting dates:

- Wednesday 19 April 2017.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....