

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, KINGSTON UPON THAMES, KT1 2DN ON 17 MARCH 2020 COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM, THE COUNCIL BEING CONSTITUTED AS FOLLOWS:

Tony Samuels (Chairman)
 * Helyn Clack (Vice-Chairman)

*	Mary Angell	*	Naz Islam
	Ayesha Azad		Colin Kemp
*	Nikki Barton		Eber Kington
*	John Beckett		Graham Knight
*	Mike Bennison	*	Rachael I Lake
*	Amanda Boote	*	Yvonna Lay
	Chris Botten	*	David Lee
*	Liz Bowes		Mary Lewis
	Natalie Bramhall	*	Andy MacLeod
*	Mark Brett-Warburton	*	Ernest Mallett MBE
*	Ben Carasco		David Mansfield
*	Bill Chapman		Peter Martin
	Stephen Cooksey	*	Jan Mason
	Clare Curran		Cameron McIntosh
	Nick Darby		Sinead Mooney
*	Paul Deach	*	Charlotte Morley
*	Graham Ellwood		Marsha Moseley
	Jonathan Essex	*	Tina Mountain
	Robert Evans		Bernie Muir
*	Tim Evans		Mark Nuti
*	Mel Few		John O'Reilly
	Will Forster		Tim Oliver
*	John Furey		Andrew Povey
	Matt Furniss	*	Wyatt Ramsdale
*	Bob Gardner	*	Penny Rivers
*	Mike Goodman	*	Becky Rush
*	Angela Goodwin	*	Stephen Spence
*	David Goodwin	*	Lesley Steeds
	Zully Grant-Duff		Peter Szanto
	Alison Griffiths		Keith Taylor
	Ken Gulati	*	Barbara Thomson
	Tim Hall	*	Rose Thorn
	Kay Hammond		Chris Townsend
	David Harmer		Denise Turner-Stewart
	Jeffrey Harris		Richard Walsh
	Nick Harrison		Hazel Watson
	Edward Hawkins	*	Fiona White
	Marisa Heath		Keith Witham
	Saj Hussain	*	Victoria Young
	Julie Iles		

*absent

14/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Mrs Angell, Mrs Barton, Mr Beckett, Mr Bennison, Amanda Boote, Mrs Bowes, Mr Brett-Warburton, Dr Chapman, Mrs Clack, Mr Deach, Mr Ellwood, Mr Evans, Mr Few, Mr Furey, Mr Gardner, Mr Goodman, Mrs Goodwin, Mr Goodwin, Mr Islam, Rachael I Lake, Mrs Lay, Mr Lee, Mr MacLeod, Mr Mallett, Mrs Mason, Mrs Mountain, Mr Ramsdale, Mrs Rivers, Mrs Rush, Mr Spence, Mrs Steeds, Ms Thomson, Mrs Thorn, Mrs White and Mrs Young.

15/20 MINUTES [Item 2]

The minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 4 February 2020 were submitted, confirmed and signed.

16/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

17/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS [Item 4]

The Chairman:

- Highlighted to Members that the Chairman's Announcements were located in the agenda front sheet.

18/20 LEADER'S STATEMENT [Item 5]

Mr Harrison arrived at 10.05 am

Ms Azad arrived at 10.09 am

The Leader made a detailed statement. A copy of the statement is attached as Appendix A.

Members raised the following topics:

- Offered full support to the actions taken by the Council in respect of the current circumstances concerning coronavirus, thanking officers and partners for continuing to support vulnerable residents.
- Highlighted the importance of communities coming together to provide reassurance to one another, it was encouraging that volunteers and neighbours were offering to help vulnerable individuals and those self-isolating.
- Recognised the changing priorities of the Council and that the challenges faced by the Council were met bravely and boldly by the Leader and Chief Executive.
- Urged all Members to work proactively in communities to support local initiatives and noted that although it was a difficult time the Council were equipped to address the crisis.
- Welcomed the cross-party support concerning coronavirus and requested more information from the Leader on the Council's emergency helpline.
- That some residents had written to the Leader querying the Council's recently agreed precept percentage concerning Council Tax.

18/20a CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES [Item 5a]

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, noting that the draft report had been circulated to group leaders and committee chairmen. Legislation surrounding special arrangements for local government was constantly evolving in respect of new provisions by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government - such as holding meetings remotely. As a result, there would be small changes to the Council's constitution to enable Council business to continue. He highlighted that those arrangements were time-limited until the County Council meeting on 13 October, subject to review by the Audit and Governance Committee.

Members made the following comments:

- That one recommendation stated that the Chairman of the Council and group leaders would be consulted on a protocol setting out the arrangements for decision making with committee members prior to any officer decision usually referred to committee, querying whether all Members could receive the draft protocol.
- Felt that the report was a major step in altering democracy as it gave power to a small group of Members and officers, raising concerns with the provision for non-executive decision making (as far as the law allows) particularly the Planning and Regulatory Committee and its often contentious applications.
- Welcomed the inclusion of time limit and consultation with group leaders and committee chairmen.

In response the Leader explained that the constitutional changes would not change the power structure within the Council as it was a practical step to ensure the continuation of council business. He agreed that a draft protocol would be circulated to all Members. He was hopeful that the additional temporary powers granted such as the ability to hold meetings remotely, would lead to a future change in the legislation. He recalled that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had given special consideration to planning and licensing committees. The Leader noted that in some situations there would not be delegated decisions by officers regarding the Planning and Regulatory Committee, as significant decisions would be delayed where possible until full meetings were convened.

The chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee asked for any committee members present to discuss outside of the meeting how it wished to operate as a result of the report's recommendations - despite self-isolating he urged Members to contact him if they had any concerns.

RESOLVED:

1. To amend the definition within the Council's Constitution (as far as the law allows) to define Cabinet as a formal meeting of Cabinet or the Leader or nominated Cabinet Member making a decision in consultation with at least two other Cabinet Members.

2. To delegate all non-executive decisions (as far as the law allows) to the relevant proper officer in consultation with the relevant chairman or member nominated by the chairman.
3. To agree that any member unable to attend a council meeting for a period greater than six months for virus related reasons, receives a dispensation further to section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to December 2020.
4. To resolve that a protocol be agreed with the Chairman of the Council and group leaders to set out the arrangements for decision making with committee members prior to any officer decision usually referred to committee. Protocol to include:
 - a) Notice and reports for the public and committee members
 - b) Any representations from members on decisions
 - c) Arrangements for 'virtual' meetings, discussions or recommendations from members of the committees/members of the public/other councillors.
5. To agree that the Audit and Governance Committee will monitor the use of the protocol and make recommendations on any required amendments to the protocol to ensure that Members remain informed in relation to council decision making.
6. To authorise the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and group leaders to incorporate any legislative changes issued by Government into council business processes.
7. To agree existing chairmen, vice-chairmen and committee appointments continue in line with political group wishes.
8. To review these measures at the 13 October 2020 meeting of the Council or as soon as practicable thereafter as determined by the Audit and Governance Committee.

19/20 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME [Item 6]

Member Questions:

Notice of thirteen questions had been received. The questions and replies were published in a supplementary agenda on 16 March 2020.

A number of supplementary questions were asked and a summary of the main points is set out below:

(Q1) Mr John O'Reilly did not ask a supplementary question.

Mr Jonathan Essex noted the upcoming review by the Government on the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) concerning Heathrow and Gatwick expansion. He asked whether the Council would review its position on its support of the expansion of Gatwick to 15 million passenger movements annually, prior to the Court of Appeal's recent ruling on the ANPS and despite the Government's 10 million passenger movement limit set out in response to the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign.

In response the Leader of the Council agreed to look into the query subsequent to the meeting as the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste was not present to respond.

(Q6) Mr Eber Kington asked the Cabinet Member for Highways to clarify his response concerning the Council's new application system for highway trees which he felt was unclear. He stated that applicants would be required to register online and pay a fee, which meant that data regarding requests on the number of trees and refused requests would be recorded. He asked if that data would be made available so the performance of the new policy could be assessed.

The Cabinet Member for Highways responded that the Council did not currently have a system for recording all trees planted in the county, unless they went through the Highways Arboriculture Team (HAT). A system would be put in place to facilitate the recording of the proposed 1.2 million trees and he agreed to provide data recorded by the HAT to Members if they requested it regarding trees in their division.

(Q8) Mr Robert Evans asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste on whether issues on reducing emissions would still be prioritised in view of changed circumstances since the recent seminar on Climate Change in February.

In response the Leader of the Council agreed to look into the query subsequent to the meeting as the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste was not present to respond.

Cabinet Member Briefings:

These were also published with the supplementary agenda on 16 March 2020.

Cabinet Member for Highways: A Member commended the Cabinet Member and Surrey Highways for their work in successfully resolving the long-standing flooding problem on the A24 near Downsland School. He also thanked the Council's highways officers responsible for the Mole Valley area and thanked the Local Highway Services Group Manager for resolving issues in his division.

20/20 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS [Item 7]

There were none.

21/20 ORIGINAL MOTIONS [Item 8]

Item 8 (i)

Mr Botten agreed to withdraw his motion.

22/20 MEMBERS' COMMUNITY ALLOCATION - FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK [Item 9]

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and stated that there were no major changes to the Members' Community Allocation (MCA). The revised MCA encouraged Members to consider the wider ambitions of the Council as set out

in its Organisation Strategy 2020-2025, which included eight main areas of focus such as improving quality of life and addressing the inequality of opportunity and life expectancy.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families emphasised that one way in which to tackle inequality was to continue to support Looked After Children (LAC) in the county. She was pleased that the Leader had agreed that Members could contribute £250 from their allowance to the Celebration Fund for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. She informed Members that the panel who were responsible for administering the Fund, had met recently to give out awards and the panel agreed that a report would be provided to Members detailing where MCA contributions were dedicated to last year. She encouraged Members to contribute again this year and noted that officers from other local authorities had said that it was a unique way to demonstrate corporate parenting.

RESOLVED:

That Council:

1. Approved the new MCA grant criteria of tackling inequality; supporting independence; joined up health and social care; creating a greener future; embracing Surrey's diversity; partnership; supporting the local economy; and digital revolution.
2. Approved the revised MCA exclusions disallowing the funding of political organisations and activities; national curriculum teaching or learning activities; planning disputes; reputation-damaging activities; and conflicts of interest.
3. Approved the new Financial Framework for Members' Community Allocation, with effect from 1 April 2020.

23/20 SURREY PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/2021 [Item 10]

The Leader of the Council introduced the report noting that it had been agreed at the People, Performance and Development Committee (PPDC) and was a requirement that the Council agreed it annually. He thanked the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development for her work on the report. He summarised the main points on the Statement which were the remuneration of Chief Officers, the terms to which those Chief Officers were employed and the Council's current policies on equal pay, redundancy and Severance which involved sensitive discussions with Council's two Trade Unions and staff.

RESOLVED:

That Council agreed the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/2021.

24/20 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS [Item 11]

No notification had been received by the deadline from Members wishing to raise a question or make a statement on any matters in the minutes.

[Meeting ended at: 10.38 am]

Chairman

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Leader's Statement to County Council – 17 March 2020

Mr Chairman, no sooner had the country's political uncertainty and gridlock been resolved, than a different kind of disruption reared its head.

We now find ourselves in the midst of a public health emergency, one that will test our resilience as an organisation and will need strong leadership to guide us through.

I must take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work already taking place here in Surrey to deal with Coronavirus and the impact it is having on our communities.

Surrey had the dubious honour of being the home to the first case contracted within the UK, which certainly brought public health and communications challenges with it.

But it meant that we put into immediate action our emergency response, which ensured that any public panic was restricted, that the right information was disseminated and that all our services were well prepared to deal with the ongoing disruption this caused.

The team remain on high alert. Surrey County Council staff across the board are working tirelessly on this – supporting our schools and care facilities, liaising with our contractors and providers, working with districts and boroughs and health partners and communicating with our residents.

Obviously, the updated guidance from Government last night means that society is fundamentally changing, for the short term at least.

Working remotely, or indeed in isolation, will become the new normal.

We are guiding staff through this process and analysing the impact across the organisation.

But essentially, we are a public service and our staff are proud and dedicated public servants.

Our priorities at this time are to ensure that we do everything we can to reduce the pressure on the NHS, to protect our most vulnerable communities, and support our staff and residents.

To do this, we must protect the democratic process. Indeed Mr Chairman, this may well be the last public meeting in-person for some weeks or months, but we are putting in place the measures to hold meetings virtually if required, as guided by government.

Legislation is being adapted nationally to guide the nation through this crisis, and we are ensuring our constitution here at Surrey County Council is updated to enable us to continue making the required decisions to keep Surrey functioning.

I would remind all members and residents to heed the guidance from Public Health England not only to keep washing their hands, but also to be alert to information and follow that official guidance and communications directions meticulously.

We have an important role in guiding our communities through this as best we can.

I'd like to thank in particular Ruth Hutchinson, our Interim Director of Public Health, for coordinating this work and showing the leadership so required in fast moving situations like this, as well as the Communications team who have been on call 24 hours a day.

Mr Chairman, this issue has brought into focus our partnership working across the County, and how important those relationships and open lines of communication are.

We have been clear, through our Vision 2030 work and our organisational strategy that was brought here to Full Council before Christmas, that partnership working must be a clear area of focus for everything we do. And I genuinely mean that.

This means proper engagement with partners and communities across Surrey.

Whether it's dealing with Coronavirus or redesigning our services, those relationships are vital to deliver what our communities really need, and want.

As all members are aware Mr Chairman, we have for some years now facilitated a series of Local and Joint Committees, that effectively join together County councillors with their colleagues at a District and Borough level to examine issues and make local decisions.

Today, we are also discussing our Member's Community Allocation, which is proving a useful tool for us to directly support community groups and projects locally.

I'm delighted to see that 96% of that allocation has been spent in 2019/20, demonstrating really effective delivery.

However, even given these tried and tested channels of local engagement and partnership, I think we can and should be doing even more.

Mr Chairman, we are ready to move forward, to utilise new technology to engage even more effectively, and to start thinking bigger in terms of what we can do together.

So, what does that mean in practice?

Next month we are planning to begin a pilot of a new forum – the Local Partnership Board.

These boards will be established at a district and borough level and will bring together not only the County Council with districts and boroughs, but also voluntary sector partners, health, businesses and other key stakeholders.

They will engage local people to help deliver solutions to local issues.

This will enable true partnership working - looking at the bigger picture to fundamentally address place-based issues, by understanding an area's priorities and delivering sustainable solutions.

Mr Chairman, I am confident that this way of working will also prove effective in tackling some of our big challenges.

Our health and wellbeing strategy, reducing inequality, supporting the local economy, tackling the climate emergency, rethinking transport and improving air quality.

We cannot solve these issues alone.

Working in partnership is key to unlocking the expertise and potential of this County, and delivering real change for our residents.

Mr Chairman many of our residents of Surrey will have received their Council Tax demand through their letterboxes. Indeed, some have taken the trouble to write to me.

However unpopular that piece of mail may be, I'm proud that this year we can include a bold and optimistic message alongside it:

That Surrey County Council is investing in our residents of today and of the future, ensuring Surrey is a place fit for the future and ready for the challenges that may emerge over the next decade.

So, the second initiative and a major part of that investment is our Community Projects Fund – initially called the Community Improvement Fund.

This is another example of our desire to work in partnership - helping Surrey's local communities create a better place to live.

During our budget setting process this year, we were able to allocate a £100m capital investment over the next five years as part of the Community Projects Fund.

That is a significant amount of money and it must deliver real benefits for the people of Surrey.

We have a working group putting in place the necessary technology and structures to ensure that we engage with our local communities about exactly what they need and want in their areas.

We want to hear people's ideas and ambitions. Not just traffic schemes and landscaping projects, but ambitious legacy projects that will fundamentally change a place for the better.

And we are here to help deliver it.

This is all about co-design and partnership.

We want boroughs and districts, local business groups, residents' associations, charities, voluntary organisations, the health sector all working alongside us.

We want the whole community involved - shaping the County they want to see for the future, together.

The money is in place, ready to be unlocked and invested, so let's all actively engage our residents.

Mr Chairman, as I draw to a close, I reflect that again we stand here discussing the efforts and ambition of this council against the backdrop of national disruption and uncertainty.

But we are demonstrating our resilience, our leadership and our desire to fulfil our public duty.

The challenges being brought by Coronavirus are not going to go away any time soon, we will be tested further in the coming weeks and months almost certainly, but it is during times like these that we must all pull together.

I hope I have outlined exactly how we're doing that – harnessing all of the creativity, energy and expertise this County has to offer – not just to tackle public health emergencies, but to deliver a sustainable future for Surrey.

Our residents must be assured that we will continue to deliver the vital services they rely on.

And we will continue to show the vision and ambition that is needed to create a better place and a better quality of life for everyone in the County.