

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3rd December 2019 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 20.44 pm

Present: Councillors Mary Huggins (Chairman), Roger Adams, Tim Ashton, Lynne Brooks, Simon Budd, Lesley Bushnell, Helyn Clack, Margaret Cooksey, Stephen Cooksey, Mary Cooper, Elizabeth Daly, Rosemary Dickson, David Draper, Paul Elderton, James Friend, Bridget Kendrick, Nancy Goodacre, Raj Haque, David Harper, David Hawksworth, Chris Hunt, Metin Huseyin, Tracy Keeley, Paul Kennedy, Tim Loretto, Claire Malcomson, Wayne Monkman, Richard Moyse, Emma Norman, Paul Potter, Alan Reilly, Elsie Rosam, Caroline Salmon, Garry Stansfield, Keira Vyvyan-Robinson, Hazel Watson, Clayton Wellman, Patricia Wiltshire and Charles Yarwood.

43. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 8th October 2019 and the Extraordinary Council on 23rd October 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Edge, David Preedy and Garry Stansfield

45. Disclosure of Interests

None

46. Chairman's Announcements

At the Council meeting, the Chairman presented a certificate on behalf of the Council to John Wollatt, the Chairman of the Trustees for Dyscover, recognising the achievements of the volunteer group, which received the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service this year.

The Chairman advised that since the last Council Meeting she had met a Royal Duke, a Burgermeister, switched on Dorking's Christmas lights with a Sindaco (Italian Mayor) and been to concert by Dorking Choral Society with the Guatemalan Ambassador.

At the recent Surrey County Council Chairman's reception awards were presented to Mole Valley residents Bob Bartlett, Penny Tyson-Davies, Kerrie Wellbank and Mark Welling in recognition of the work they do for charities in Mole Valley. It was a wonderful occasion to celebrate with the volunteers and recognise all the great work they do throughout the district.

Other events ranged from concerts and a café opening, to some quizzes and the wonderful Arts Alive Finale.

The Chairman also spent a sobering morning at the Safe Drive, Stay Alive event held every year at the Dorking Halls for new young drivers, an important event reminding all who attended to think more seriously about our approach to driving.

47. Recommendations from Committee

Audit Committee: 31st October 2019 – Treasury Management

RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Monitoring Report for the period ended 30th September 2019 be received, noting that, in the first half year, the Council had operated fully in accordance with the Prudential Limits and levels of approved lending stipulated in the Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20.

48. Climate Change

The Council considered the report set out on pages xx of the agenda.

Councillor Claire Malcomson, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report advising that it summarised the progress that had been made in eight key areas since the Climate Change Emergency had been declared. In particular Councillor Malcomson advised Council that over 60 business and organisations had signed up to the water bottle refill scheme and expected more to follow. Work had commenced on the procurement of new energy contracts, which were to be considered by Cabinet in due course. It was intended that changes to the contracts would lead to reductions in the Council's carbon footprint.

Councillor Malcomson noted that work had almost been completed on calculating the Council's carbon footprint which would be fundamental in the development of a Climate Change Strategy. The Mole Valley Environment Forum brought together a group of people from across the District, all of whom had similar ambitions about the environment, demonstrating the Council's commitment to continue to facilitate working with environmental groups.

Councillor James Friend noted the positive steps taken during the first six months, however suggested that the Council should be more ambitious in its aspirations by using the Council's land and assets to become carbon neutral.

Councillor Tracy Keeley noted that the Council had the opportunity to ensure the development of the Local Plan echoed the desire of the Council in becoming carbon neutral. This was echoed by Councillors David Harper and Helyn Clack who both encouraged greater integration with the Local Plan.

Councillor Patricia Wiltshire welcomed the report and the work undertaken to date, however noted that there needed to be greater integration and coordination on a nation level to see a significant impact.

Councillor Claire Malcomson expressed her thanks to all members for their support and enthusiasm on this important work, noting that there was a desire to see Mole Valley District Council at the forefront of this agenda.

Councillor Malcomson proposed the recommendations to Council, seconded by Councillor Clayton Wellman.

All members were in favour of the recommendation.

RESOLVED: The Council's progress made following the declaration of the Climate Change Emergency be noted.

49. Property Acquisition

Members were reminded that the Constitution provided for reports to be made to the Council on a quarterly basis with details of decisions taken under the special urgency arrangements set out in paragraph 14 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Council's constitution.

Members were presented with a report which detailed the Council's two most recent property acquisitions as detailed on page 2 of the agenda, namely Touristik House, Dorking Office Park.

50. Leaders Statement

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Cooksey, made the following statement,

“I would like first to formally put on record recent changes to the Cabinet. Councillor Kendrick has moved from holding the Projects Portfolio to take up the Finance and Organisation Portfolio and Councillor Vyvyan-Robinson has been appointed to the Projects Portfolio in her place. I would like to take the opportunity of thanking Councillor Kennedy for his very valuable work as holder of the Finance and Organisation Portfolio until he stood down last month.

The forthcoming General Election and the consequent purdah restrictions imposed on Council activities have delayed a number of important projects but all will be back on course next month. Perhaps the most important is the Local Plan but I am confident that Council took the right decision in deferring the processes leading to consultation on a draft plan in view of the fact that the original dates for the major consultation exercise would have run in parallel with purdah thereby significantly reducing the effectiveness of that consultation.

The members’ consultation on proposals to change the system of governance of the Council to a more committee based system had also to be deferred because the general election required a staffing commitment that made proceeding on our original timetable impossible. For similar reasons our timetable for moving forward with the Opportunity Dorking project has suffered delays. All of these projects will be coming forward in January which for all members will be an extremely busy month. We very much welcome the news from the County Council that the Dorking Tip will remain open and know that pressure from the Dorking community and this Council played an important part in that decision and we are now seeking to work with the County to try to secure longer opening hours and acceptance of a wider range of materials. In a similar way the Council was able to respond to community concern about the future of post office facilities in Leatherhead and to work to help ensure that the new post office opened much more quickly than had been originally envisaged.

The Council is making progress on environmental issues, as we heard earlier this evening, and in particular we are beginning to discuss co-ordination with the County and other Districts and Boroughs to achieve common objectives. To that end Councillor Malcomson and I have met with the County Cabinet member to discuss climate change issues and I have been appointed to a small Working Group of Surrey Leaders and Chief Executives to seek ways of co-ordinating our approaches to climate change.

We are all aware that the application from Gatwick Airport for a Development Consent Order is of huge significance to Mole Valley residents. I am pleased to report that the Council has played a part in setting the rules for considering the application. Mole Valley made a submission to the Planning Inspectorate regarding the scope of what needs to be considered in relation to the application and the Planning Inspectorate accepted the concerns that we expressed and consequently the scope is now much wider than originally suggested by Gatwick Airport Ltd. We will continue to work to ensure that our residents have every opportunity to express their views on this major issue.

Finally it is important to recognise publicly the successes that Council staff achieve in delivering services. Such successes often go unreported despite the recognition that staff deserve. Last week, for example, Grant Thornton completed their audit of the 2018/19 Council’s Housing Benefit payments operation. The audit made no amendments, identified no errors and raised no issues for consideration by the Department of Work and Pensions on whose behalf we administer the system and make payments of around £20 million per year for residents. That report identified a significant outcome and an excellent performance on the part of the staff concerned and they deserve our thanks and congratulations for achieving that result.”

51. Reports of Cabinet Members

Councillor Clayton Wellman – Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy

Councillor Wellman advised that the refurbishment of the Ashted Peace Memorial Hall Car Park was nearing completion and plans were underway to progress the refurbishment of South Side Car Park in Dorking in the Spring of 2020.

In the run up to Christmas, Council were advised that Mole Valley car parks were to be free of charge on three Saturdays in December. Additionally, the Council had supported local events by offering free parking on one afternoon to coincide with a Christmas event in the area.

Work on Opportunity Dorking had been progressing with training for small businesses scheduled for early in 2020. It was intended that a consultation was to be undertaken on June.

52. Questions to Members of the Cabinet

The Chairman of the Council advised that no questions had been received.

53. Change of Membership of the Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: The change to the membership of the Scrutiny Committee was approved.

The revised Scrutiny Committee Membership is as follows:

	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Independent
1	Roger Adams	Charles Yarwood	David Harper
2	Paul Kennedy	Lynne Brooks	Garry Stansfield
3	Paul Potter	Tracy Keeley	
4	David Preedy		
5	Elsie Rosam		
6	Caroline Salmon		

Substitutes

	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Independent
1	Nancy Goodacre	Rosemary Dickson	Patricia Wiltshire
2	Emma Norman	Tim Ashton	David Hawksworth

54. Change of Membership of the Audit Committee

Resolved: The change to the membership of the Audit Committee was approved.

The revised Audit Committee Membership is as follows:

	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Independent
1	Roger Adams	Lynne Brooks	Mary Cooper
2	Paul Kennedy	Tim Ashton	
3	Paul Elderton		
4	David Preedy		

55. Motions

Motion 6/2019

The following motion was deferred by Council on 8th October, and had been submitted by Councillor Hawksworth and seconded by Councillor Dickson:-

1. This District is extraordinarily rich in assets of heritage value, including not only the fabric of particular buildings but also ones of historic, literary, scientific, wildlife, archaeological or other note.
2. The Strategy for 2019-2024, adopted unanimously by this Council, and which came into effect on 1 April 2019 aims to "Protect and enhance the natural and built environment, and ensure our areas of natural beauty and wildlife are well looked-after", and also to "Encourage participation in sports, leisure, cultural and educational activities, to promote responsible enjoyment of our parks, open spaces, heritage and countryside."

3. Mechanisms are in place through Historic England and Natural England and other bodies to protect various assets of national importance, and in the case of wildlife there is an established local system of recognizing Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) operated under the Surrey Nature Partnership with a list of the SNCIs in the District available from the MVDC website.
4. This Council, however, lacks a complementary system to that of SNCI system for recognizing and recording heritage assets other than those related to wildlife at the District level, and there have been several instances of cases brought to the Development Management Committee in recent years where the local heritage importance of a site has not always been appreciated in sufficient time to enable it to be taken into consideration in reaching a decision.
5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) is concerned to conserve and enhance the historic environment through the preservation of heritage assets including those “of local historic value” (para 184) and notes that “Local planning authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environmental record” (para 187) and make this “publicly accessible” (para 188). Heritage assets are a consideration to be taken into account in determining applications (para 189).
6. We are aware that any list of local heritage assets would need to remain open and would be expected to develop incrementally as proposals were brought forward by individuals, residents’ associations, parish councils, and local history and similar organizations.
7. Without prejudice, we note that one way to achieve such a list could be by a largely web-based GIS system, similar to or integrated with ones already utilized for other purposes by MVDC, whereby information could be input directly so that it would automatically come to the attention of officers or others conducting searches. This would ensure that the asset could be taken into account and its importance evaluated when preparing reports in relation to planning or other matters.
8. The matter of registering local heritage assets was considered briefly by the previous Administration, but not explored in detail. We now wish to see this progressed by the current Administration to support the Council’s Strategy to protect the natural and built environment of the District.

Motion

This Council requests the current Administration to explore options and develop proposals for the establishment of a list of local heritage assets, with a view to having a mechanism for their recognition in place as soon as possible.

The Council resolved to take the motion on the night.

Councillor Lynne Brooks proposed an amendment to the motion which is shown in bold below. This was seconded by Councillor David Hawksworth.

This Council requests the current Administration to explore options and develop proposals for the establishment of a list of local heritage assets, **to be costed and bought to the Standing Budget Panel in January 2020**, with a view to having a mechanism for their recognition in place as soon possible.

Members debated the motion in full, with Councillor Kendrick, Cabinet Member for Finance and Organisation advising Council that she did not believe it feasible for officers to work up a fully costed proposal by early January. Councillor Margaret Cooksey expressed concerns about the

significant additional amount of work required to undertake the required action in both the original motion and the proposed amendment. Given the limited resources available it was felt that there was insufficient resources and other work to be undertaken which had priority.

Some Members felt that only limited resources would be needed and consideration should be given to outsourcing if internal resources were at capacity. There was a consensus that the heritage assets needed to be protected, but differing opinions as to how this would be best achieved.

The Council voted on the motion, and it was lost.

(NB. Counted votes on motion: 16 in favour, 18 against and 3 abstentions)

Members debated the substantive motion in full. Particular reference was made as to whether community groups could be asked to assist with the development of a heritage register. Concerns were raised about the criteria for what could be listed, given the remit was wider than just heritage buildings and therefore careful consideration would need if this work were to be undertaken by the Council or local organisations. There was considerable debate about the costings and resourcing of this work, given that the Council had already identified priorities for the year and allocated the funding and resources which were available.

The Council voted on the motion, and it was lost.

(NB. Counted votes on motion: 16 in favour, 21 against and 0 abstentions)

RESOLVED: that the substantive motion detailed above was lost.