GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

At an extraordinary meeting of Guildford Borough Council held at Millmead House, Millmead, Guildford on Monday 13 January 2014.

*The Mayor, Councillor Diana Lockyer-Nibbs
*The Deputy Mayor, David Elms

* Councillor Richard Billington
* Councillor Melanie Bright
  Councillor David Carpenter
* Councillor Adrian Chandler
* Councillor Mark Chapman
* Councillor Sarah Creedy
  Councillor Graham Ellwood
* Councillor Zöe Franklin
* Councillor Steve Freeman
* Councillor Andrew French
* Councillor Matt Furniss
  Councillor John Garrett
  Councillor Christian Gilliam
* Councillor David Goodwin
* Councillor Lizzie Griffiths
* Councillor Murray Grubb Jnr.
* Councillor Angela Gunning
* Councillor Gillian Harwood
* Councillor Jayne Hewlett
* Councillor Liz Hogger
* Councillor Christian Holliday
  Councillor Philip Hooper
* Councillor Gordon Jackson
* Councillor Jennifer Jordan
* Councillor Monika Juneja
  Councillor Julia McShane
* Councillor Bob McShee
  Councillor Nigel Manning
* Councillor Stephen Mansbridge
* Councillor Anne Meredith
* Councillor Mrs Marsha Moseley
* Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith
* Councillor James Palmer
* Councillor Terence Patrick
* Councillor Tony Phillips
* Councillor Mrs Jennifer E Powell
* Councillor Caroline Reeves
* Councillor Iseult Roche
* Councillor Tony Rooth
* Councillor Pauline Searle
* Councillor Paul Spooner
* Councillor Nick Sutcliffe
* Councillor Keith Taylor
* Councillor Neil Ward
  Councillor Jenny Wicks
* Councillor David Wright

*Present

CO83 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors David Carpenter, Graham Ellwood, Christian Gilliam, Philip Hooper, Nigel Manning and Jenny Wicks.

CO84 – LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
There were no disclosures of interest.

CO85 – MINUTES
The Council confirmed the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 12 December 2013 as a correct record. The Mayor signed the minutes.

CO86 – MAYOR’S COMMUNICATIONS

Flooding in Guildford
The Mayor placed on record, on behalf of the Council, her sympathy for the many residents and businesses who had suffered with the recent flooding. The Mayor also expressed her gratitude to the considerable number of Guildford Borough Council staff, across many services, who had worked tirelessly over the Christmas and New Year period, helping those residents and businesses.
Mayor’s charity curry night – 29 January 2014
The Mayor informed the Council that she would be hosting a charity curry night, including a raffle, at The Shaheen Tandoori Restaurant, Woodbridge Hill, Guildford on Wednesday 29 January 2014. The proceeds from the evening would be donated to the Mayor’s two chosen charities, Surrey Association for Visual Impairment and the Mayor of Guildford’s Local Distress Fund.

CO87 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
As eleven persons had given notice of their wish to address the Council, and bearing in mind that public participation at Council meetings was limited to thirty minutes, the Council

RESOLVED: That Public Speaking Procedure Rules be suspended to allow more time for public participation at this meeting.

In accordance with Public Speaking Procedure Rule 1 (c), the following persons addressed the Council in relation to Item 7 on the Council agenda: Petition – Save the Hog’s Back (see Minute CO89 below):

(1) Robert Burch
(2) Tom Stevens
(3) Martin Dowland
(4) Peter Elliott
(5) Tim Harrold
(6) Ramsey Nagaty
(7) Mark Payne

The following persons addressed the Council in relation to Item 6 on the Council agenda: Petition – Keep West Horsley in the Green Belt (see Minute CO88 below):

(1) Susan Parker
(2) Tony Thompson
(3) Dr. Peter Shaw
(4) Ben Paton

(The webcast debate on this item may be viewed here, timed at 00:34:54)

CO88 – PETITION – KEEP WEST HORSLEY IN THE GREEN BELT
In accordance with Public Speaking Procedure Rule 1 (d) and the Council’s petition scheme, the petition organiser Mr Jules Cranwell made a statement to the Council in support of his petition.

As at 29 November 2013, when it was submitted to the Council, the petition had been signed by 660 people, of whom 626 lived, worked or studied in the borough, 31 lived outside the borough and three gave no address or the address was illegible.

The petition had stated:

“PLAN TO CONCRETE WEST HORSLEY
We say:

• KEEP WEST HORSLEY IN THE GREEN BELT
• NO to 821 homes to be built on Green Belt land in our village
• NO to increasing our village by 75%

We say this plan will impose an unsupportable burden on schools, road network, drainage, infrastructure, medical services, public transport and dramatically change the character of our village for future generations.”
Before commencement of the formal debate on this petition, the Council

RESOLVED: That Council Procedure Rules be suspended to allow the Lead Councillor for Planning and Governance, Councillor Monika Juneja, to speak for up to ten minutes in moving the respective motions in response both to this petition and the petition referred to in minute no CO89.

Councillor Monika Juneja proposed and Councillor Stephen Mansbridge seconded the following motion for the purpose of the Council's formal response to the petition:

“The Council RESOLVES:

That its formal response to this petition is as follows:

1. The Council welcomes the Petition to ‘Keep West Horsley in the Green Belt’, and thanks the petitioners for their time in collecting, collating and presenting it. We note and understand the genuine concern and strength of feeling of residents and communities in respect of the protection of the village within the Green Belt.

2. The Council would reassure the petitioners that we have not, as yet, made any decisions on our future housing numbers, development strategy or strategic sites. The Council has not decided how many homes should be built within the Borough, or which sites to allocate for development.

3. The Council will reappraise, correct as appropriate, and update the evidence base, in the light of comments made in response to the Issues and Options Consultation, which includes this petition. It will consider them all as part of the new Local Plan process.

4. At this early stage in the process, it would be premature and prejudicial to a sound Local Plan for the Council to agree to keep or remove any particular village or community from the Green Belt, or to adjust its boundaries or inset details until all options and evidence have been fully evaluated.

5. The Council will present its proposals in the Draft Local Plan upon which further consultation will then take place.

6. The Council is aware that the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence, and that its boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process. It is the role of the Local Plan to balance the competing demands protecting and enhancing our environment and accommodating our objectively assessed development needs.

7. Once the Local Plan has been publicly examined, approved as sound and adopted, the Council will continue to heed Government policies, which state that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, and that planning applications for such development should only be approved in “very special circumstances”. The Council is also mindful of the need to respect and preserve the special character of many parts of the Borough.

8. The Council will also ensure that developers are only granted permission to develop provided it will be acceptable in planning terms. This means the Council will continue to require developers to make contributions to the necessary infrastructure via the mechanism of Planning Obligations and/or any new Community Infrastructure Levy Charging regime that comes into force in its area.”
Councillor Liz Hogger proposed, and Councillor Tony Phillips seconded, the following amendment:

Add the following text to the end of paragraph 3 of the motion:

"The Council will enable full public involvement in this reappraisal of the evidence base, especially the 'Green Belt and Countryside Study', by holding a special joint meeting of the two Scrutiny Committees."

After a debate on the amendment, it was put to the vote and was carried. Following the debate on the substantive motion and before the vote was taken thereon, Mr Cranwell exercised his right of reply on the debate.

The Council then

RESOLVED: That its formal response to this petition is as follows:

1. The Council welcomes the Petition to ‘Keep West Horsley in the Green Belt’, and thanks the petitioners for their time in collecting, collating and presenting it. We note and understand the genuine concern and strength of feeling of residents and communities in respect of the protection of the village within the Green Belt.

2. The Council would reassure the petitioners that we have not, as yet, made any decisions on our future housing numbers, development strategy or strategic sites. The Council has not decided how many homes should be built within the Borough, or which sites to allocate for development.

3. The Council will reappraise, correct as appropriate, and update the evidence base, in the light of comments made in response to the Issues and Options Consultation, which includes this petition. It will consider them all as part of the new Local Plan process. The Council will enable full public involvement in this reappraisal of the evidence base, especially the ‘Green Belt and Countryside Study’, by holding a special joint meeting of the two Scrutiny Committees.

4. At this early stage in the process, it would be premature and prejudicial to a sound Local Plan for the Council to agree to keep or remove any particular village or community from the Green Belt, or to adjust its boundaries or inset details until all options and evidence have been fully evaluated.

5. The Council will present its proposals in the Draft Local Plan upon which further consultation will then take place.

6. The Council is aware that the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence, and that its boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process. It is the role of the Local Plan to balance the competing demands protecting and enhancing our environment and accommodating our objectively assessed development needs.

7. Once the Local Plan has been publicly examined, approved as sound and adopted, the Council will continue to heed Government policies, which state that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, and that planning applications for such development should only be approved in "very special circumstances". The Council is also mindful of the need to respect and preserve the special character of many parts of the Borough.
8. The Council will also ensure that developers are only granted permission to develop provided it will be acceptable in planning terms. This means the Council will continue to require developers to make contributions to the necessary infrastructure via the mechanism of Planning Obligations and/or any new Community Infrastructure Levy Charging regime that comes into force in its area.

Reason for decision:
To provide the Council’s formal response to the petition in accordance with the Petition Scheme.

(The webcast debate on this item may be viewed here, timed at 01:18:11)

CO89 – PETITION – SAVE THE HOG’S BACK
In accordance with Public Speaking Procedure Rule 1 (d) and the Council’s petition scheme, the petition organiser Mrs Karen Stevens made a statement to the Council in support of her petition.

As at 29 November 2013, when it was submitted to the Council, the petition had been signed by 981 people, of whom 782 lived, worked or studied in the borough, 181 lived outside the borough and 18 gave no address or the address was illegible.

The petition had called on the Council to:

- “remove the areas of Green Belt land on the northern slopes of the Hog’s Back from the Guildford Local Plan and to stop plans to build 2,000 new homes on Blackwell and Manor Farms;
- safeguard this open countryside which contributes to the landscape character of Guildford and also includes an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and an Area of Great Landscape Value;
- create a Local Green Space between Beechcroft Drive and Manor Copse to protect an area promised in 2003;
- invest within Guildford’s existing boundaries to regenerate areas and make Guildford a better place to live. Any further development should be limited to non-Green Belt land adjacent to existing development.”

Councillor Monika Juneja proposed and Councillor Stephen Mansbridge seconded the following motion for the purpose of the Council’s formal response to the petition:

“The Council RESOLUTIONS:

That its formal response to this petition is as follows:

1. The Council welcomes the Petition to ‘Keep West Horsley in the Green Belt’, and thanks the petitioners for their time in collecting, collating and presenting it. We note and understand the genuine concern and strength of feeling of residents and communities in respect of the protection of the village within the Green Belt.

2. The Council would reassure the petitioners that we have not, as yet, made any decisions on our future housing numbers, development strategy or strategic sites. The Council has not decided how many homes should be built within the Borough, or which sites to allocate for development.

3. The Council will reappraise, correct as appropriate, and update the evidence base, in the light of comments made in response to the Issues and Options Consultation, which includes this petition. It will consider them all as part of the new Local Plan process.
4. At this early stage in the process, it would be premature and prejudicial to a sound Local Plan for the Council to agree to keep or remove any particular village or community from the Green Belt, or to adjust its boundaries or inset details until all options and evidence have been fully evaluated.

5. The Council will present its proposals in the Draft Local Plan upon which further consultation will then take place.

6. The Council is aware that the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence, and that its boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process. It is the role of the Local Plan to balance the competing demands protecting and enhancing our environment and accommodating our objectively assessed development needs.

7. Once the Local Plan has been publicly examined, approved as sound and adopted, the Council will continue to heed Government policies, which state that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, and that planning applications for such development should only be approved in “very special circumstances”. The Council is also mindful of the need to respect and preserve the special character of many parts of the Borough.

8. The Council will also ensure that developers are only granted permission to develop provided it will be acceptable in planning terms. This means the Council will continue to require developers to make contributions to the necessary infrastructure via the mechanism of Planning Obligations and/or any new Community Infrastructure Levy Charging regime that comes into force in its area.”

Councillor Tony Phillips proposed, and Councillor Liz Hogger seconded, the following amendment:

Add the following text to the end of paragraph 3 of the motion:

"The Council will enable full public involvement in this reappraisal of the evidence base, especially the ‘Green Belt and Countryside Study’, by holding a special joint meeting of the two Scrutiny Committees."

In the light of the outcome of the debate on the amendment in respect of the motion referred to in Minute No. CO88 above, Councillors Monika Juneja and Stephen Mansbridge indicated that they would be prepared to accept the amendment in respect of this motion. Following the debate on the substantive motion and before the vote was taken thereon, Mrs Stevens exercised her right of reply on the debate.

The Council then

RESOLVED: That its formal response to this petition is as follows:

1. The Council welcomes the Petition to ‘Save the Hog’s Back’, and thanks the petitioners for their time in collecting, collating and presenting it. We note and understand the genuine concern and strength of feeling of residents and communities in respect of the protection of the Green Belt land on the northern slopes of the Hog’s Back.

2. The Council would reassure the petitioners that we have not, as yet, made any decisions on our future housing numbers, development strategy or strategic sites;
nor have any allocations been made for new homes on Blackwell Farm or Manor Farm.

3. The Council will reappraise, correct as appropriate, and update the evidence base, in the light of comments made in response to the Issues and Options Consultation, which includes this petition. It will consider them all as part of the new Local Plan process. The Council will enable full public involvement in this reappraisal of the evidence base, especially the 'Green Belt and Countryside Study', by holding a special joint meeting of the two Scrutiny Committees.

4. The Council is not yet in a position to decide whether any further development should be limited to non-Green Belt land adjacent to existing development. At this early stage in the process, it would be premature and prejudicial to a sound Local Plan for the Council to agree to remove from consideration, any land which is or is not covered by Green Belt, AONB or AGLV designations, or to agree to create a Local Green Space until all options and evidence have been fully evaluated.

5. The Council will present its proposals in the Draft Local Plan upon which further consultation will then take place.

6. The Council is aware that the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence, and that its boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. The Council is equally aware of the importance of regeneration and economic issues to make Guildford ‘a better place to live’.

7. Once the Local Plan has been publicly examined, approved as sound and adopted, the Council will continue to heed Government policies, which state that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, and that planning applications for such development should only be approved in “very special circumstances”.

Reason for decision:
To provide the Council’s formal response to the petition in accordance with the Petition Scheme.

(The webcast debate on this item may be viewed here, timed at 02:18:50)