

**Minutes of a Meeting of the External
Partnerships Select Committee held at
Surrey Heath House on 14 July 2015**

+ Cllr Paul Deach (Chairman)
+ Cllr Dan Adams (Vice Chairman)

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| - Cllr Ian Cullen | - Cllr Adrian Page |
| - Cllr Ruth Hutchinson | + Cllr Robin Perry |
| + Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans | + Cllr Chris Pitt |
| + Cllr David Lewis | + Cllr Nic Price |
| + Cllr Katia Malcaus Cooper | + Cllr Darryl Ratiram |
| + Cllr Alan McClafferty | + Cllr John Winterton |
| + Cllr Max Nelson | |

+ Present

- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes:

In Attendance: Cllr Rodney Bates, Cllr Bill Chapman, Cllr Colin Dougan, Cllr Charlotte Morley, Andrew Crawford, Cllr Bill Chapman, Cllr Charlotte Morley, Cllr Colin Dougan, Robert Mills, Castell, Jenny Rickard and Cllr Rodney Bates

1/EP Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Cullen, Ruth Hutchinson and Adrian Page.

2/EP Chairman's Announcements and Welcome to Guests

The Chairman welcomed Members and in particular the new members of the Committee. He welcomed and introduced Rob Mills, the Regional Housing Director of Accent South and Acting Inspector Jon Castell, the Surrey Police Neighbourhood Inspector.

3/EP Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 March 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4/EP Presentation - Surrey Police

The Committee received an update on community safety/crime and disorder in the Borough, based on data compiled by the Force Analysis Unit.

Further to the challenges previously reported, Acting Inspector Jon Castell explained that the Neighbourhood Team had experienced significant cuts and that the priorities across the Force had to be to target crime rather than community events. The Neighbourhood Team's priorities had to be keeping people safe, being there when people needed them and the relentless pursuit of criminality.

Inspector Castell reported that total notifiable crime was down by 6.6%, with vehicle crime down by 18.1%, domestic burglaries down by 20% and non-domestic burglaries down by 29.2%. The main increase was in non-domestic violence with injury, but this was the result of a different definition of the crime by the Home Office. Following numerous high profile cases, it was expected that reporting of child exploitation crimes would increase.

Crime related to the Town Centre Night-time Economy was under control but there were other areas of the Borough where related crime occurred.

In response to Members questions, Inspector Castell highlighted the following:

- (i) Community Events – In previous years, the Neighbourhood Team had provided significant resources on road closures and the policing of events such as the Chobham and Frimley Green Carnivals. However, with a reduction from 50 to 30 officers, the Team had 4 officers on the beat at any given time.

Any road closure proposals for major events had to be considered by the Surrey Heath Safety Advisory Group. Given that there were now a number of organisations which specialised in events, road closures and traffic/crowd management, the Team and Force priority had to be the relentless pursuit of criminality, particularly in relation to child abuse, domestic abuse, violent crime and terrorist activities;

- (ii) Travellers Incursion in Chobham –The Police and Borough Council worked closely, dealing with anti-social behaviour and moving travellers on from illegal sites. There were challenges from close proximity to other areas where travellers were also being moved on. In this instance, 5 to 6 vehicles were on the Recreation Ground. the Council was landowner and would take appropriate action;

- (iii) Heatherside Recreation Ground – In respect of reports on anti-social behaviour of youths gathering in the Play Area, Inspector Castell confirmed that there was a Police presence at the recreation grounds on Friday and Saturday evenings. Information on vehicle numbers provided by residents had been used and new mobile CCTV cameras have been acquired recently and would be deployed as necessary. Dispersal powers were available for up to 48 hours, but would only be used where maximum impact could be achieved;

- (iv) Drugs – There continued to be issues in the Old Dean and other parts of the Borough. Whilst there was a dedicated Youth Intervention Officer post, which worked to divert young people from crime, this post had been vacant for 2 weeks. There were instances of dealers travelling from London and operating out of addresses in the Borough, but Surrey Police and other Forces had very good shared intelligence and the neighbourhood Team targeted those crimes which had the most impact on the community. The Team had a range of measures available to it, including street cautions, arrests and prosecutions.

The Chairman noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner would make a presentation to the Council in the near future and Members would have an opportunity to raise the issues of resources and community events with him at that meeting.

RESOLVED, that the presentation and resource issues be noted and that the Neighbourhood Inspector be invited to make further presentations to future meetings.

5/EP Presentation - Accent South

Rob Mills, the Regional Housing Director, Accent South gave a presentation on the Accent Group, its governance, the work of the Group in Surrey Heath and local initiatives/joint working with the Council.

The Accent Group was a national Housing Association with Headquarters in Yorkshire, but the biggest number of properties managed were in Surrey Heath and Accent South had an office in Camberley. The Housing Association's structures were functional rather than geographical, with 3 Directorates and a single Accent Board and Executive, leading to quick and clear decision making.

A Regional Customer Services Committee focussed on service delivery, value for money, improvements to property management/maintenance and influencing local decision making. Councillor Colin Dougan was an active member of this committee.

The Accent Group had over 20,000 properties. In Surrey Heath, its stock consisted of 3,000 dwellings and 700 garages. The main targets for the Group were delivering effective services, providing value for money, as well as improving housing management and property maintenance.

In terms of its customers, with a staff of 47, including 8 housing officers with their own 'patches', one home ownership officer and one supported housing officer, and a contact centre which dealt with 80% of all contacts, Accent was committed to provide high quality services.

Accent offered a range of tenure types including social rent (65% or market value), affordable rent (80% of market value), starter tenancies, assured tenancies, temporary accommodation, sheltered accommodation, shared ownership and leasehold.

The Group was working jointly with partner agencies in Surrey Heath on a Joint Housing Register/Allocations policy, temporary accommodation and down-sizing projects. All new tenants started on fixed 12 month tenancies, before moving onto more secure 'assured' tenancies. The Group currently continued to issue lifetime tenancies. Temporary accommodation could last for anything from 6 to 12 months.

Accent had evicted 10 single people and 3 families from properties in the previous year, of which one was due to anti-social behaviour and the remainder due to rent arrears.

In terms of anti-social behaviour (ASB), the group had a number of measures in place and was building an ever closer relationship with partner agencies to reduce the impact thereof. In addition to address existing ASB, the Group employed 2 tenancy support officers to assist those flagged up as being most at risk of becoming involved in ASB. It also had a community fund (£10,000 per annum) available for grants of up to £2,000 with the main criteria being benefits to Accent customers.

Mr Mills listed a number of achievements in the previous year, including the development of 175 new homes in Runnymede, 175 tenants being supported under tenancy sustainability, investment in the community and disposal of stock in Kent, which generated a capital receipt for investment in new housing locally. In terms of challenges, he listed the impact of welfare reforms, the lack of new affordable housing and difficulties renting out or re-developing 700 garages in the Borough due to restrictions imposed by the Special Protection Area (SPA). Reductions in rent, 'pay to stay' for those households with combined earnings of more than £30,000, the compulsory introduction of fixed term tenancies, welfare caps and the extension of 'Right to Buy', would set further testing challenges for Housing Associations.

In response to Members' questions, Mr Mills noted the following:

- (i) Housing Allocation – In terms of the allocation of Housing Association built/rented properties in the Borough, the actual organisation purchasing/building had no impact on the allocation, as 100% of all new lets were nominated by the Council. Shared ownership went locally in the first instance and was only offered further afield if there was no local take-up. Some accommodation would be allocated to those fleeing domestic abuse, but, again, the majority of this allocation was from Surrey Heath.

Accent was in competition with other housing associations when bidding for available land. Sometimes, for developments such as Deepcut, the numbers of units would be too high for an individual Housing Association and Accent would bid in partnership with other Groups.

- (ii) Temporary Accommodation – Kitchens and bathrooms in Temporary accommodation were due to be renovated this year, but the available accommodation was basic.
- (iii) Mental Wellbeing/Disability - Housing Officers would initially assist those with mental wellbeing issues or disabilities, but support officers could be called in and the officers liaised closely with the Community Mental Health Team and related charities. There would be additional training for staff on this area of work within the next 12 months.
- (iv) Challenges – Accent, like other providers were heavily impacted upon by the Special Protection Area and the Group had concerns around the percentage of affordable/social housing which would come forward following the recent easing of planning regulations.

- (v) Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Mr Mills accepted difficulties in addressing issues around ASB, noting that the example of a Mytchett tenant who was finally evicted after 7 years of complaints, whilst an exceptional case, was a failing. Measures had been put in place subsequently and Accent worked closely with partner organisations, including Surrey Police, to expedite any necessary measures in a more timely fashion. However, if it is necessary to take action through the courts, the timescales would be 6 to 9 months and often, outcomes would depend on affected people coming forward.
- (vi) Maintenance – An example was given of a resident living with serious mould issues in an Accent property for a number of months. Mr Mills noted that this was as a result of a structural issue, but that Accent accepted that the delay had been unacceptable. The matter had now been rectified to the tenant's satisfaction.

Mr Mills emphasised that emergencies should be turned round inside 24 hours and urgent repairs sorted within 5 days. Accent currently met the required standards for 95 -96% of its properties.

RESOLVED, that

(i) the presentation be noted;

(ii) the Group be invited to provide an update to a future meeting.

Note: Councillor Colin Dougan declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as he was the Council's representative on Accent South and received remuneration. He was, however, attending to support the Regional Manager.

6/EP Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered issues for consideration at meetings during the remainder of the municipal year. In addition to the presentations from Surrey Police and the Accent Group, at this meeting, Members considered the following:

Accent Group (Housing Association)
Crime and Disorder Update
Enterprise M3 (Local Enterprise Partnership)
Surrey Chambers of Commerce
Collectively Camberley BID
Surrey Heath Health and Wellbeing Board
Surrey Heath Clinical Commissioning Group
Frimley Park Hospital NHS Trust
Surrey Police and Crime Panel
Surrey Fire and Rescue
Camberley Street Angels
Active Surrey
University of Surrey
Tomlinscote Sixth Form/Vocational Centre

Environment Agency
Natural England
Dementia Friendly Surrey (SCC Initiative)
Surrey Heath Age Concern
Camberley Care
Tringhams Lunch Club (Bisley and West End)
L.I.V.E. (Lightwater Information for the Vulnerable and Elderly)
Your Sanctuary (Domestic Abuse Refuge Provider)

Meetings were scheduled for 14 July, 15 September and 24 November 2015 and 19 January and 29 March 2016.

Members proposed that presentations be grouped in sets of 2 or 3 similar/linked areas and allocated to appropriate meetings. The Transformation Team Manager, Sarah Groom was asked to draft a possible Committee work Programme. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman would consider the draft work programme and a copy would be circulated electronically, in advance of the next meeting.

Resolved that

- (i) the report be noted; and**
- (ii) the Transformation Manager be asked to draft a work programme, for consideration by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and circulate electronically, a developed work programme for the remainder of the municipal year 2015/16.**

Chairman