

**Minutes of a Meeting of the External  
Partnerships Select Committee held at  
Surrey Heath House on  
22 November 2016**

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

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

+ Present  
- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: Cllr Ian Sams for Cllr Chris Pitt

In Attendance: Cllr David Allen  
Cllr Colin Dougan  
Nigel Downey, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath  
Sarah Groom, Transformation Team Manager  
Tara Hastings, Citizen's Advice Surrey Heath  
Cllr Charlotte Morley  
Peter Nyman, Camberley Central Job Club  
James Stewart, Yorktown and Watchmoor Business Association  
Michael Usher, Frimley Business Association

**15/EP Chairman's Announcements and Welcome to Guests**

The Chairman welcomed James Stewart, Yorktown and Watchmoor Business Association, Michael Usher, Frimley Business Association, Peter Nyman, Camberley Central Job Club and Nigel Downey and Tara Hastings, Citizen's Advice Surrey Heath, to the meeting.

**16/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee held on 20 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**17/EP Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Perry declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 7 Citizens' Advice Surrey Heath as he was the Council's representative on Citizens' Advice Surrey Heath's Board of Trustees.

## **18/EP Yorktown Watchmoor Business Association**

James Stewart, Chairman, gave an update in respect of the work of the Yorktown and Watchmoor Business Association.

The Organisation's main aim was to tackle barriers to business growth in and around Camberley with a particular focus on public transport provision, traffic congestion and local infrastructure. This was achieved through a combination of providing local businesses with a single body that could represent their views in a wider arena and working to promote specific projects that would improve business prosperity in the area.

A recent revamp of the organisation had helped improve its interface with local businesses and this had in turn helped progress a number of key projects for the area including the development of the Blackwater Valley Cycle Route, improvements to the Meadows Gyratory to address capacity issues, improving bus connectivity between railway stations and business areas and working to identify parking solutions in key business areas.

It was acknowledged that many small businesses lacked the resources to get fully involved with the Organisation however they were encouraged to be involved with the organisation's work through a series of standalone events including business breakfasts.

A decision by Surrey Heath Bough Council to part fund a post with Surrey County Council has resulted in a Highways Officer being based in Surrey Heath for one day a week. This has resulted in the priorities and problems in the area having a much greater profile than previously and meant that progress to improve traffic congestion was now being made in a number of areas.

It was stressed that businesses in Watchmoor Park and Watchmoor Point business areas were keen to promote alternative ways of travelling to work to their employees and were supportive of the cycleway that was currently under construction. However it was acknowledged that more needed to be done to counter the negative messages about the scheme currently on social media.

The Committee thanked James Stewart for his update.

## **19/EP Frimley Business Association**

Michael Usher gave a presentation in respect of the Frimley Business Association which had been set up two years ago with the key aim of improving the environment in and around Frimley High Street.

Funding had been secured from the Community Improvement Fund and this would be used to tidy up Frimley High Street and buy plants for the large planters down the middle of the road.

A Christmas Tree Light Switch On in 2015 had proved particularly successful. This event would be repeated on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December when it was hoped that it would help raise awareness of the businesses operating in Frimley High Street and encourage more people to visit and use them. It was suggested that the Project 5 event being run in partnership with the Surrey Wildlife trust might be an ideal way to source Christmas Trees for the high street and it was agreed that the details would be forwarded to the Association.

It was acknowledged that the large white building on the High Street was in need of some cosmetic work to improve its appearance however it was a privately owned building and there was little that could be done to impel the owners to address the situation.

The Committee thanked Michael Usher for his presentation.

## **20/EP Citizens Advice Surrey Heath**

Tara Hastings, Chief Executive, and Nigel Downey, Chairman, gave a presentation in respect of the work of Citizens Advice Surrey Heath. The presentation included an overview of the organisation, a summary of the services provided and areas for development.

The Organisation provided a free, independent and confidential advice service on a wide range of issues to local residents whilst at the same time working to improve policies and practices that affected people's lives directly. The organisation employed eight part time paid members of staff who were in turn supported by 40 volunteers and monitored by a ten member trustee board who had been selected on the basis of the skills they could offer the organisation.

To ensure that resources were deployed appropriately, and people approaching the service received an appropriate level of support, a triage system was used to assess the nature and complexity of a person's problems before an appropriate course of action was developed. Those seeking advice were increasingly presenting with multiple problems and in 2015/16, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath dealt with 4993 unique clients who presented with 15,110 problems.

The four most common reasons for approaching the organisation were to seek advice on benefits, debt, housing and employment. Data showed that, with the exception of one subject area, the number of people seeking advice had increased across all advice areas when compared to 2014/15 data. The exception to this was the number of people seeking advice for Council Tax arrears which had fallen by 19% to 196 people. This fall was attributed to the Borough Council becoming more proactive about tackling Council Tax arrears at an early stage and not waiting until the situation became critical; a move that was welcomed by the organisation.

As part of work to improve the accessibility of the service, an agreement had been entered into with Citizens Advice Woking and the organisation had joined Adviceline. This meant that Surrey Heath residents could now talk to advisors on a Friday when Surrey Heath's office was closed, weekly outreach services were being delivered in Chobham and Bagshot and home visits were offered to those who were unable to travel. The possibility of operating an outreach service at Frimley Park Hospital had been explored however to date this project had not got beyond initial discussions.

Analysis of the weekly outreach services had found that the Bagshot service was not as well used as it might and more needed to be done to widen awareness of the service before a decision was taken on whether the resources might be better used elsewhere in the Borough. Councillor Hutchinson agreed to help with this task in her capacity as ward councillor for Bagshot.

Initial approaches to the Clinical Commissioning Group for funding had been unsuccessful and it was agreed that Councillor Dougan would work with the CAB to try and unlock this potential funding stream.

Some success had been had with fundraising activities and over the past four years approximately £50,000 had been raised however it was acknowledged that this was an area that could be developed further.

Whilst the organisation had a Twitter account this was currently linked to the national Citizen's Advice Bureau website and work was taking place to link this to the local website so that more could be done to raise awareness of the services offered locally.

The Committee thanked Tara Hastings and Nigel Downey for their update.

## **21/EP Camberley Central Job Club**

Peter Nyman, Treasurer, gave a presentation in respect of the work of the Camberley Job Club. The presentation included an overview of the organisation, a summary of the services it provided and potential areas for development.

The Job Club, originally set up in 2012, had predominantly been funded by the Frimley Fuel Allotment Society. In April 2016, a grant of £5,000 had been received from Surrey Heath Borough Council which had been used to employ a part time administrator to strengthen and support the work of the small voluntary committee who ran the Job Club.

The Job Club met for two hours twice a week when a team of 12 volunteers, many volunteering for the first time, provided service users with support to help them find employment. In addition to providing advice and guidance on CVs and interview preparation volunteers also helped people to access training, become smarter with their job searches and could if necessary refer people to other more specialised services for example debt advice services and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. The Job Club encouraged its service users to undertake voluntary work and helped them to understand that the transferable skills acquired through voluntary work were positive attributes that should be included on CVs. External speakers were invited to attend sessions to talk on a range of subjects and the Committee was looking to expand this aspect of the service. In May 2016, the Job Club had hosted a successful employment conference and work had started on a similar event for May 2017. Employers were encouraged to attend sessions to talk to service users about the opportunities available and the Job Club were working with Council officers to expand this offer further.

Although Surrey Heath had low unemployment levels it was recognised that the labour market was volatile and the services offered by the Job Club provided supplemental support to service users in addition to the help that was available from Job Centre Plus. In addition to assisting those people looking for work the Job Club worked with the long term unemployed, those wanting to return to work after a significant break and people who found themselves out of work after a significant period of time in one role by helping them to build up their resilience, self-respect and self-confidence.

The Job Club was looking to expand its offer and had identified social care as a growth area in the region. Following work with Age UK and the Alzheimer's Society, a funding bid had been submitted to enable the development of an Introduction to Social Care Course. The possibility of spending time operating from the Sure Start Centre and possibly occupying a vacant space in the Mall on one day were also being explored.

The Job Club had a Twitter account and a Facebook page and it was hoped that with the new Administrator in post these would be more fully exploited.

The Job Club did not currently provide training on using Linked In as a job seeking tool and Councillor Adams offered to help the Job Club with setting this up.

The possibility of acquiring charitable status had been explored however it was felt that the organisation was too small to benefit from this at the current time and the matter would be revisited at a later date.

It was agreed that a suggestion to put an article in Heathscene about the Job Club would be followed up.

The Committee thanked Peter Nyman for his informative update.

## **22/EP Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered a report setting out a proposed work programme for the Committee for the rest of the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

The following agenda items were suggested for consideration:

- Heathrow Airport and the actions planned to mitigate the effects of the building of a third runway

It was agreed that the next meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee would be rescheduled to Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at 7pm.

**Chairman**