

**Minutes of a Meeting of the External
Partnerships Select Committee held at
Council Chamber, Surrey Heath
House, Knoll Road, Camberley, GU15
3HD on 12 March 2024**

- Cllr Rob Lee (Chair)
+ Cllr Mary Glauert (Vice Chair)

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| + Cllr Rob Lee | + Cllr Lewis Mears |
| + Cllr Mary Glauert | + Cllr Jacques Olmo |
| + Cllr Louise Ashbery | + Cllr Murray Rowlands |
| Cllr Jonny Cope | + Cllr Bob Raikes |
| Cllr Emma-Jane McGrath | + Cllr Kevin Thompson |
| + Present | |
| - Apologies for absence presented | |

Substitutes: Cllr Liz Noble (In place of Cllr Rob Lee)

Members in Attendance: Cllr Shaun Garrett, Cllr Nirmal Kang, Cllr Victoria Wheeler, Cllr Valerie White, Cllr Richard Wilson, Sally Kipping, Eddie Scott and Nick Steevens

24/EP Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

25/EP Public Question Time

There were no questions by Members of the Public as per the procedure outlined in Part 4, Section E of the Constitution.

26/EP Chair's Updates and Welcome to Guests.

The Vice-Chair updated the Committee on various pieces of Committee correspondence and events which had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that Windlesham Parish Council had declined to attend the meeting of the Committee, and Michael Gove MP was not able to attend the meeting, due to his attendance of the conclusion of the budget debate. Surrey County Highways had also declined to attend.

The Council continued to pursue Thames Water for a satisfactory level of compensation for residents following the events in the summer of 2023, which led to severe odour pollution in areas of Camberley. It was agreed to pursue Thames Water for answers to the questions, which were agreed to be replied to in writing at the Committee's 28 November 2024 meeting.

The Committee noted the report included in the agenda pack, which summarised the Committee's Accent Workshop which took place on 12 January 2024. The Committee noted its proposed attendance at the June 2024 meeting of the Committee and highlighted the contrasting experiences of residents of Accent, and the importance of Surrey Heath-specific performance figures from Accent.

27/EP Royal Mail

The Committee received a presentation from Michael Hogg, Senior Public Affairs Manager, and Chez Bondonno, Operations Performance Lead – GU, in respect of the recruitment, and workforce and employment issues, which affected the service which was being provided by the Camberley Delivery Office and to provide account of the factors which affected the performance of the service in postcodes GU15, GU16 and GU17.

Camberley had received and acknowledged poor Royal Mail postal delivery service during 2023. The GU area covered approximately 350,000 addresses, served by 19 delivery offices, over 50 postcodes and employed over 1,100 personnel. Camberley Delivery Office served over 31,000 addresses and employed 90 frontline employees. Pre-November 2023, the GU operation area had suffered from a significant resource gap and a success rate of 52% (criteria which aimed to achieve a postal delivery to addresses at least every other day). Since November 2023, there had been a reset of standards in the GU area, as well as recruitment to make up a significant resource gap, and new measures to increase morale and reduce sick leave. As a result of these changes the success rate had risen to between 80% and 90% success deliveries on a regular basis.

It was anticipated that moving forward, Camberley would receive a consistent service, 6 days a week and there were significant contingency plans in place for if a similar resourcing issue were to occur again. When there were acknowledged failures, Royal Mail now looked to implement rotations to ensure addresses received post regularly. This process had previously not been in place in the GU area before November 2023.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Whilst there had previously been reports of only 20 hours part-time contracts being offered in the Camberley area, this was untrue. Approval had recently been granted to increase the headcount at the Camberley Delivery Office, and there was no contractual limitations in place which dictated part-time hours.
- It was clarified that the standard was a 6 day a week service, which residents could all expect.
- There had previously been a recruitment gap up to approximately 120 personnel across the GU area and this had subsequently been reduced to approximately 10. It was noted that there was now also a pool of staff at the Goldsworth Park Royal Mail base, which could be diverted if resourcing problems were to exist again. Moreover, overtime facilities were available for personnel who wanted it.

- All Royal Mail employees nationally, now had access to private GP and mental health support services. Private health provision for its employees was brought in given its high levels of staff sickness and the need to ensure a healthy and productive workforce. Whilst long-term staff sick leave was handled on a case by case basis, Royal Mail did not rule out the option of recruitment of temporary members of staff where necessary.
- It had been reported to a member of the Committee, that a member of the Communication Workers Union, did not feel comfortable to attend the meeting but had a different perspective on the recent perceived turnaround of the delivery service. Whilst, there had been a significant dispute with the union and an 18 day strike in 2022, it was reported that Royal Mail were beginning to regain trust amongst its employees and managers. Moreover, there was recognition that better morale within the workforce resulted in a better quality of delivered performance.
- Collection services in GU24 had recently changed from evening collections to morning collections which had impacted the turnaround times for local businesses. It was agreed that the reasons for this would be provided in writing to the Committee in due course.
- Given the recruitment issues experienced, rolling recruitment took place in specific areas within the GU area. In other areas, this was not required because of significant amount of interest in Royal Mail employment opportunities in the area.
- Residents had reported to Members, that they found the opening hours of the sorting office for collections limiting. Whilst, redelivery had limited the necessity for extended life customer service points, the opening hours were largely dictated by footfall. Moreover, it was noted that delivery offices, now mostly provided Special Delivery, surcharges and custom services, and that the vast majority of deliveries were made to the recipients' addresses.

The Committee thanked Michael and Chez for their time and the detailed answers to questions. The Committee was also grateful to receive an invitation from Michael, to receive a tour of the Camberley Delivery Office to illustrate some of the changes which had been made.

28/EP Surrey Police

The Committee received a presentation from Inspector Gemma Taylor in respect of the recent changes which had affected Policing within Surrey Heath, campaigns and ongoing crime trends.

Policing in Surrey Heath was primarily undertaken by the Safer Neighbourhood Team, and the Wider Neighbourhood Policing Team, which were response based. The teams were in turn backed up by specialists and other departments.

The Safer Neighbourhood team currently had 4 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), together with 1 in training, which would cover the Town Centre, and one further new PCSO who would be dedicated to the 6 villages.

Following the appointment of the new Chief Constable for Surrey Police in April 2023, the Western Neighbourhood Policy had subsequently been updated to

reflect his aims and objectives. This in turn had been reflected in new priorities in the Surrey Heath Neighbourhood Policing Strategy, which comprised of aims to 'Engage with Communities', be 'Problem Solvers' and to undertake 'Specifically Targeted Activity'. Specifically, the Neighbourhood Policing Team were now asked to hold one 'Meet the Beat', style event each month, with a specific target audience and focussed messaging. Moreover, there was a focus to better utilise the team's People, Groups and Places meeting and partner and volunteers in order to increase problem solving. On top of this the Neighbourhood Team also supported national campaigns throughout the year, which would now be structured into quarters throughout the 12 months. Moreover, to fulfil the aim to increase charges, a new investigation team had been created out of the borough's response team, which meant at the point of arrest of a subject, investigations were now handed over to a specialist team, who processed the prisoner and dealt with the case accordingly. It was acknowledged that work had also meant that offenders were being charged quicker and were often no longer released on bail.

Recently 'Meet the Beat', events had taken place with Bisley Residents' Association and sessions were also planned for Places Leisure and at Ballard Court. There were also forthcoming plans to aim to tackle Anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre, which involved a pop-up youth club, to create a different angle in which to tackle ASB.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team had also taken part in the White Ribbon Campaign, and aimed to raise awareness of male violence against women and girls in alcohol- licenced premises in the evening. All hate crime and all non-crime hate incidents were recorded and flagged to ensure patterns could be traced of repeat victims or repeat suspects. Hate and Anti-Social Risk assessments were for each case undertaken to assess risk of each case, and any potential impact on the wider community. This was then reviewed by Inspectors at 72 hours, 7 days and 28 days after the event.

Following on from Members questions and comments the following points were noted:

- There hadn't been significant changes over the past year in respect of volumes of recorded crimes. Burglaries and vehicle crimes were perceived to peak when there were clusters of offences. It was expected that domestic abuse and hate crime offences were likely to rise, but it was deemed positive that people felt comfortable to report these offences.
- There were approximately 1.5 burglaries per 1,000 population per year in Surrey Heath, as it stood, which was almost the lowest in the entire force, but was perceived to be worse by residents and the public. There was a feeling this could be framed to give confidence to residents that the borough continued to be a safe place to live.
- Members requested further information in relation to the non-disclosure rates in the borough in respect of Claire's law. Whilst the Committee were to be furnished with the precise figure, the borough's numbers were known not to be exceptionally low but also not out of line with the rest of the Western Division. It was acknowledged that there was an

opportunity for a joint campaign between the Council and the Safer Neighbourhood Team to promote Claire's Law.

- It was noted that there was a 18.2% increase in the solve rate in hate crime and a 19% increase in the solve rate in relation to Domestic Abuse cases. The Committee asked for this to be confirmed on how many cases this equated to.
- The Safer Neighbourhood Team were working to put in place a framework at Collingwood School to allow members of school staff to deal with lower level hate incidents, to ensure they did not escalate into crimes. The Safer Neighbourhood Teams was working with the School's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team and it was hoped the co-produced framework could be rolled out across Surrey Heath schools and potentially across Surrey.
- The Safer Neighbourhood Team was due to the work with the Youth Council, the Young People already involved in various instances, and a group at Tomlinscote School in order to consult on the best ways to tackle anti-social behaviour, under a Positive Future approach.
- Reported burglaries would be attended, but prioritised on the level of threat, harm and risk at that time. Forensics were always considered in every burglary and may result in a Scene of Crime Officer attending the address. The investigation team also proactively investigated each burglary, but would often pair up the information gathered to solve a series of burglaries, as burglaries were now often committed by Serious and Organised Crime groups. An initiative had been put in place recently so that every burglary victim received an individual visit from Neighbourhood Watch, who would offer support and suggestions on how to make their properties more secure.

29/EP Surrey Police and Crime Panel Update

The Committee received a verbal update from Councillor Richard Wilson, who was the Council's representative on the Surrey Police and Crime Panel.

The panel's primary aim was to scrutinise the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner and support the Commissioner as a critical friend. The panel had 14 members, and met approximately every 2 months. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was required to produce a Police and Crime Plan, which was a primary vehicle to form the basis of scrutiny. The panel also scrutinised revenue and capital budgets of the Office of the PCC.

The Chief Constable was responsible for operational policing matters; and was held to account by the Police and Crime Commissioner, rather than the Police and Crime Panel. However, it was good practice to understand the issues affecting the Chief Constable, who privately met with the Police and Crime Panel on an annual basis.

Members of the Committee asked for further detail on the effectiveness of the Police and Crime Panel's Scrutiny and the following points were noted:

- Whilst the majority of issues in relation to policing were Surrey-wide, the Panel had made representations and discussed the shortage of PCSOs, and the significant increase in shoplifting, in relation to Surrey Heath specific issues.
- The Police and Crime Panel provided critical friend scrutiny to the PCC, which recently included a recommendation on the inclusion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Police and Crime Plan, and various recommendations on call-handling which featured at its meeting on 2 February 2024.
- There were contrasting opinions on the overall performance of policing in Surrey, with significant reference to metrics featured in the Peel Report, and it was perceived that whilst performance under these metrics were not entirely sub-standard they had dropped in recent years.
- There were concerns in respect of how frontline contact with Surrey Police had changed in recent years; and on contact with the PCC, the PCC's limited scope had been reemphasised and that it was not the PCC's place to get involved in operational matters.

The Committee thanked Councillor Wilson for his update and his continued representation of Surrey Heath on the Panel.

30/EP Work Programming for 24/25

The Committee noted that its Work Programme for the 24/25 year would be developed in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair. It was anticipated that the Committee would consider items relating to Accent Housing provision, NHS Frimley and Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Boards at its June meeting.

Chair