

Minutes of a Meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee held at Council Chamber, Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, GU15 3HD on 12 November 2019

+ Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans (Chairman)

+ Cllr Sarah Jane Croke (Vice Chairman)

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| + Cllr Peter Barnett | + Cllr Emma-Jane McGrath |
| + Cllr Cliff Betton | - Cllr Sashi Mylvaganam |
| + Cllr Tim FitzGerald | + Cllr Darryl Ratiram |
| + Cllr Shaun Garrett | - Cllr Morgan Rise |
| + Cllr David Lewis | + Cllr Pat Tedder |
| + Cllr Alan McClafferty | |

+ Present

- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: Cllr Graham Tapper

Members in Attendance: Cllr Graham Alleway, Cllr Paul Deach, Cllr Charlotte Morley, Cllr Robin Perry and Cllr Victoria Wheeler

Officers Present: Louise Livingston, Jenny Rickard, Jayne Boitoult and Eddie Scott.

13/EP Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

14/EP Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

- (a) Councillors Robin Perry and Graham Tapper as Trustees of the Frimley Fuel Allotments Charity as some of Accent Housing tenants were recipients of grants from the Charity; and
- (b) Councillor David Lewis as the Council's representative on the Citizens Advice Surrey Heath.

15/EP Citizens Advice Surrey Heath

Kate Sawdy, the Chief Executive Officer of Citizens Advice Surrey Heath (CASH) made a presentation on the vital work undertaken by CASH. CASH helped people with a range of problems and increasing complex issues with housing, debts, benefits, employment, relationships and consumer rights.

The Committee heard that evidence showed that CASH's advice was effective, prevented problems from escalating and often had a wider impact. Members were

advised that helping to solve an individual's problems had a wider value to the community.

Although it was impossible to put a financial value on the work of CASH, the following benefits could be identified:

- Keeping people in employment or helping them back to work
- Preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness
- Reducing demand for mental health and GP services
- Improving mental wellbeing and positive functioning
- Improved family relationships

Financial modelling showed that for every £1 spent CASH generated £9.01 in savings to government and public services, £41.25 in wider economic and social benefits and £38.84 in financial value to the people helped.

Additional services provided related to

- 'Help to Claim' - helping people make their first Universal Credit application
- Social Prescribing - linking people to community activities and services.
- Emergency support – Food bags and Referrals to Surrey Crisis Fund, Besom and other charitable funds
- Independent Living - Home visits for those whose disability, age or caring responsibility makes it difficult to leave their homes to access advice.
- Disability Form Filling support - To help people access appropriate benefits and appeal decisions.
- Hate Crime reporting centre – referrals to the police
- Domestic Abuse support - including being a centre for Emergency Domestic Abuse orders by phone
- Healthwatch Surrey – Providing the patient's voice to influence change.

Kate gave an example of how advice and social prescribing worked. Many vulnerable clients not only needed financial advice and support but also help with linking in to society and accessing services and organisations that could improve their wellbeing and engagement in life. Improved wellbeing would hopefully result in less visits to GPs and other health services, reducing the pressure on the health system.

CASH had over 50 volunteers who gave their time, skills and experience. This year the trained volunteers had given up the equivalent of £296,000 worth of volunteering hours.

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

- The value of CASH's signposting role for councillors doing ward casework.
- The funds which were raised locally by CASH to contribute to income from other sources.
- The CASH's move to Surrey Heath House which had had considerable benefits such as improved networking opportunities.
- The potential to use Councillors and officers to help to promote and develop CASH services, particularly the outreach service.

- Gratitude for the help with the homeless, particularly in Chobham.
- Officers be asked to facilitate Member Training on CASH issues and how councillors could help those in emergency need.
- Members requested better access to CASH staff email addresses.

The Committee thanked Kate Sawdy for her informative presentation.

16/EP Accent Housing

The Chairman welcomed Claire Stone, Executive Director of Customer Experience and Rob Mills, Director of Customer Experience at Accent, to the meeting.

Accent had provided homes and services for a diverse range of customers and communities since 1966. Accent owned over 20,000 properties, providing homes to around 40,000 people nationwide. It had 4,100 homes in Surrey, Hampshire, Kent and Sussex. Overall, Accent had 97 units of homeless temporary housing with 54 units in Surrey Heath.

Rob advised the Committee of the investments made by Accent and the challenges for the future which included a new service offer and improvements to the customer experience.

In relation to the Repairs Service, Accent accepted that performance had not been as they would expect it to be. A new contractor had recently been employed who would provide an improved service.

Members' asked questions and Accent representatives' responded in relation to the following:

- The new maintenance contractor, Axis Europe, had better capacity to undertaken a large number of repairs.
- Annual customer care checks were being introduced.
- It was considered that during welfare visits maintenance issues should be identified and reported back.
- It was suggested that there was a need to shorten the renewal life cycles for kitchen and bathrooms in line with other providers – statistics on Accent's current life cycle provision to be attached to the minutes.
- New experienced staff had been recruited in order to foster better relationships with the contractor.
- As energy costs were a higher percentage of outgoings for lower incomes families, it was suggested that high condensing boilers should be introduced in all properties.
- It was also suggested that boilers should be replaced on at least a 15 year cycle.
- Accent indicated that lowering energy costs and the associated environmental issues were now becoming increasingly urgent matters.
- Despite annual meetings with local residents, there was disappointment that the specific issues raised at these meetings were not resolved. It was noted that this could be as the result of inherent problems in the housing stock.

- Accent acknowledged there was a need for cultural shift when dealing with the adaptation of properties to meet the requirements of the elderly and disabled.
- Councillors asked for a single contact point to enable them to deal with ward issues.
- Some Members considered that the emergency repairs target was unrealistic. Accent reported that the contractor had employed additional staff to assist with the backlog of work.

The Committee thanked Rob Mills and Claire Stone for their interesting and informative presentation.

17/EP The Hope Hub

The Committee received a presentation from Mags Mercer the Chief Executive of the Hope Hub, a registered charity working to prevent and end homelessness in the Borough and surrounding areas. Hope stood for Holistic, Open to all, Person centred and Empowering.

Members noted the sources of funding received by the Hope Hub. Moving facilities had allowed the Hope Hub to improve its services, which included crisis services such as the provision of food and empowerment services such as money management advice. The Committee was informed the number clients who had accessed the service in 2018/19 and between April and September 2019 and the outcomes in help provided.

A number of projects would be undertaken this year, such as the Cooking for Hope Courses. In the longer term it was planned to develop partnering with the Council in the Supporting Homeless Strategy.

The Committee was advised that the Hope Hub had received many commendations from clients and the Council was urged to continue to support their work.

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

- The Hub relied heavily on volunteers to keep up with increasing demand.
- The Hub proposed to apply for a revenue grant from the Council and would sign up to a 3 year service level agreement.
- The Hope House provide short term shelter for Surrey Heath residents for those who had no access to public funds whilst the Hub sought solutions.
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The Committee thanked Mags Mercer for her interesting and informative presentation.

18/EP Heathrow Noise Forum Update

Councillor Victoria Wheeler had been appointed as the Council's representative on the Heathrow Community Noise Forum in May 2019.

Councillor Wheeler made a presentation on the work of the Forum which had been set up in 2015 in response to local concerns regarding future changes to airspace as a result of the Government's airspace modernisation strategy. The Forum was made up of representatives from local authorities around Heathrow, NATS, British Airways, Department for Transport, Civil Aviation Authority and Heathrow.

The aims of the Forum were to

- keep community representatives and local authority stakeholders informed and seek their input in preparing for and consulting on future airspace modernisation as part of the Government's airspace modernisation strategy and airspace changes associated with Heathrow expansion;
- improve understanding of members on Heathrow's operations and airspace issues;
- seek input from members to inform the communications approach to trials and public consultations regarding potential airspace changes;
- build trust in the data through members involvement in the independent verification of the data and analysis of data.

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

- Changes and increases in aircraft did not need to be the subject of consultation.
- The difference between noise and annoyance were hard to define, had different effects on health and wellbeing and could differ according to background of the location e.g the impact of noise was greater in rural areas.
- There had been no studies on the impact of noise on the SPA.
- It was suggested that a third runway would have no greater impact on noise in the Borough than the technological developments likely to be introduced.
- Residents should complain if affected by noise and could use a flight radar App to give details of planes and altitude.

The Committee thanked Councillor Wheeler for her interesting and informative presentation.

19/EP Committee Work Programme

The Committee noted its work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

Chairman