

**Minutes of a Meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee held at Council Chamber, Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, GU15 3HD on 11 February 2020**

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|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| + Cllr Peter Barnett    | + Cllr Emma-Jane McGrath |
| + Cllr Cliff Betton     | + Cllr Morgan Rise       |
| + Cllr Sarah Jane Croke | + Cllr Sashi Mylvaganam  |
| + Cllr Tim FitzGerald   | + Cllr Darryl Ratiram    |
| + Cllr Shaun Garrett    | + Cllr Pat Tedder        |

+ Present

- Apologies for absence presented

Members in Attendance: Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans, Cllr David Mansfield, Cllr Robin Perry and Cllr Helen Whitcroft

Officers Present: Jayne Boitout and Louise Livingston

**20/EP Appointment of Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED that Councillor Sarah Jane Croke be elected Chairman for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year.**

**21/EP Appointment of Vice Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED that Councillor Morgan Rise be elected Vice Chairman for the remainder of 2019/20 municipal year.**

**22/EP Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**23/EP Declarations of Interest**

It was noted for the record that Councillor Helen Whitcroft was the Council's Outside Body Appointment to Parity for Disability.

**24/EP Accent Housing**

The Committee received a presentation on Accent Housing from Rob Mills, Director of Customer Experience; Claire Stone, Executive Director; and David Crampton, Operations Director at Axis Europe.

Since their last presentation to the Committee during November 2019, Accent was receiving circa 330 maintenance orders per week and Axis Europe was the main contractor for the Housing Association.

Accent's new 'Rant and Rave' satisfaction scheme allowed for quantitative and qualitative analysis of their maintenance service. As well as a rating out of 5, Rant and Rave allowed for daily quick-glance analysis of scores and encouraged customer comments. Unlike other Housing Associations' feedback software, 'Rant and Rave' picked out keywords in order to present an overall picture of satisfaction in a word-cloud and also provided a qualitative insight list.

Joint Accent and Axis resident events would take place during spring 2020 in order to acquire feedback and have direct contact with residents. In response to Members' feedback from the last Committee Meeting events would take place in every Council ward where Accent had properties.

Axis was continuing to fulfil the legacy contract which carried out the outstanding maintenance orders from the previous contractor CHS. Whilst there were issues in respect of the data on the outstanding work left by CHS, an increase in maintenance orders year on year meant Axis would have to recruit more staff. In addition it was acknowledged that there was room for improvement in respect of communication on missed appointments.

Arising from Members questions and subsequent discussions the following points were noted:

- Completed maintenance orders were followed up via the following methods:
  - The resident would receive a telephone call from Accent's contact centre to check satisfaction with the completed repair/maintenance.
  - Once the Axis member of staff had logged completion of an order an automated text message was sent to the customer to check satisfaction with the service. Dissatisfaction would be immediately followed up in order to allow the Axis Member of Staff to go directly back to the property.
  - The newly appointed Resident Liaison Officers also acted as a direct point of contact for residents in respect of maintenance issues.
- Emergency maintenance issues aimed to be fixed within 4 hours; and routine maintenance issues fixed within 8 days with a maximum window of 15 days for work to be completed. It was acknowledged that on occasions maintenance was completed outside of these timescales as Axis aimed to fit round residents' schedules if requested. In addition some orders required multiple visits to a property.
- Members had received significantly less complaints in respect of maintenance issues from residents since Accent last presented to the Committee. In addition there had also been a perceived reduction in complaints about Accent on Social Media. Moreover, Members had significant positive feedback in respect of better communication with residents particularly via the Resident Liaison Officer.
- Despite this there had been continued access issues in respect of disability friendly properties. It was underlined that stairlifts could be a solution to these problems and that the properties were unsuitable in emergencies. A

particular case was outlined, where an elderly resident had to climb on their kitchen drainer in order to open or close their window. This was taken away for addressing by Accent's representatives.

- Quarterly group meetings took place on site with older residents in sheltered housing in respect of residents' happiness. It was envisaged that Axis would also attend these meetings in the future.
- There was a potential need to review Accent and Surrey Heath's Joint allocation policies and a need for Accent and Council Officers to liaise in respect of a wider conversation about access to affordable housing.

Members thanked Rob Mills, Claire Stone and David Crampton for their presentation and were positive about the improvements which had been made since November.

## **25/EP Camberley Business Improvement District (BID)**

The Committee received a presentation from Jodie MacAndrew, Business Improvement District Manager, at Collectively Camberley.

The Business Improvement District (BID), was a defined area in Camberley Town Centre within which the businesses had voted in 2011 to collectively invest in local improvements to enhance their trading environment.

Whilst some businesses were excluded, often those who were exempt from business rates, a Levy was set for the BID area and all businesses within that area were bound to pay it. The levy was collected by the Council and the income was what was used to fund the work of the BID. Collectively Camberley self-funded to a total between £20,000 and £40,000 per year via advertising revenue and pitch fees at its events. It was underlined BIDs were not-for-profit organisations.

Within Camberley, Collectively Camberley was responsible for the running of events such as Armed Forces Day and the various Town Centre hunts. In addition the BID was responsible for the annual Christmas decorations and hanging baskets around the Town Centre. Amongst other activities Collectively Camberley also ran social media campaigns and leaflet drops promoting Town Centre Businesses, networking events and business awards.

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

- Louise Livingston, Executive Head – Transformation, was Surrey Heath's Representative on the BID Board and Collectively Camberley worked closely with the Council's Economic Development, Marketing and Communications and Leisure Teams to promote the Town Centre.
- The BID's expenditure was broken down to the penny and financial reports were regularly presented to its Board. The BID was directly accountable to the BID Levy payers.
- Collectively Camberley tried to cater events or specific campaigns to benefit a specific business if it felt it wasn't getting a return on its BID levy.
- Collectively Camberley's relationship with the large national retailers in the Town Centre varied from retailer to retailer. It was noted whilst Sainsburys use to have little involvement, Primark was active on the BID Board.

- Collectively Camberley was working with Town Centre businesses on exploring free car parking initiatives, which would entail a reduced Car Parking fee if shoppers spent money at a qualifying business.
- Plans for the installation of Footfall Counters were being considered in The Square.
- Collectively Camberley didn't produce new marketing content for Council run projects, but normally repackaged existing materials.

There was a discussion in respect of the marketing and communication around the Town Centre regeneration. It was agreed there was value to a more detailed exhibition of the plans and proposed materials in The Square.

- Even though a scheme had previously existed and failed to get much uptake, there was worth for the Council to review the demand and potential for a shop mobility service.

Members felt it would be useful for Councillors to receive a brief update on the Council's work with the BID.

**RESOLVED that**

- I. **the relevant Committee or Working Group receive a verbal update on the Council's joint work with Collectively Camberley and any relevant feedback from its representation on the BID Board; and**
- II. **the potential for a Shop Mobility Service be examined for potential consideration at the Town Centre Working Group.**

**26/EP Camberley Job Club - Report**

The Committee received a report from Peter Nyman, Treasurer, in respect of the work of Camberley and District Job Club.

Camberley Job Club was originally founded in 2012. Its purpose was to help those who were looking for employment to prepare and search for jobs. This was provided by helping rebuild confidence, offering support in preparing a CV, writing a cover letter and interview preparation.

Camberley Job Club fostered a friendly and inclusive culture and had a 'no turn-away' policy and had received many repeat customers as a result. The majority of customers aimed to acquire basic-level jobs and the Job Club aimed to improve jobseekers' employability through enrolling clients in English-speaking classes and helping them with basic IT skills.

Whilst a significant amount of clients were referred back to Job Centre Plus, each customer had between 5 and 12 mentoring sessions at the end of which it was hoped that clients would be self-managing. Clients also had workshops on debt issues and guidance on setting up their own business if necessary.

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

- It was noted that the Executive had resolved to delegate the decision to award the Job Club with a revenue grant for the 20/21 financial year to the

Executive Head – Transformation. Discussions had indicated it was likely that the Job Club would be awarded with a revenue grant of £6,000.

- Peter Nyman advised that Councillors were welcome to experience the service first hand on a Monday morning at High Cross Church.

The Committee thanked Peter Nyman for his informative presentation.

## **27/EP Parity for Disability**

The Committee received a presentation from Helene Abbiss and Kelly Jarman in respect of the work of Parity for Disability.

Parity was a charity which provided specialist day services in Farnborough, Camberley and Mytchett to those with multiple disabilities. Once young people with multiple disabilities left education, their options were limited in terms of day to day support and opportunities to connect with others. This was exemplified by feedback from parents that without parity they didn't know what their young people would do.

Parity had a fleet of 6 mini-buses; and had a team of carefully recruited staff, some of which were training towards qualifications such as a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

Parity currently fundraised £150,000 a year to meet the shortfall in funding, but it was noted that Parity also required 2-3 months in contingency funding.

Parity had been recipients of a Community Fund Grant and positive references from Officers allowing the acquisition of an interactive Visilift Screen for their Mytchett Centre. Parity had also been helped with grants from Frimley Fuel Allotments and Surrey Community Foundation.

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

- On visiting Parity's day services Members had received a fantastic welcome from both students and staff and were stunned by the great facilities in particular the sensory room. It was reiterated that every Member should visit to see the work of the charity and that Parity did fantastic work to reduce isolationism for young people with multiple disabilities.
- Parity fostered a great atmosphere and culture, where the students constructed and planned their own days whilst staff facilitated their plans.
- There was potential for Parity to work with the Council's Economic Development Team to promote their service and network with other local charities and businesses such as at the Surrey Heath Business Breakfast.
- In June 2019 Parity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This could act as an opportunity to promote and raise the profile of the charity in conjunction with the Council's Economic Development Team.

The Committee thanked Helene Abbiss and Kelly Jarman for Parity's brilliant work and their informative presentation.

## **28/EP Proposed Work Programme 2020/2021 Municipal Year**

The Committee considered its Work Programme for the 20/21 municipal year.

It was agreed that as Accent had made significant progress towards successfully tackling its maintenance issues, there was little value to it presenting to the Committee during the June meeting. Instead it was agreed that an Accent presentation to the September meeting of the Group would be more valuable.

In addition as Surrey Heath Arts Council was in receipt of a Revenue Grant, but hadn't recently presented to the Committee, it was felt there was value for them to present at the next Committee Meeting.

**RESOLVED that Surrey Heath Arts Council be invited to present to the Committee during its June Meeting.**

Chairman