

**PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

**Portfolio Holder Update: Support and
Safeguarding**

Portfolio	Support and Safeguarding
Ward(s) Affected:	All

Purpose

To consider a progress report on the Support and Safeguarding Portfolio

1. Background

1.1 Within the Regulatory Service, the Support and Safeguarding Portfolio covers the following areas:

- Community & Revenue Grants
- Community Safety
- Children's Champion
- Equalities
- Information Management
- Voluntary Sector & Community Partnerships – The Lottery
- Private Sector Housing and Disabled Facilities Grants
- Housing and Homelessness

2. Community and Revenue Grants

- 2.1 The Council values the work undertaken by our voluntary organisations enormously and there are two grant schemes available to help facilitate local services supporting those in need. All applicants are charitable not for profit organisations.
- 2.2 The Council funds a number of voluntary organisations which either work in partnership with the Council or perform functions on the Council's behalf.
- 2.3 In January 2019 the Council Executive agreed that a full review of the existing Revenue Grant scheme would be undertaken with the outcomes becoming effective from the 1st April 2020. The review looked at whether grants were being made at the correct levels, to the right organisations, and the value for money the revenue grants realised. Additionally we were able to increase the sum available with the Council increasing the cash budget to £200,000 which represents an increase of around £40,000.
- 2.4 The scheme is now open and accepts applications from any not for profit organisation who delivers services within Surrey Heath and is fully compliant and helps the Council to meet its long and short term strategy as outlined within our 5 year plan.
- 2.5 This is a clear demonstration of the Council's ongoing community commitment to local organisations who provide crucial services within Surrey Heath. Part of the review has introduced ring fencing to 3 organisations who work with the Council: Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, Blackwater Valley Partnership and the Basingstoke Canal Authority, other organisations are attached in annex A.

3. Community Safety

- 3.1 The Crime and Disorder Act was enacted in 1998 and places a statutory duty on all local authorities together with their partnership agencies to develop and deliver a Community Safety Strategy. The original legislation has seen changes and some of the most recent is the Crime and Policing Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014, which saw the Council lead a multi-agency partnership project group that introduced from October 2017 an all-encompassing Public Space Protection Orders in Surrey Heath. This gives proportionate powers to both the Council and Surrey Police to be able to deal effectively with low level anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 The Surrey Heath Partnership is chaired by the Leader of the Council, and sets the strategic direction supported by both statutory and voluntary partners, and the support of the Partnership Officer Group. The CHaRMM (Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting) and the JAG (Joint Action Group) has the operational responsibility in managing the day to day incidents and risks of both people and places.
- 3.3 The Annual Plan agreed at the Surrey Heath Partnership meeting on the 26th February is provided as annex B and provides specifics as to where the local focus is for the year 2020/21.

4. Safeguarding

- 4.1 The Surrey Heath team work hard to comply with the responsibilities relating to safe guarding. This is managed by the Executive Head of Transformation, Louise Livingston and the officers who are the safeguarding champions which comprises of representatives from services across SHBC. The Council is represented at both the officer and member Children's and Adult Safeguarding Boards.
- 4.2 From the Ofsted review in May 2018, where Children's Services were judged to be in a critical state, Surrey County Council have embarked upon a comprehensive transformation programme with a major restructure of the children's services to support the shift to a model based upon early support and prevention.
- 4.3 It is important to remember that all Councils have responsibilities to safeguard children and for us to provide the best services possible, a collaborative approach is essential. In 2019, Ofsted acknowledged the rapid and solid progress of the Surrey County Council changes.
- 4.4 The next Surrey Heath Section 11 Audit is scheduled to take place later in 2020. Our Safeguarding e-learning platform – covering safeguarding for both adults and children - is part of mandatory induction for all new starters and all existing staff who have not completed safeguarding training in the last three years are also completing this module. In addition, around 40 staff in relevant roles have attended greater in-depth safeguarding training over the last 18 months.

5. Children's Champion

- 5.1 My role as Surrey Heath's Children's champion involves working with the Council's lead officer in Safeguarding, Louise Livingston and we work with Surrey County Council and the Safeguarding Children's Board who lead in this area. It is important that our own practice and policies are up to date and fit for purpose.
- 5.2 I attended the Safe Drive Stay Alive Surrey event on the 7th November 2019 at Dorking Halls, this is always a really thought provoking event, aimed at our young people who are either newly qualified drivers, or in the process of becoming one, or a passenger. The event is delivered via a series of live education performances with a sequence of short films and live speakers from Fire, Police, Ambulance, and former (young people) patients who have been involved with dealing with the at the scene accidents. The aim is to increase awareness of the risk and responsibilities of young drivers and passengers, and to positively influence their attitude.
- 5.3 For Local Democracy week in October 2019, a workshop was hosted by the Surrey Heath Museum where local schools were invited to come along and attend a mock Council meeting in the Chamber, students from: Frimley C of E, and Lakeside Primary, schools attended.
- 5.4 I also supported the continuation of the Surrey Heath Young Citizen event which was hosted at Collingwood College in November 2019, this is a unique event aimed at year 7 pupils and is designed to build awareness around healthy relationships, through delivery of a drama production from Solomon Theatre entitled 'last orders' over the two day period an average of 335 pupils attended.

6. Equalities

Internal

- 6.1 The Member Equality Working group met in January, where the equality impact assessment form was reviewed and it was generally acknowledged that this process ensured that officers fully considered the impact of their policies upon different groups. Members supported the recent Hate Crime Policy introduction, and would like to see further publicity in this area by the Council with the aim of increasing awareness.
- 6.2 On the 27th January the Council commemorated the 75 Holocaust Memorial Day, jointly with the Surrey Heath Faith Forum. The Member Working group have resolved to ask the Executive to recommend to Council to adopt a pledge against antisemitism and discrimination.
- 6.3 At the Full Council meeting on the 26th February Cllr Morgan Rise, asked the Council to note the increase in hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people across the country, and how this group are more likely to suffer from problems including mental illness, homelessness and violence. The Council committed to an annual pride flag raising at Surrey Heath House and to fly the Pride flag for all of Pride month in Surrey (August) to show visible support from the Council for the LGBTQ+ community.

- 6.4 The Council reconfirmed its commitment to the Equality Act 2010 in promoting equality and eliminating discrimination for all minority groups within Surrey Heath with the Member Equality Group to develop an annual plan that considers the characteristics in the equality groups.

External

- 6.5 The Surrey Heath Faith Forum (SHFF) is a local constituted not for profit group with a core membership of around 10 people who represent the range of faith groups that operate and are based within Surrey Heath. The group is chaired by Foad Rahimi who represents the Baha'i faith and Ray Wicksman who represents the Jewish Faith.
- 6.6 The group continue to deliver educational interfaith assemblies in Surrey Heath Schools sharing our message of 'Mutual Respect – Unity in Diversity', this has been delivered to eight primary schools benefitting a total of over 1200 children, and in February this presentation was altered to appeal to older young people, with Kings International students being the first to receive this.
- 6.7 The SHFF have also been invited to come along and help with the Great British Spring Clean on Friday 20th March, and are working towards launching a colouring competition to schools, using the title 'how can people of faith unite to tackle climate change' this will culminate with a prize giving event during Interfaith week on Saturday 14th November.
- 6.8 The Council will be applying for re- accreditation of the Disability Confident Committed certificate in April 2020.

7. Information Management

Freedom of Information

- 7.1 The last three years of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Regulation (EIR) requests shows a steady increase year on year with 2019 figure increasing regardless of the go live of the Building Control Database in October 2019 which has seen a sharp decrease in the amount of EIR requests.

Year	2017	2018	2019
FOI/EIR total	1111	1133	1211

- 7.2 FOI's have increased in complexity taking longer to source information or apply relevant exemptions. Examples of FOI requests by subject area include:

- CEO expenses/investigation
- Planning application/permission correspondence
- Business rates data
- Council spend – office move/toilets
- Air quality / energy efficiency
- Data security /cyber security breaches, procedures, policy
- Fixed penalty notice data
- Recovery of unpaid council tax
- Council tax & disability reductions

8. Voluntary Sector and Community Partnerships - The Surrey Heath Lottery

- 8.1 The Council has enabled and supported local Community development within Surrey Heath for over 20 years and there are many examples of the initiatives, such as The Surrey Heath Lottery, which exemplifies the good practice of community development, in supporting local for local at its best.
- 8.2 It was launched on the 13th July 2019, and is a great way to raise funds for both the participating organisations and the clients who buy the tickets, with a top prize of £25,000.
- 8.3 The Surrey Heath Annual Community Lottery Award Scheme' will be accepting funding bids from the 1st – 30th April, and this will be accessible to all not for profit organisations to apply for funding, without being part of the Surrey Heath Lottery organisations, it is expected that the funds to be awarded will be in the region of £6-£8,000: The awards will be announced around the time of the lottery 1st birthday on the 13th July.

9. Private Sector Housing and Disabled Facilities Grants

- 9.1 The housing stock within the Borough is generally in good condition and there have been no prosecutions this year.
- 9.2 The Team deal with disrepair in resident's homes and manage standards in the private rented sector, including the licensing of Houses in Multiple occupation (HMOs). Between January 2019 and January 2020 the Team responded to 89 housing complaints relating to repairs and disrepair issues and licensed 12 HMOs after ensuring that they met the required standards.
- 9.3 There have been no clearances of housing due to hoarding in 2019. The team undertook 131 housing inspections in 2019. They also provided 3 public health funerals.
- 9.4 This team also acts as the Council's Home Improvement Agency and delivers the Council's mandatory and discretionary grants programme, including Disabled Facilities Grant, used to adapt and improve the homes of disabled and vulnerable residents. This works supports independence, keeps people in their homes in the community and delays moves to care. By adapting and improving the home environment the work seeks to reduce hospital admissions and, when residents have been ill, support re-enablement.
- 9.5 In 2019 the team has agreed 109 grants and between April 2019 and January 2020 the Home Improvement Agency oversaw completion of works on 81 homes. Types of works agreed include stair lifts, shower rooms/bathroom adaptations, access issues (e.g. doors, ramps, etc.), scooter stores and vehicular access. This complements the work of the Community Services Team who deliver adaptations such as key safes and the Home Handyman Service.

9. Housing and Homelessness

- 9.1 This team deals with homelessness in the Borough and seeks to deliver solutions for those who are at risk of or are homeless. Between April 2019 and January 2020 the Housing Solutions Team received 334 homeless applications.
- 9.2 These applications were from households who were either threatened with homelessness (i.e. would be homeless in the next 56 days) or actually homeless at the time they approached the Council. In 2018/19 the Council received 355 applications.
- 9.3 When a household is homeless the Council has a duty to assess their needs and produce a Personal Housing Plan, setting out the action the household and the Council will take. If someone has a priority need, i.e. they have children or are vulnerable in some way, there is a duty to provide temporary accommodation during this relief period.
- 9.4 Of the 334 applications received, 34 households were found to have the main housing duty owed to them, which means they had priority need and the Council were not able to relieve their homelessness. This gives rise to a duty to provide them with temporary accommodation until settled housing can be found. At the time of writing there were 47 households in temporary accommodation and 4 in Bed and Breakfast. There was also one person housed in Bed and Breakfast under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).
- 9.5 A further 75 households had their homelessness prevented which is why numbers in temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast remain at low levels compared to other areas
- 9.6 Of the remaining 225 these are either open cases, have secured their own housing or have stopped engaging with the service.
- 9.7 The main cause of homelessness continues to be loss of accommodation in the private rented sector. Often households who approach would have previously secured another tenancy but are having difficulty in finding a property they can afford. Rents in the private sector continue to outstrip the help available through the benefits system, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table: Snapshot of rents in Camberley January 2020

Property size	Average rent p.c.m	Local Housing allowance p.c.m
1 bedroom	£843	£612
2 bedroom	£1026	£765
3 bedroom	£1258	£913

- 9.8 The number of single homeless residents continues to be high with the most visible cases being those who are rough sleeping. The Council is required to do an annual count or estimate of the number of rough sleepers out on a given night in November. In 2019 the count identified 12 individuals, this is up from 6 in 2018. Whilst some of these might be from out of area attracted

by the All Night Café, however, the Council's own figures demonstrate a clear local need:

- 60% of the Housing Solutions Team's Homelessness Reduction Act case load is single people.
- The Housing Register, which has a strict local connection criterion to the Borough, currently has 16 households who are registered as being of no fixed abode.

9.9 The Team are monitoring the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit (UC). Evidence to date is anecdotal but early impacts noted include:

- increased rent arrears reported amongst housing association tenants;
- a reluctance of private landlords to take households on UC where the Council has lost the ability to pay Housing Benefit direct; and,
- Reported hardship from resident's subject to delays in payment and/or sanctions.

Annexes:

- a. Revenue Grants Offered 20/21
- b. SHP Annual Plan 20/21

Background Papers:

None

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