

**Minutes of a Meeting of the External
Partnerships Select Committee held at
Council Chamber, Surrey Heath
House, Knoll Road, Camberley, GU15
3HD on 1 June 2021**

+ Cllr Vivienne Chapman (Chairman)

+ Cllr Morgan Rise (Vice Chairman)

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| + Cllr Dan Adams | - Cllr Josephine Hawkins |
| + Cllr Sarah Jane Croke | + Cllr David Lewis |
| + Cllr Paul Deach | + Cllr Emma-Jane McGrath |
| + Cllr Tim FitzGerald | + Cllr Pat Tedder |
| - Cllr Mark Gordon | - Cllr Helen Whitcroft |

+ Present

- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: Cllr Valerie White (In place of Cllr Josephine Hawkins) and
Cllr Kristian Wrenn (in place of Cllr Helen Whitcroft)

Members in Attendance: Cllr Shaun Garrett

Officers Present: Jayne Boitoult and Louise Livingston

1/EP Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2/EP Declarations of Interest

Councillors Sarah Jane Croke and David Lewis declared non-pecuniary interests as they were trustees of Surrey Heath Age Concern.

It was noted for the record that Councillor Paul Deach declared that he, as well as a number of Committee Members had been involved in Surrey Heath Prepared which had worked closely with a number organisations presenting at the meeting.

3/EP Camberley Besom

The Committee received a presentation from Greg Scott, "Time-giver", and Gael Brodie, Trustee, in respect of the services of Camberley BESOM and their partnership work with the Council.

Camberley BESOM sought to alleviate poverty and financial hardship in Camberley in the surrounding area via the provision of basic goods, such as food and household items, to individuals and families in need. Camberley BESOM was one of 29 BESOM groups in South East England; and following its founding in 2009 it moved to its Bridge Road premises in 2013. The organisation now had 6 registered trustees and more than 20 time givers.

In contrast to other local services, Camberley BESOM's food parcels were provided in response to a referral from a local partnering agency, which also helped the individuals and families tackle the cause of their need. The list of Partnering agencies consisted of Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, the Council, social housing providers; and charities such as Home Start, The Hope Hub, and local churches, as well as schools and nurseries. In the event of an emergency response one-off food parcels could be provided. However longer term food parcel support required a sponsor from one of the partner agencies, whom worked with the family and or individual to provide help and guidance where necessary.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was highlighted that most of the Camberley BESOM's team had to shield. Whilst at the start of the pandemic, the BESOM, the Council's services and Surrey Heath Prepared combined to create a centralised distribution hub, by July 2020 operations had started to return to the BESOM's Camberley Warehouse with driver support from the Council.

Outside the pandemic setting the BESOM and as part of its core work, provided various packs to Surrey Heath Residents, which included kitchen starter packs, bedding and towel packs, and new parent packs. As part of the organisation's regular work the BESOM also provided Christmas Food Parcels. Demand during 2020 for this service was 2.5 times higher than in 2019.

It was noted that the Camberley BESOM had been in receipt of a grant from the Council which originated from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Hardship Fund of £29,000. The organisation aimed to continue to support those in the greatest need and adapt where necessary. .

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

- Despite the importance of their services being highlighted during the pandemic, BESOM were struggling to attract volunteers. It was noted that the Council could provide additional support in respect of encouraging new volunteers. In addition, it was emphasised how invaluable the Council's support was in respect of providing the drivers to deliver food parcels at the height of the pandemic.
- The BESOM were willing to work in partnership with new foodbanks, such as Bisley and West End Foodbanks, and build a relationship where if required such foodbanks can make referrals to the BESOM in order to provide long term support.
- It was clarified that, whilst an increase in volunteer numbers wouldn't be unhelpful, Camberley BESOM was particularly looking to attract a new generation of trustees. However, preferably such trustees would be recruited within the Church network.

The Committee thanked Greg and Gael for their presentation and informative insight.

4/EP Surrey Heath Age Concern

The Committee received a presentation from Gwen McClafferty and Tracey Hiney on the work of Surrey Heath Age Concern.

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Surrey Heath Age Concern (SHAC) was an independent local charity which aimed to provide a service to enhance the lives of older people in the borough of Surrey Heath, with a focus on enabling elderly residents to live independently and reducing social isolationism and loneliness.

As it stood Surrey Heath Age Concern provided befriending services to 49 local residents via a coordinated process, which started with a visit or phone call from the befriending coordinator to assess needs, and was followed by a matching process to ensure a suitable, long lasting relationship between befriender and befriender. As society returns to face to face contact, befrienders have been encouraged to undertake regular lateral flow tests, share vaccination statuses and follow guidance identified via risk assessments, in order to allow for face to face befriending again. It was emphasised that SHAC had a duty of care to protect both the befriender and befriender and that indoor befriending only took place where both parties had both of their COVID-19 Vaccinations.

Following the easing of restrictions the Rainbow Café was also due to reopen in June 2021.

Looking forward SHAC had identified that the elderly population's lack of access to technology had led to greater social isolationism, which was further compounded by the effects of Covid-19. As a result SHAC were planning and had secured funding for basic IT training sessions for the elderly. Furthermore SHAC was also seeking to implement an impact measurement strategy for its befriending programme and was also aiming to review and improve its volunteer training programme.

The presentation encouraged a wider conversation amongst the Committee in respect of accessibility to the Town for the elderly and less mobile. Following suggestions by Members, Officers were asked to explore the use of a mobility scooter or shopping trolley scheme and a mobile phone lending scheme. Any results, following such explorations, would be reported back to the Committee.

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

- Although it could be argued from a Council perspective that there was an overlap between SHAC's befriending service and the Time to Talk project run by Voluntary Support North Surrey, which the Council also provided a Revenue Grant to, it was emphasised that the Time to Talk project was aimed at a younger cliental and often those with Mental Health issues.
- Following on from previous feedback, SHAC now had a fundraising team and had booked onto a social-media training course in order to try to boost its profile. Furthermore it was suggested that SHAC could apply to Members' Ward Councillor fund as an extra way to access funding.
- The last year had been challenging for befrienders in respect of the topics discussed during befriending sessions given the impact of the pandemic.

- A review of all the Council's grants was due to be considered by the Executive in November. It is noted that Members acknowledged the benefits and value of the services provided from SHAC.
- Whilst most of SHAC's befrienders were based in Camberley and often in and around the Town Centre, SHAC were actively advertising their services in the rural parts of the Borough via libraries and local village magazines. Greater take up in the villages may be naturally encouraged with greater numbers of befrienders available in the rural areas.

Members thanked Gwen and Tracey for the informative presentation and noted the progress of the charity since first presenting to the Committee in 2011.

5/EP Disability Initiative

The Committee received a presentation from Lucy Brown, Chief Executive, in respect of the work of Disability Initiative.

Disability Initiative (DI) was a charity which specialised in the provision of adult services to individuals with complex physical disabilities and acquired brain injury. DI provided a coordinated, slow-stream programme of rehabilitation catered specifically to the individual and included a variety of activities, accredited educational courses and a number of therapies.

DI supported 75 adults, whom were primarily based within Surrey Heath, and were based within the DI resource centre on Knoll Road, which was owned by the Council. The Council had provided the organisation with a 99 year lease of the building (starting from the year 2000) and 15 car parking spaces at a peppercorn rent.

An early meeting of the charity's trustees, many of which had backgrounds in healthcare and risk, had set out DI's path in the pandemic. It acknowledged that all its clients were high risk and the organisation pivoted their services to identify the needs of DI's clients and how the charity could meet these needs.

Within the first few weeks of the pandemic, DI received a grant of £7,200 from the Council which covered DI's immediate costs as grants and fundraising opportunities dried up. After pouring huge resource into meeting the immediate needs of DI's clients and family, DI were especially keen to get its clients back into its premises, motivated, stimulated and actively involved in its offered activities. Furthermore, after the pandemic hit the disabled community especially aggressively, DI were looking to increase its initiatives to upskill its clients in respect of IT and technology, and in turn reduce any social-isolationism resulting from their lack of skills and knowledge. This included early plans to produce a Disability Initiative App and make use of opportunities around the teaching of basic coding.

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

- DI and Parity for Disability catered for a slightly different cliental. However the leadership of the two charities often collaborated by

sharing policies and best practice as well as by conducting regular peer reviews. Furthermore, it was added that DI were welcoming of new partnership working opportunities in the future.

- DI worked hard in conjunction with Frimley Park Hospital to rehabilitate clients who were coming out of hospital so they would not have to return. DI's psychologists and equipment such as mace beds meant that such well-thought out schemes were successful.
- During the pandemic DI had to deal with clients and their families, which had complex issues, such as psychological stress as a result of impact of the pandemic and being unable to visit DI's premises. This was then coupled with the impact on the full time carers of DI's clients.

The Committee thanked Lucy for her insightful presentation and for attending.

6/EP Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of the 21/22 municipal year. The Committee were advised that following conversations with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Surrey Sports Council, Camberley Cricket Club and Camberley Judo Club would be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

In addition, Voluntary Support North Surrey and Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, as the 2 largest recipients of the Council Revenue Grant Scheme, would also be fitted into the Committee Work Programme. Following a suggestion from the Committee, a presentation from Surrey Heath Neighbourhood Watch would also be added to the September meeting of the Committee to allow consideration alongside the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Surrey Heath Borough Commander.

Discussion emanated in respect of the level of service provided by Accent Housing and the borough's other social housing providers. In particular, there were significant concerns in respect of Accent's maintenance service. As a result it was agreed that Accent would feature as a recurring item on the Committee's Work Programme; and the other Housing Trusts which provide services within the Borough also be invited to a dedicated meeting of the Committee.

It was also agreed that an informal meeting between Accent Housing and Councillors would be arranged by officers for before the Committee's next meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee's Work Programme be agreed as amended; and Accent Housing be added as a standing item

Chairman

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