

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Finance and Performance
9 March 2022

Support & Safeguarding Portfolio Update

Portfolio	Support & Safeguarding – Cllr Shaun Garrett
Head of Service	Louise Livingston, Head of HR, Performance & Communications Nick Steevens, Strategic Director: Environment & Community
Report Author	Jayne Boitout – Community Partnership Officer
Key Decision	No
Wards Affected	All

1. Summary and purpose

1.1 To review the Support and Safeguarding Portfolio services area progress over the past 12 months which covers the following areas:

- Voluntary Sector & Community Partnerships
- Grant schemes
- Community Safety
- Safeguarding
- Equalities
- Private Sector Housing and Disabled Facilities Grants
- Housing Solutions
- Family Support

2. Background

Voluntary Sector & Community Partnerships

2.1 The Council has a tradition whereby it values the work undertaken by our voluntary organisations enormously and it has worked hard over the past 20 years to ensure of its collaborative approach to partnership working.

Covid -19

2.2 Over the past year the welfare service has been retained to help provide emergency food parcels to those in need, which is provided from the Camberley Besom. The foodbanks can access funding from the Council Emergency Food Bank Fund, which has seen funds diverted from the Council Community Fund Grant Scheme.

Surrey Heath House – Covid 19

- 2.3 Staff and partners at SH House will continue to be asked to wear face masks post any announcement on 21st Feb 2022, and maintain social distancing. A risk assessment will be reviewed post 21st Feb 2022 announcements.
- 2.4 For staff to continue with working a minimum of 1 day per week in the office, subject to service requirements to ensure service delivery remains unaffected by this arrangement.

Covid Champions

- 2.5 The Council has retained the Covid Champion programme which is a partnership programme with Surrey County Council and Frimley/Heartlands ICS (Integrated Care Service) Covid Champions network, which aims to keep community representatives updated with information relating to the pandemic. The membership is presently being consulted with ideas to change the discussion areas to include health and well-being, and to link any areas of overlap with the Whole Approach to Obesity Programme.

Grant Schemes

Community Fund Grants

- 2.6 The Community Fund Grant scheme has continued to operate over the past year, with very limited applications being received during this time. This led to the Executive seeking a review of all community related grants that fell into this area at its meeting in January 2022. At this time it was agreed to retain the Community Fund Grant scheme, but be open to accept applications quarterly.
- 2.7 The Council has also retained its Emergency Food Poverty Grant Scheme by agreeing to divert further funds of £50,000 from the Community Fund Grant Scheme in February 2021 and this will remain open until 31st March 2023.
- 2.8 A number of grant schemes have been introduced over the last year utilising Central Government funding to meet the current priority needs within our Community, an example of this is the Charity Enabling Fund that supports not for profit organisations who deliver services who were affected by the pandemic and providing the criteria is met, they can offer up to £3,000, so far 10 organisations have been supported at a cost of £27,500. All grant schemes are regularly evaluated and to ensure that our local needs and priorities continue to be met beyond the pandemic.

Revenue Grants

- 2.9 The Council Executive on the 25th January approved revenue grants for a year starting from 1st April 2022 to: Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, Surrey Heath Age Concern, Camberley Central Job Club, Catalyst Support, The Hope Hub, VSNS and Time To Talk, Basingstoke Canal Authority, Blackwater Valley Countryside and Partnership, Surrey Heath Sports Council. The funds identified from the Containment Outbreak Management Fund sees an award valued at £192,500. All organisations to be informed of the present Council budget restrictions and advised that the funding cannot be guaranteed past this date. It was also agreed to fund the 3 ring fenced organisations for a further year starting 1st April 2023-31st March 2024 valued at £100,000 again from the Containment Outbreak Management Fund.

Ward Councillor Grant

- 2.10 This scheme introduced in December 2020 enables all Ward Councillors to support local charities and not for profit groups. Each Ward Councillor has a annual budget of £1500, with individual grants values not to exceed £500. At the Council Executive meeting on the 25th January 2022 the Community Grants were reviewed, and agreement reached to amend the criteria to from the 31st March 2022 any annual unused balances will be withdrawn, and transferred in to the new financial year.
- 2.11 As of 24th February 2022, 80 applications have been processed benefitting 44 projects at cost of £22,738, plus a further 26 pending applications valued at £12750, with a remaining unallocated amount of £50,113.

Surrey Heath Lottery

- 2.12 This initiative exemplifies the good practice of community development, in supporting 'local for local' at its best. The scheme was launched on the 13th July 2019, and since that time has continued to evolve and grow all be it at a slower rate during the pandemic, this has also seen an impact upon actual ticket sales, however organisations continue to support with over 65 local good causes who are able to benefit from this regular monthly income. Since its launch it has generated £53,830 for local good causes.
- 2.13 We have been fortunate as we have had a winner of the top £25,000 prize and several who have won £2000. This type of positive publicity helps retain this local scheme.
- 2.14 Each ticket is priced at £1 and from that 60% of the funds raised are allocated to local (not for profit) good causes, and if they select an organisation as a preferred option, they will receive 50%, and 10% allocated to a central allocation fund, 20% prize money, 17% to Gatherwell (who are an external lottery management organisation who operate this scheme on behalf of the Council), and 3% VAT (which is re-claimed). The odds are a 1 in 50 chance of winning a prize, and a 1 in a million chance of winning £25,000.
- 2.15 For the local organisation there is no cost to join, and they can benefit from receiving additional funding, another advantage to the lottery is that the organisations will also want to promote the lottery as a way of their supporters giving, but also having a chance to win.

The Surrey Heath Annual Community Lottery Award Scheme

- 2.16 This scheme awarded grants in December 2020, of just under £8,000 to eight local organisations, and in December 2021 local applications of approximately £5,000 were awarded to Heatherside Community Association, Camberley Judo Club x 2 and The Hope Hub.

Community Support Working Group

- 2.17 It is recognised that the impact from the pandemic has affected universally, and the previous poverty landscape is subject to change. The Government Furlough scheme has shielded the true picture of this local effect on our economies, and with the loss of employment and the full extent of this is becoming clearer with the need for the Council to assist where possible.

- 2.18 The former Poverty Working Group was superseded by Community Support WG in April 2021, following an all-Member consultation meeting that took place on the 31st March 2021 which discussed the various options to widen the Poverty Working Group. After the consideration and the discounting of several options, a proposal was taken forward where several area-specific cluster groups sat underneath a larger borough-wide umbrella Executive Working Group. Area specific working groups would meet separately, include representatives from local community organisations; and would then appoint a representative to sit on the borough-wide umbrella Working Group.
- 2.19 Arising from the discussions, the first specific area who volunteered was Frimley, Frimley Green, Mytchett and Deepcut with the Chairman Cllr Croke and Vice Chair Cllr Whitcroft identifying local initiatives around school breakfast club and a pre-owned school uniform concept. The next area to will be Chobham with initial meetings now underway. In addition, it was acknowledged that some areas, such as Lightwater, already had established groups and Councillor/Community partnerships in place and could send a representative to the borough-wide Executive Working Group without requiring any initial officer support. In addition it was noted that area working group's representatives did not have to be the chairman of the working group and could rotate if desired.
- 2.20 Through the work undertaken via this group the Emergency Food Poverty Grant scheme continues, plus the Hardship fund which is delivered by Citizens Advice Surrey Heath.
- 2.21 In November 2021 the Council through Citizens Advice Surrey Heath have delivered the Household Support Grant which will remain open to receive applications until the 31st March. This is designed to help families meet the rising costs of energy and food. To the 17th February over 1,000 grants have been awarded at a cost of £77,000 and a further £44,000 is to be allocated for 2nd applications to qualifying families, plus new applications continue to be invited, this Central Government initiative has seen Surrey Heath receive just under £200,000 to help support those locally most in need.

Community Safety

- 2.22 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. This is managed by the Surrey Heath Partnership which combines the Community Safety Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership and is chaired by the Leader of the Council with a membership from both statutory and voluntary partners who meet up to 4 times a year receive partner updates.
- 2.23 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.
- 2.24 In July 2021 a review was undertaken of the Camberley Town centre CCTV system, and this has resulted in a paper being considered at the Executive meeting on the 15th March with the recommendation to introduce a management group which will develop an overarching Policy to ensure of our consistency in approach and governance.

Safeguarding

- 2.25 The safeguarding champions (officer group) meet regularly to review the training needs and ongoing support for both staff and elected members to ensure that we fulfil our responsibilities in this area.
- 2.26 The Council is represented at both the officer and elected member Children's' and Adult Safeguarding Surrey meeting which ensures we are aware of any changing responsibilities or procedures. Our responsibilities from the Section 11 audit are up to date with the latest audit submitted on 1st November 2021, and the Council introduced an updated Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in February 2022.

Children's Champion

- 2.27 Within my portfolio I am the Council's Children's champion and represent the Borough at regular safeguarding meetings, events held previously such as Smart Drive which have all been paused since the pandemic and I am hopeful to see them resume later this year.

Equalities

- 2.28 The Member Equality Working Group met in August 2021, January, and February 2022.
- 2.29 The Equalities WG in January reviewed and considered a new accessibility initiative in light of the Council motion relating to accessibility at the Full Council on the 28th July 2021. The review at its February meeting, enables EWG members to agree annually the events (outside of civil events) the Council wishes to commemorate.

Private Sector Housing Enforcement

- 2.30 The housing stock within the Borough is generally in good condition and there have been no prosecutions this year. There are, however, always a number of cases ongoing. Where concerns about the quality of a property arise, the Council always seeks to find the quickest way to resolve issues for tenants and landlords. While every complaint could potentially lead to prosecution, officers continue to have a strong track record of securing the best outcome without the ultimate sanction of prosecution but is a useful tool for landlords who are reluctant to fulfil their obligations.

Enforcement and Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 2.31 The Home Solutions Team deal with disrepair in residents' homes and manage standards in the private rented sector, including the licensing of Houses in Multiple occupation (HMOs).
- 2.32 The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) identifies 29 known potential housing hazards that can be assessed. Hazards include damp and mould, excess cold, excess heat, crowding and space and risk of falls.
- 2.33 Anyone complaining about deficiencies in their rented accommodation will almost certainly fall into one or other of the hazard categories. The deficiencies can be assessed and rated to determine the category of risk that each poses. It is a whole house inspection and even elements not being complained about but in the opinion of the Council could pose a hazard and risk to the occupant will be identified. Where

a Category One Hazard, the most serious harm outcome, is identified the Council has a duty to ensure that it is eliminated or at least reduced to an acceptable level. For Category Two hazards, those less serious or urgent, the Council would have a power to intervene with the degree of intervention being directly proportionate to the risk to health. The closer to a category One Hazard the greater Council intervention. Generally the Council is able to negotiate necessary work with landlords however enforcement can include prosecution and carrying out works in default.

- 2.34 During 2021 the Team responded to 110 housing complaints relating to repairs and disrepair issues. This is the second year running there has been an increase in cases (a 30% increase in complaints from 2019 to 2020, and an increase of 14% last year). As a result of complaints, the Team undertook 68 housing inspections, an increase of 24% on last year.
- 2.35 There are certain homes that are in shared occupation that require a license from the Council. Since October 2018 these houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) that are let to five tenants or more with two or more households and share some facilities such as cooking and bathing are mandatory licensable.
- 2.36 In order to comply with licensing conditions landlords have to demonstrate that they have met the standards required for the operation of a HMO in terms of the facilities available, the condition of the property and management standards. Once they have provided a full application and paid their fee the property is inspected and, all being well, a licence granted. If further works are needed the landlord must comply with these before a licence is issued. It is an offence to operate a licensable HMO without a licence. The licence period last for five-years and is not transferrable.
- 2.37 Licensing ensures the health, safety and welfare of tenants in a rental sector that has historically had problems and helps to provide good quality housing for potentially some of the most vulnerable in the private rented sector.
- 2.38 The team licensed 13 HMOs after ensuring that they met the required standards.

Clearances/ Hoarders

- 2.39 Tackling hoarding requires a multi-agency approach. While the Council has enforcement powers under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1936 as amended by the Public Health Act 1961 to tackle properties that are in such a filthy or unwholesome condition as to be prejudicial to health, it is recognised that hoarding is often the result of a resident's poor mental health or other factors.
- 2.40 Work in this area is very time consuming, with a need to build trust and find solutions that work for the resident. It is a balancing act between the residents right to live the life they choose and the risk that their behaviour is posing both to themselves and sometimes to others around them.
- 2.41 The Council often provides the 'stick', giving notice to the owner or occupier requiring them to take such steps as may be specified to remedy the conditions or in the case of verminous premises to take such steps as may be necessary for destroying or removing the vermin. Ultimately the Council can take action to clear the property.
- 2.42 Occasionally we will be contacted by the NHS for a hospital release where the home environment is not considered conducive to the patient's wellbeing and in such

cases there is a grant available to assist with such clearances. There have been no clearances of housing due to hoarding in 2021.

Public Health Funerals

2.43 Under Section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 the Council has a duty to arrange the funeral of anyone dying within their jurisdiction intestate and without any next of kin. It involves:

- Registering the death
- Searching for next of kin.
- Searching premises for important documents and valuables.
- Arranging the funeral
- Attending the funeral where appropriate.
- Arranging payment and recovering costs.

2.44 Any expenses incurred can be reclaimed from the deceased estate and will become the first charge. Once funds have been recovered if there is any residue over £500 the estate is referred to the Treasury Solicitor as Bona Vacantia (Vacant Goods). Anything unclaimed will then revert to the state.

2.45 The Home Solutions Team provided 3 public health funerals in 2021, the same number as in 2020.

Disabled Facilities Grant

2.46 The Home Solutions Team also acts as the Council's Home Improvement Agency and delivers the Council's mandatory and discretionary grants programme, including Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), used to adapt and improve the homes of disabled and vulnerable residents. These works support independence, keep people in their homes in the community and delay 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. This work is currently fully funded by government grant (£779,111 in 2020/21). The DFG is mandatory which means that where the adaptations sought are essential and the proposed works are necessary and appropriate to meet the persons needs and reasonable and practicable given the age and condition of the property then the grant must be paid. The maximum amount of grant that can normally be paid is £30,000 and can be means tested.

2.47 In 2021 the Home Improvement Agency agreed 127 grants, oversaw completion of works on 82 homes and a further 20 projects have yet to start. A further 44 requests for grants were received which are in the process of being assessed. Types of works agreed include stair lifts, shower rooms/bathroom adaptations, access issues (e.g. doors, ramps, etc.), scooter stores and vehicular access.

Homelessness

2.48 The Housing Solutions Team deals with housing advice and homelessness in the Borough and seeks to deliver solutions for those who are risk of or are homeless. Between 1st January 2021 and 31st December 2021, the Housing Solutions Team received 609 approaches from households whose housing situation was likely to lead to homelessness without intervention or who were already homeless at the time they sought help. This is an increase of 25% from 2020 and while some of the increase

can be explained by improved recording on new IT systems there has been higher demand from residents with a housing need.

- 2.49 From these approaches 156 households 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 therefore triggering a homelessness duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. While this is lower than the previous two years, in part due to the ban on evictions, the number of approaches to the Team would indicate a built up need that is likely to present over coming months.
- 2.50 When a household is *threatened* with homelessness 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 to *prevent* them becoming homeless.
- 2.51 When a household is *actually 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 to *relieve* their homelessness. 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. There is not a duty to provide accommodation to households who do not have a priority need.
- 2.52 From those 154 homeless approaches, 45 ended up having a full duty accepted. 20 further cases had their homelessness prevented and were able to remain in their current homes. The rest are currently open cases or had their homelessness relieved by way of securing accommodation in the private rented sector, supported accommodation referrals or closed due to lack of engagement.

Rough Sleeping

- 2.53 The number of single homeless residents continues to be high with the most visible cases being those who are rough sleeping, which is a small but persistent number of this client group. 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 2021 the count identified 5 individuals, down from 7 in 2020 and 12 in 2019.
- 2.54 When Covid 19 restrictions started in March 2020 there was a call from Government to bring all rough sleepers in. This was a request not a new duty and one that has continued through 2021.
- 2.55 Since the start of January 2021 the Council have accommodated 18 single people in Bed and Breakfast as a discretionary placement. Of these 18 single people 6 remain accommodated, 5 have been successfully accommodated in supported accommodation or social housing, 4 had their placements ended due to non-engagement and 3 either abandoned or secured their own accommodation without Council support.
- 2.56 A further 11 single people were accommodated temporarily in the Deepcut cabins from June until 31 December 2021. Of these 11 people, 5 were supported by agencies into supported accommodation, 3 were successful in securing social housing, 1 secured tied accommodation and 2 were found to not have recourse for public funds in the UK.

- 2.57 In response to this demand from single homeless residents the Council has made three consecutive successful bids to the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative to provide accommodation and support services to this client group. The funding of £200,000 has provided:
- A Single Homeless Support Worker based at the Council and supporting residents in Connaught Court (see below).
 - Joint funding with Surrey Heath CCG for a mental health worker based at the Hope Hub.
 - Revenue funding to support setting up the Emergency Accommodation Service with the Hope Hub for rough sleepers.
 - Funding for joint work with Accent and Transform to set up a Housing First scheme; and,
 - Funding to employ a Single Homelessness Floating Support Worker within the Housing Support Team.
- 2.58 The Council has used developer contributions to buy Connaught Court from Accent, a 10-bed unit to provide accommodation and support for up to two years for single homeless individuals and purchasing a 6-bed property for the Emergency Accommodation Service. Both now up and running, and two households have already successfully moved on from Connaught Court.
- 2.59 The Council was also successful in securing a Surrey County Council contract and funding of £50,000 pa to deliver Floating Housing Support. In 2021 there were 42 referrals for families and individuals needing help to maintain their independence in the community with the help of floating support. A further bid will be made in February 2022 for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding.

Family Support

- 2.60 The Troubled Families grant which funded the Family Support Service from 2013, ended in 2019. Within Surrey the programme was run in partnership with the Boroughs and Districts delivering the programme on behalf of Surrey County Council. Following the 2018 Ofsted Inspection of Surrey Children's Services, it was noted that the Family Support programme was successfully delivering an Early Help Programme for Surrey for a lower cost per family and was able to chart and track family progress and the progress of those stepped down from the service. Much of the approach was recognised as best practice. We are waiting for the report from the Ofsted Inspection of Surrey Children's Services in January 2022.
- 2.61 Following on from this, Surrey County Council (SCC) decided to continue with the service and is now matching the previous level of government funding and in addition providing extra funding to introduce social workers into the programme. The service currently has 1 full time qualified Social Worker and are in the progress of beginning recruitment for a second social worker, who will cover Runnymede. The revised programme now recognises the level of challenge in families that the service has in practice been working to for a number of years.
- 2.62 In April 2021, we volunteered to be part of a pilot scheme with SCC, using the Early Help Module (EHM) database system. This is the database used countywide by Surrey Children's Services for all early help work and this was the introduction of it to Level 3 partner agencies (FSP and Family Centres). The EHM system is now embedded in our practice and brings wide benefits to our service and the families we work with. We are able to now access the history of previous involvement with

families, enabling robust information sharing across our service and others. This supports us to safeguard children more effectively and ensure we provide the right support to a family. It also strengthens challenging decisions with Children's Services when we have significant safeguarding concerns and are looking for more intensive support from statutory social care.

- 2.63 Between April 2021 and Dec 2021 we successfully supported 106 families across Surrey Heath and Runnymede. Of these families, 49 were Surrey Heath residents.

Resettlement Programme

- 2.64 In addition, the Family Support team runs the UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme) previously known as the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme and most recently, the ACRS (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme) on behalf of Surrey Heath and Runnymede.
- 2.65 The UKRS started slowly in 2017 as the council was unable to identify properties in the private sector which impacted on the Councils commitment to house 10 families by 2020. Covid 19 then brought further delay with a pause on the scheme Nationally in March 2020. The UKRS has restarted and in Runnymede we have resettled 1 new family, with a further property identified. There are currently 5 refugee families in Surrey Heath, with the most recent family having arrived 10th March 2020.
- 2.66 All of the families in Surrey Heath are well settled and the children are all doing well in school. The families have created a strong community network between them, supporting each other in accessing local facilities especially when new families have arrived. There are currently no significant challenges with any of these families.
- 2.67 In August 2021, we received 5 families under the ACRS. Due to the urgency in resettling these families, they were placed in temporary accommodation while the team worked to secure long term accommodation for the families. 3 of the 5 families have now moved into permanent accommodation, with the 2 remaining families having been offered suitable permanent accommodation but choosing not to take it. We are continuing to work with the remaining 2 families to secure them private sector accommodation. All 5 of the men are now in employment and the families have formed a supportive network together. The service is provided with funding to continue to support the families for the next 3 years. The families that we received, all have at least 1 child under the age of 5. although they are not yet old enough for school, we are supporting each family to apply for Free entitlement to education funding to attend an Early Years setting.
- 2.68 Due to the urgency of processing and receiving these families, we experienced challenge in the lack of information we were provided about each family. Often the information we were given was inaccurate (such as wrong Dates of birth) and their passport documentation has been different to their biometric resident's permit information. This initially led to a delay in accessing Universal credit funds although has since been resolved. Two of the women who arrived were also unexpectedly expecting babies, which have since been safely born.
- 2.69 We have recently introduced workshops for the families from the UKRS and ACRS to attend. These are organised around themes such as employment, understanding Universal Credit, budgeting etc. We have worked with the DWP in delivering these workshops and they have been well attended by the families.

2.70 Resettlement work is funded by Government grant and officers await details of future funding levels to inform recommendations about the level of support that can continue to be given to these humanitarian programmes.

Annexes: None

Background Papers: None