

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Community Services Scrutiny
Committee held at Surrey Heath House
on 5 February 2015**

+ Cllr Audrey Roxburgh (Chairman)
+ Cllr Valerie White (Vice Chairman) – (to part way through min 15/CY)

+ Cllr David Allen	+ Cllr Beverley Harding
+ Cllr Bill Chapman	+ Cllr Josephine Hawkins
+ Cllr Ian Cullen	+ Cllr Paul Innicki
+ Cllr Paul Deach	Cllr Adrian Page
+ Cllr Tim Dodds	- Cllr Joanne Potter
- Cllr Heather Gerred	+ Cllr Alan Whittart
+ Cllr Liane Gibson (from min 14/CY)	

+ Present
- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: No substitutes in attendance

In Attendance: Tim Pashen, Lee Brewin, Clive Jinman, Jenny Rickard and Cllr Bruce Mansell (Clive Jinman and Jenny Rickard to min 15/CY)

13/CY Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

- At minute 11/C, 'Civil Enforcement Officer' on page 6 at the end of the first paragraph should read 'Community Warden'.

Some Members also asked about the progress of the Dog Fouling Reduction Members' Panel. The Committee was advised that some Members of the Panel had twice accompanied the Community Warden to observe any incidents of dog fouling. Unfortunately none had been seen. A further observation would be set up for about 8 weeks' time.

Members were also advised that a podcast relating to dog fouling had been published that afternoon and already there had been 400 viewings.

Figures relating to dog fouling incidents would be forwarded to Members.

14/CY Housing Services

Members received a report on the work of the Housing Services Team. The following issues were discussed.

Bed and Breakfast

- It was noted that the Council had had no persons in Bed and Breakfast over the last few weeks.
- Although there had been some people in the borough in bed and breakfast, the length of time in this accommodation had decreased from 7 weeks to 5 weeks.

Welfare Reform

- Welfare Reform would continue to impact on residents but the Council had tried to mitigate this by working closely with Housing Benefit colleagues, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath, Jobcentre Plus and Accent Housing Association.

Homelessness

- The reasons for homelessness were discussed, including the considerable number of young people being evicted by parents. This could be due to a breakdown in the relationship, overcrowding or financial issues. Some Members asked what the figures were for under 18 year olds being evicted by parents. These figures would be forwarded to the Committee. It was commented that the burden of proof that the eviction by parents was genuine was on the Housing Services Team. Members were also advised that this age group was now better served especially with the work of the Youth Support Service.
- There had been a lot of work carried out in partnership in 2014 with a successful joint HomeSwap event held in August 2014. This had helped tenants to find exchanges. It was proposed that a similar event be held in partnership with Hart District Council and Rushmoor Borough Council.
- Grant funding of £21,000 had been received by the Council to work with the single homeless. This would also be used to co-ordinate a team of people around the homeless person to improve long term prospects. An additional £5,000 had been received to fund an online advice tool. This tool would give advice, display an online application form, give access to other options available, and advice to help keep people in their own home etc. In addition it was hoped to incorporate a 'red light' system for the online tool. This would discontinue the application should the information given indicate that they did not meet the criteria to be an eligible applicant. The Council's IT department was working on this. The challenge for the Council would be to keep the homeless figures down, in particular those in bed and breakfast.
- The Council had recruited a Lettings Negotiator specifically to liaise with the private rental sector to help rehouse residents. The Lettings Negotiator had come from a private housing background and would work closely and proactively with companies and landlords.
- Homeless prevention was a key objective for the Team. This would be carried out by giving advice and help regarding arrears, disrepair and crisis;

there was also a social fund available in qualifying cases to help with short term rent arrears.

Social Housing

- It was noted that housing supply was the biggest problem for the Team and the shortage of social housing in the borough had compounded this.

Resolved that

i) the excellent work of the Housing Services Team be endorsed and noted;

ii) a further report be submitted to the December 2015 meeting; and

iii) further work on exploring issues of affordable housing supply be investigated.

15/CY Independent Living

The Committee received a progress report on independent living in the borough.

It was noted that the number of older people in the borough was higher than in other Surrey areas and dementia was also on the increase. Members were reminded that the services for this sector of the community was discretionary but was an important service to provide. The new interim Community Services Team Manager was looking into ways of improving the way the service was delivered.

Members discussed the following:

- **Windle Valley** – the Saturday Club was for the ‘cared for’ and the carers of all ages. There had been various trips organised including a visit to the Tower of London to see the poppies. The library would also be opened on a Saturday once a month just for the customers of Windle Valley. The Centre currently worked at 80% capacity. Some Members urged other Members to visit the Centre to see how successful it was. It was also noted that some older people would like activities/places to meet with people of all ages.
- **Well Being Centre** – an advice centre for the elderly. There had also been the formation of a Dementia Garden; the official opening was yet to be arranged. The dementia advice was available for all ages and not just the elderly.
- **Community Transport** – the scheduling of the vehicles was undertaken by Runnymede Borough Council; this was a more cost effective way than employing an extra person for this role. (It was noted that at paragraph 5 c), on the third line of the report the date should read March 2015.) Additional ways of using the community buses was being looked into.

- **Community Alarms** – the telephone system was connected to the control centre and cost £252 a year; the Telecare service was free. The number of customers for this service was increasing.
- **Meals at home** – it was noted that high quality food was used for the meals. The choice was quite limited but there were plans to improve this. Members were advised that meals were heated on the vans and there were also fridges on board to keep summer meals cool. It was felt by some Members that the Meals at Home service needed re-branding; the promotions seemed uninspiring, particularly the advert on the web.
- **Home Improvement Agency** – helped to facilitate adaptations to properties to help older residents stay in their homes.

Some Members asked how the Council was made aware of the needs of the elderly in the borough. They were advised that referrals made by Social Services were received; the services were constantly being promoted and the work of the Care Connections Co-ordinator would help with streamlining the service and providing other options for customers e.g. training befrienders.

The Committee was advised that the Council subsidised the services for Independent Living by £804,000. The aim was to increase numbers receiving the services whilst reducing the subsidy.

Resolved that

- i) **the wide range of services provided by the Council to promote independent living be noted;**
- ii) **the opening of the Wellbeing Centre at the Windle Valley Centre be noted;**
- iii) **the increased number of customers receiving the Community Alarm and Meals at Home services be noted;**
- iv) **the number of properties which have been adapted to meet the needs of disabled and frail residents be noted;**
- v) **the aim to increase the numbers of people receiving these valuable services while at the same time decreasing the Council's subsidy be noted.**
- vi) **ideas for rebranding the services be explored.**

16/CY Emergency Planning

Members received a report on the Council's resilience to respond to emergencies. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 placed a duty on the Council to ensure critical services were resilient to emergencies.

A Corporate Resilience Policy had been drafted and was due to be considered by the Executive.

Voluntary organisations had been approached to see how they could assist in an emergency. Some of the rest centres in the borough in the case of an emergency were the Camberley Theatre, the Arena Leisure Centre and the Ian Goodchild Centre.

Some Members were concerned about what plans were in place should someone try to drive a 4x4 car through the reception area, referring to the recent incident in South Oxfordshire. A review was due to take place regarding this.

In addition the Committee sought assurances that all the vulnerable people in the borough could be identified in case of an emergency. Members were informed that a database was kept by the Council and was kept up to date, information being received from various sources.

The last emergency exercise had been carried out in May 2011. Two exercises were planned for this year and together rest centre exercises.

It was noted that the word 'maintain' in paragraph 11b) of the report should read 'remain'.

Resolved that:

- i) **the Council's updated plans and policies, so it is able to respond to emergencies efficiently and effectively, be noted.**
- ii) **critical activities identified by the Council and steps taken to ensure that these remain resilient during disruptive events be noted.**

17/CY Work Programme/Members Panels

The Committee considered the work programme. It was agreed that a report on Traveller Site Management be added to the 2 April 2015 work programme.

Resolved that the work programme at Annex A be agreed.

Annex A

2 April 2015	1.	Air Quality Report <u>Purpose</u> To provide a report on the air quality in the borough	Tim Pashen
	2.	Traveller Site Management <u>Purpose</u> To provide a report on the management of Traveller Sites in the borough.	Tim Pashen

	3.	Sustainable Community Strategy <u>Purpose</u> Provide a progress report to include details of the Care Co-ordinator pilot in Lightwater	Tim Pashen/Sarah Groom
	4.	Work Programme/Members' Panels <u>Purpose</u> To consider the work programme for the year 2015/16	Lee Brewin

Unallocated Topics

1. Housing Services – annual reports – due in December 2015
2. Youth Issues – December 2015
3. Museum/heritage
4. Waste and Recycling Action Plan
5. Supported Families Project
6. Flooding and Drainage
7. Community Transport
8. Social Networking
9. Public Conveniences and Street Cleansing
10. Environmental Health
11. Energy Efficiency and Climate Change
12. Camberley Theatre
13. Community Centres
14. Car Parking

Chairman