

Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 12 July 2022

PRESENT -

Councillor Alex Coley (Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (Vice-Chair); Councillors Monica Coleman (as nominated substitute for Councillor Bernice Froud), Luke Giles, Steven McCormick (as nominated substitute for Councillor Christine Howells), Julie Morris, Phil Neale and Peter Webb

Absent: Councillor Bernice Froud, Councillor Christine Howells, Councillor Debbie Monksfield and Councillor Guy Robbins

Officers present: Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Teresa Wingfield (Senior Accountant), Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

1 QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from members of the public.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made in relation to items on this agenda.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee held on 17 March 2022 were agreed as a true record by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

The followings matters were considered in relation to the Minutes:

- (a) Minute 22 (4), Tennis in the Borough:** In response to a question from a Member, the Committee noted that responsibility for this matter now fell within the terms of reference of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee. Future reports would be presented to the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, and not the Community and Wellbeing Committee.
- (b) Minute 21, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy:** Following a question from a member, the Committee noted that the Draft

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is to be presented to its October meeting.

- (c) **Minute 19, Heritage Tours:** Following a request from a member for an update regarding the Summer Programme of Heritage Tours, the Chair noted that there had recently been a Heritage Day at Bourne Hall with another planned for 17 September 2022. Officers were requested to provide details of the scheduled heritage programme events.
- (d) **Minute 23 (3), Allotments:** In response to a question from a Member, the Committee noted that responsibility for this matter now fell within the terms of reference of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee. Future reports would be presented to the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, and not the Community and Wellbeing Committee.
- (e) **Minute 21 a) Empty Properties:** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that an update on the number of empty properties could be provided, but due to the constant fluctuation in numbers it was unlikely a regular report on empty properties would be of value. It was noted that the Chair would discuss the matter with the relevant Officers. A request was made to the Head of Housing and Community to provide end of year data on empty properties.

4 EPSOM AND EWELL HUB - APPLICATION FOR 2ND YEAR FUNDING

The Committee received a report to support a bid for grant funding from the Department of Works and Pensions' (DWP) Flexible Support Fund to continue the work of the Epsom and Ewell Hub, with delivery partners.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Thanks from Members:** Members wished to thank Officers for their work in relation to the Hub, and expressed their admiration and commendations for the scheme.
- b) **Volunteers working at the Hub:** Following a question from a member, the Head of Housing and Community explained that the DWP have requested that the Council includes volunteers as part of the offer, and that there are plans to expand the Hub's steering group in order to develop the role of volunteers within the Hub, in collaboration with Surrey Lifelong Learning and Surrey Voluntary Action.
- c) **Relocation of the Hub from Bourne Hall to the Ashley Centre:** The Committee noted that the move to the Ashley Centre has led to an increased footfall for the Hub and has boosted the Hub's success as a relatable and engaging location for the target audience of people aged 16-24. They noted the location has increased engagement with parents/guardians, as well as businesses. It was considered important for the Hub to remain in the Ashley Centre to maintain its current success,

and thanks were given to the Ashley Centre Management for their support. The Head of Housing and Community explained that the Hub hopes in its second year to increase engagement further with local businesses.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Support that the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, the Chief Finance officer and Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration, submits an application to the Department of Work and Pensions to fund a further year of the Epsom and Ewell Hub.**
- (2) Agree that the Council continues the delivery arrangements with Surrey Life-Long Learning to deliver this initiative.**
- (3) Delegate minor amendments to the bid to the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee.**

5 REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Committee received a report proposing two amendments to the Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy.

The following matters were considered:

- a) Clarification of Recommendation (1)(i) of the report:** Following a question from a member, the Head of Housing and Community clarified the “exceptional circumstances” mentioned in Recommendation (1)(i) are expected to occur very seldomly (predicted as once a year) and that the expected increase would typically be £5000 to £10,000. He explained the recommendation to increase the top up funding above £30,000 in exceptional circumstances is in place in the interest of flexibility, to prevent the process from stopping until such a time as the policy can be revised, as payments of these grants are often time sensitive. The Committee considered that the wording surrounding the “exceptional circumstances” should be clarified in the interest of the prevention of challenges in future that could be caused by lack of clarity.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Approve the recommended amendments to the Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy, so as to:**
 - (i) Increase the level of discretionary top up funding to £30,000 (or more in exceptional circumstances, provided it would not cause the Council to exceed its overall DFG grant allocation);**
 - (ii) Where reference is made to the term “legal charge”, replace with the term “land charge”.**

- (2) **Agree to delegate any necessary minor amendments to the Council's Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy following changes in law or good practice, to the Head of Housing & Community in consultation with the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 7.49 pm

COUNCILLOR ALEX COLEY (CHAIR)