

Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 8 July 2025

PRESENT -

Councillor Clive Woodbridge (Chair); Councillor Bernice Froud (Vice-Chair); Councillors Rob Geleit, Rachel King, Bernie Muir, Humphrey Reynolds and Kim Spickett

Absent: Councillor Graham Jones

Officers present: Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Rachel Epton (Community Development Manager), Oliver Nelson (Public Protection Manager), Richard Appiah-Ampofo (Senior Accountant) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

7 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions or statements from members of the public were received by the Committee.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2028

Councillor Bernie Muir, Other Interest: In the interest of openness and transparency, Councillor Bernie Muir declared that she was a Governor of the Surrey and Borders Partnership Board.

9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 March 2025 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

10 ADOPTION OF A REVISED HOUSING CIVIL PENALTY POLICY

The Committee received a report to determine a revised policy for the issuing of civil sanctions under the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Staffing and Resourcing.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager stated that in his view the service area was sufficiently resourced to carry out the enforcement works associated with

the proposed policy. He stated that Epsom & Ewell had a history of few enforcement cases, informing the Committee that there had been none under the current policy within the last c.2-3 years. He advised that the service would to a degree be self-funding, with any penalty income resulting under the new policy being ringfenced and put back towards resourcing the service.

- b) **Identification and Prioritisation of Cases.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager stated that, aside from those cases identified through the Council's routine checks of HMOs, the majority of enforcement cases are brought to the Council's attention via complaints made. He stated that cases are prioritised based on risk-level, and that the process for prioritising cases was set out the Council's enforcement policy.
- c) **Policy Robustness.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager stated that the proposal to adopt the policy proposed to Members had come about following a wider review of housing procedures. He stated that many nearby authorities had already adopted the proposed policy, explaining that the policy was backed up by a great deal of case law and data indicating strong robustness and effectiveness.
- d) **Future Review.** The Public Protection Manager advised that the policy may require review in future following the Royal Assent of the Renters (Reform) Bill, which may introduce law requiring updates to be made to the policy.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve and adopt the revised policy as set out in Annex 1 to the report.**

Resolved (6 for, 1 against) to:

- (2) **Nominate and Authorise the Head of Housing and Community, Public Protection Manager, Principal Environmental Health Officer and Environmental Health Officer to determine individual financial penalties in accordance with the policy.**

11 HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2025-2028

The Committee received a report setting out the Council's intended Health and Wellbeing strategy for 2025-2028.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Progress Monitoring.** In response to questions from a Member, the Community Development Manager explained that the delivery and progress of the 2019-24 health & wellbeing strategy had been disrupted on account of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Syrian, Afghan and

Ukrainian refugee schemes – she stated, however, that the Council was now in a much stronger position to deliver on its strategy. She advised that the progress of the strategy would be monitored via an action plan, which was currently in the process of being drafted. The Chair stated that work of the Council would only be part of the picture, and that the success of the strategy would be in large part dependent on collaboration with partner organisations. He advised that the progress of the strategy would be reported back to Committee after a period of 12 months.

- b) **Digital Inclusion.** It was acknowledged that for a large number of people, digital exclusion can act as a barrier in many aspects of life. Members considered the importance of finding ways to break down those barriers for people who experience digital exclusion, particularly the elderly population of the borough, and discussed the social benefits and alleviation to feelings of isolation that digital devices and their social platforms can provide.
- c) **Access to Sports and Other Activities.** In response to a question from a Member, the Community Development Manager confirmed that the 'Surrey Youth Games' had been discontinued. She stated that its successor, the 'Young Legends' project, was currently in development – an activities programme targeted at young children, intended to provide opportunities to engage in sports for those who experience barriers to access for reasons such as physical or financial needs, etc. She stated that the possibility of including creative activities on the programme was also being explored.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve the final Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2028 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.**

12 AFGHAN REFUGEES

The Committee received a report setting out the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) and proposing the Council's offer of accommodating eligible Afghan households and the provision of Transitional Accommodation.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Funding for Refugees.** In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Housing and Community stated that the Council receives substantial funding to support refugees and asylum seekers, and that there were significant ringfenced reserves in place for those purposes. He stated that the £24k per person allowance for integration support was sufficient to cover costs, owing in large part to the work of the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network ('EERN'), who the Council commissions to assist in providing support for refugees in Epsom & Ewell. He explained that the Council's housing team has access to a separate budget to cover costs in

providing support to refugees in instances where refugees fall into homelessness.

- b) **Considering Impact on the Homeless Population.** A Member enquired as to what impact the housing of refugees might have on support provided to homeless people in the borough. The Head of Housing and Community stated that the Council seeks to provide accommodation for refugees that would not otherwise be available as accommodation for those on the housing needs register. He stated that many landlords work closely with the EERN, and that EERN had a successful track record in identifying landlords wishing to put their properties forward for use specifically as housing for refugees.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Nominate and Authorise the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Committee Chair, to produce and submit a response to the Government on behalf of the Council, as outlined in section 5 of the report.**

13 URGENT DECISIONS

The Committee received a report on two decisions taken by one of the Directors and/or Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency, in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Note the urgent decisions taken and the reasons for those decisions.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.32 pm

COUNCILLOR CLIVE WOODBRIDGE (CHAIR)