

Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 5 March 2026

PRESENT -

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

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

32 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

One question was received from a member of the public. This question was published at item 1 of the agenda pack.

A written response to the question was provided by the Chair prior to the meeting. This response was published as a supplement to the agenda item prior to the meeting.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registrable or non-registrable interests were made by Members in respect of any items considered at the meeting.

34 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13 January 2026 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

35 ARMED FORCES COUNCILLOR CHAMPION ANNUAL STATEMENT 2025/26

The Committee received a report to the Committee of the annual statement of the Armed Forces Councillor Champion.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Raising Awareness within GP Clinics.** The Armed Forces Champion pressed the importance of increasing awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant within local GP clinics.

- b) **Future of the Armed Forces Champion Role.** Following a question from a Member, the Armed Forces Champion proposed that, following the election for the East Surrey Shadow Council, a meeting including the Shadow Councillors should be held to consider the future arrangements for the championing of the armed forces community – i.e. one Champion for the entire East Surrey area, or one Champion per ward, etc.
- c) **Silver and Gold Status.** In response to a question from a Member, the Armed Forces Champion stated that, in order to achieve silver status or higher, the Council would need to demonstrate increased proactiveness in the steps taken to improve the services provided for the borough's armed forces community, and suggested possible steps such as increasing awareness within local GP clinics, or developing a housing policy for veterans.
- d) **Advisory Board.** The Armed Forces Champion stated that he had been involved in setting up an advisory board, including representatives from local charities such as Citizens Advice and Age Concern, to discuss how local services could be improved for veterans and the wider armed forces community within the borough.
- e) **Potential Agenda Item for Future HLP Meeting.** The Armed Forces Champion suggested that an item could be taken to a future meeting of the Health Liaison Panel for consideration, to discuss the topic of increasing awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant within local GP clinics. The Committee was supportive of the suggestion. The Head of Housing and Community stated that he would reach out to the Epsom Primary Care Network Director of Operations to discuss the matter.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Receive and note the annual statement of the Armed Forces Councillor Champion.**

36 ADOPTION OF A REVISED HOUSING CIVIL SANCTIONS POLICY

The Committee received a report recommending adoption of a revised Civil Penalty Policy to take into account the new offences which have been created as a consequence of the implementation timeline for the Renters Rights Act.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Responding to Complaints.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager explained that cases would be dealt with as priority required – he stated that cases involving a risk to health in particular would be considered as high priority. He stated that it could not be confidently predicted as to the degree of extra work that the new policy would create. He explained that the Council currently received c.100 complaints annually relating to the private rented sector.

- b) **Landlords' Awareness.** A Member queried how landlords will be made aware of the changes in law connected with the Renters' Rights Act. The Public Protection Manager stated that many landlords will have agents that will be able to advise them. He stated that the Government was also working on a publicity campaign for landlords and tenants, which was due for release soon. He explained that a Surrey-wide online landlords forum was due to be held on 11th March at which specialists would be present to provide information and advice. He stated that ultimately the responsibility is on landlords to make sure they are educated on all the relevant legislation and policies, but that the Council is able to provide assistance where appropriate.
- c) **Pets Ownership.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager stated that, under the Renters' Rights Act, landlords cannot unreasonably withhold permission for a tenant to be in possession of a pet, and now need to have clear and defensible reasons as to why a tenant within their property cannot have one. It was noted that for single homeless persons in particular, pet ownership can be a great benefit to mental health and wellbeing.
- d) **Effective Date of New Policy.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager stated that the new policy would become effective as of 1st May. He explained that the current policy would still be retained for a period owing to active appeals in relation to the current policy.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve and adopt the revised policy as set out in appendix 1 to the report, with effect from 1 May 2026.**
- (2) **Nominate and Authorise the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee to make future amendments to the policy arising from changes to legislation, guidance and case precedents being set.**
- (3) **Nominate and Authorise the Head of Housing and Community, Public Protection Manager, Principal Environmental Health Officer and Environmental Health Officers to determine individual financial penalties in accordance with this, and any future revisions of the policy.**

37 AMENDMENTS TO THE ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE POLICY

The Committee received a report recommending the adoption of a housing enforcement policy to ensure the Council's enforcement decisions remain compliant with the Renters Rights Act.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Separation from the Compliance and Enforcement Policy.** In response to a question from a Member, the Public Protection Manager explained that the housing enforcement policy before Members had been separated out from the current compliance and enforcement policy in light of the recent Royal Assent of the Renters' Rights Act 2026. He explained that the enforcement options set out in the newly separated policy were defined by said Act, and differed from those set out in the existing compliance and enforcement policy.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Approve and adopt the Housing Enforcement Policy in appendix 1 to the report**
- (2) **Nominate and Authorise the Public Protection Manager to carry out consequential amendments to the existing Compliance and Enforcement Policy so as to remove elements relating to housing enforcement.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.16 pm

COUNCILLOR CLIVE WOODBRIDGE (CHAIR)