

**Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held
on 17 March 2022**

PRESENT -

Councillor Alex Coley (Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (Vice-Chair); Councillors Steven McCormick (as nominated substitute for Councillor Clive Smitheram), Julie Morris, Phil Neale, Guy Robbins and Peter Webb

In Attendance:

Absent: Councillor Luke Giles, Councillor Bernice Froud, Councillor Debbie Monksfield and Councillor Clive Smitheram

Officers present: Clare Lawrence (Director of Environment, Housing & Regeneration), Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Annette Snell (Housing Operations Manager), Rachel Kundasamy (Health and Wellbeing Officer), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager), Dan Clackson (Administrator)

16 QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from Members of the public.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee made the following declarations in relation to items on the agenda:

Tennis in the Borough

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Julie Morris declared that her son is a professional tennis coach who uses tennis courts, both paid and unpaid. Councillor Morris did not participate in the debate or vote on this item.

Allotments Review

Councillor Christine Cleveland, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Christine Cleveland declared that she was an allotment holder at the Kingston Road allotment site.

Allotments Review

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Julie Morris declared that she was an allotment holder and didn't believe that she had any bias with regard to this item.

Allotments Review

Councillor Steven McCormick, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Steven McCormick declared that he is an allotment holder but came to the meeting with a clear and open mind.

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee held on 18 January 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

19 MOTION: HERITAGE TOURS

The Committee received a report presenting a Motion referred to it by the Council at its meeting on 7 December 2021. The Motion proposed a Summer programme of Heritage tours.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **European Grant Funding for the Downs.** The Committee noted that European Grant Funding had been secured for Epsom and Walton Downs which would fund two different types of heritage tour on the Downs.
- b) **Tours of Ashley Road Tunnels.** The Committee noted that the Ashley Road tunnels were in private ownership and that any heritage tours to the site would require permission from the site owner. The Head of Operational Services informed the Committee that the previous tour of the tunnels had been organised by the Epsom Business Improvement District (BID) and that he would work with the BID to explore whether further tours would be possible.
- c) **Business case and funding for Heritage Tours.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services informed the Committee that the planned programme of Heritage Tours in 2022-23 would be provided within existing budgets. A business case and identification of funding sources would be presented to the Committee for consideration if it was proposed to expand the service.
- d) **Horton Chapel.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services informed the Committee that Officers would contact the Trustees of Horton Chapel regarding the possibility of holding a Heritage Tour to the Chapel.

- e) **SCC information signs in Epsom town centre.** The Committee was informed that there was outstanding Surrey County Council sign posting works for Epsom town centre as a part of the Plan-E project, which would provide information about local heritage. Officers had contacted the County Council to request an update on these works.
- f) **Communication of programme of Heritage Tours.** The Committee noted that Councillor Nigel Colin would be involved in the Heritage Tour Programme, as the Council's Heritage Champion. The programme of tours would be communicated with residents by the Council's communications team.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the Motion;**
- (2) **Agree to establish a programme of Heritage Tours to begin in Summer 2022.**

20 AFGHAN CITIZENS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

The Committee received a report setting out the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and proposing that the Council extends its offer of accommodating Afghan families arriving in the UK under the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Resettlement Scheme, to those arriving under the ACRS.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Extension of scheme.** The Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that the report's proposals would not extend the Council's obligation to Afghan refugees, the proposals would extend the eligibility criteria of the scheme to enable households to be matched with suitable properties.
- b) **Number of households supported.** The Committee noted that the Council was currently supporting 2 families under the Syrian Refugee Scheme and 1 household under the Afghan Refugee scheme. The support costs for these families was being met by the Government.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree to the Council participating in the ACRS as detailed in this report and therefore extending its offer to accommodate and support up-to 5 Afghan families arriving in the UK under both the LES Resettlement Scheme and ACRS.**

21 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

The Committee received a report presenting the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Homelessness Review, and

seeking agreement to consult on these documents prior to returning to Committee for approval to adopt.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Empty properties.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that a multi-faceted approach was required to address the issue of long-term empty properties. This included the Council's decision to introduce a 300% Council Tax charge on properties which remain empty for more than 2 years. The Head of Housing and Community provided the Committee with a verbal summary of the actions undertaken by officers to reduce the number of empty properties in the Borough, in accordance with the Empty Property Strategy. A Member asked whether an update on the number of empty properties in the Borough could be provided as a standard report in future and the Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that he would discuss this with the relevant Head of Service.
- b) **Housing Need Register.** Following a question from a Member, the Housing Operations Manager informed the Committee that Social Housing was allocated in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy.
- c) **Rough sleepers.** Officers informed the Committee that there were currently two entrenched rough sleepers in the Borough who had refused offers of assistance to provide housing accommodation.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved:

- (1) **To agree that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Homelessness Review as set out in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 to the report, are submitted to public consultation.**

22 TENNIS IN THE BOROUGH

The Committee received a report presenting a non-repayable grant funding opportunity from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish and upgrade all tennis courts in the Borough.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Annual costs.** Officers informed the Committee that the proposed scheme included a requirement that income from the tennis courts would contribute to a 'sinking fund'. This fund would pay for the ongoing annual maintenance of the courts and gate entrance technology.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved by majority vote with 6 members voting for and 1 not voting, to:

- (1) **Grant permission for officers to apply for a non-repayable grant from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish and upgrade all tennis courts in the borough as set out in section four of the report.**
- (2) **Agree to a request to Strategy and Resources Committee to release of £10,330 from capital reserves for a 10% match funding contribution from S106 funds.**
- (3) **Agree to the principle of charging for usage of tennis courts to fund the ongoing maintenance, as required by the Lawn Tennis Association.**
- (4) **Note that a further report will be presented to the June 2022 meeting of the Committee to set out proposals for the future management of the tennis courts.**

23 ALLOTMENTS REVIEW

The Committee received a report presenting a review of all allotments in the Borough and sets out recommendations for the future of council managed and self-managed sites.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Process for becoming a self-managed allotment site.** The Committee noted that the process for Council-managed allotment sites to become self-managed sites includes a requirement that 75% of plot holders support the application. Officers informed the Committee that this was 75% of all plot holders for the site, and that non-respondents were considered to not be in support.
- b) **Clarification to wording of paragraph 4.1 of the report.** The Committee considered that paragraph 4.1 of the report should be clarified to detail that a request had been received from Epsom Common Allotment Society for the self-managed site criteria to be revised. The Epsom Common Allotment Society had not submitted a request to become self-managed.
- c) **Amendment to self-management criteria.** The Committee requested Officers to present a report to its June 2022 meeting providing a review of the criteria for self-managed allotment sites, including the requirement for 75% of plot holders to be in support. Officers were requested to consult the Allotment Forum site representatives for their views as a part of this review.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the status of all allotment sites in the Borough.**
- (2) **Note that the current agreements for the three self-managed allotments sites are due to expire in December 2022 and agree to**

issue new agreements for the next five years from date of expiry as set out in section three of this report.

- (3) Agree to consult with the Allotment Forum site representatives to gauge interest in the remaining council-managed sites becoming self-managed as set out in section 4 of the report.**

The meeting began at 7.31 pm and ended at 9.03 pm

COUNCILLOR ALEX COLEY (CHAIR)