

Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 13 January 2026

PRESENT -

Councillor Clive Woodbridge (Chair); Councillor Bernice Froud (Vice-Chair); Councillors Rob Geleit, Rachel King, Bernie Muir and Phil Neale (as nominated substitute for Councillor Humphrey Reynolds)

Absent: Councillor Graham Jones, Councillor Humphrey Reynolds and Councillor Kim Spickett

Officers present: Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Rachel Epton (Community Development Manager), Linda Scott (Interim Assistant Head of Service - Venues), Susan Dalloe (Bourne Hall Museum Curator), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Richard Appiah-Ampofo (Senior Accountant) and Dan Clackson (Democratic Services Officer)

21 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

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

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Voluntary Sector Funding 2026-2027

Councillor Phil Neale, Other Interest: Councillor Phil Neale declared that he was a member of the Citizens Advice Management Committee as a representative of the Council and did not take part in the debate or voting for this agenda item.

23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 November 2025 and authorised the Chair to sign them.

24 OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MUSEUM

The Committee received a report presenting an appraisal of three strategic options for the future of Bourne Hall museum, drawing on findings from the Bourne Hall museum service review and the culture peer challenge report.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Cultural Peer Review.** In response to comments from Members, the Chair stated that the general messaging and outcomes from the Cultural Peer Challenge ('CPC') had been captured effectively within the report and its appendices. He read out the recommendations from the CPC, which were noted by the Committee, and stated that the full CPC would be shared with Members following the meeting.
- b) **Communicating with Local Schools.** The Committee considered that the Museum could benefit from working and communicating closely with local universities, colleges and schools. It was suggested that the Museum could liaise with local schools with respect to the subjects they will be covering over the coming year, and for a fee could put on educational events for the students in relation to those subjects.
- c) **Marketing and Promotion.** The Committee considered that the Museum could benefit from increased/improved signposting and marketing. The Museum Curator stated that there had been a recent effort to boost marketing of the museum on social media, and that museum exhibitions and events were promoted in 'What's On In Epsom' and other newsletters. She stated that the museum did not currently have an established marketing plan and explained that conversations with Communications were ongoing regarding the development of one.
- d) **Preference for Option 2.** The Committee expressed their view that the Museum was a valuable asset to the Borough and expressed a preference for Option 2 of the report (to invest in improvement of the Museum), and conversely expressed an aversion to Option 3 (to close the Museum).

Following consideration, Councillor Bernice Froud proposed that the wording to recommendation (1) b) of the report should be amended as follows (proposed amendment underlined):

(1) b) Option 2: Invest in improvement of the Museum (should option 2 be agreed a funding request will go to Strategy and Resources Committee March 2026 for consideration). In the event that Strategy and Resources Committee do not approve said funding, instead do nothing and carry on with business as usual.

Councillor Bernie Muir seconded the proposal. The Committee voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Subsequently, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Option 2: Invest in improvement of the Museum (should option 2 be agreed a funding request will go to Strategy and Resources Committee March 2026 for consideration). In the event that Strategy and Resources Committee do not approve said funding, instead do nothing and carry on with business as usual.**

25 VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2026-2027

The Committee received a report considering the continued support of voluntary sector organisations and setting out the proposed funding arrangements for 2026/2027. The report also considered the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and presented a funding proposal for the financial year 2027/2028.

Further to his declaration of interest, Councillor Phil Neale did not participate in the Committee's debate on this item.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Implications for Council in the Event of Reduced Funding.** In response to a question from a Member, the Community Development Manager advised that, should the Committee decide to reduce funding for the Voluntary organisations, there would likely be a resulting increased pressure on Council services. The Chair stated that it would be very challenging to define an accurate financial breakdown of the effect this would have on the Council owing to too many variables and unknowns.
- b) **Funding Arrangements Following Demise of Epsom & Ewell.** The Committee considered that it could not commit to any funding for the voluntary organisations beyond 2026/27, owing to the forthcoming demise of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council as part of Local Government Reorganisation, and noted that funding arrangements for the 2027/28 period would ultimately be for the new Unitary Authority to decide. It was noted however that, should the Committee agree to the funding arrangements for 2027/28 as set out in option 2 of the report, it would provide a Committee-supported decision for the new Unitary to consider when agreeing their arrangements.
- c) **Voluntary Services Expertise.** The Committee considered the important work carried out by the Voluntary Services and the valuable experience and expertise of the people who work for them.

Prior to voting, Councillor Phil Neale withdrew from the meeting room.

Following consideration, Councillor Bernie Muir proposed that the Committee go to a vote on recommendation 1 b) of the report, for Option 2. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Rachel King.

Subsequently, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Agree to the financial support of the voluntary sector organisations as detailed in Option 2 (section 3.9 of the report).**

Councillor Phil Neale returned to the room following the conclusion of this agenda item.

26 END POVERTY PLEDGE

The Committee received a report considering whether to recommend to Full Council that the council makes the End Poverty Pledge (EPP) and agrees supporting the general statement and associated commitments.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Real Living Wage for Council Staff.** In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Accountant confirmed that the Real Living Wage would be implemented for all Council Staff from 1 April 2026, including agency staff.
- b) **Venues as Community Hubs.** In response to a question from a member, the Head of Housing and Community stated that the report had a particular focus on Bourne Hall, owing to its importance and accessibility as a community hub. He stated that, should the Council agree to sign the pledge, there may be opportunity down the line to explore how other venues, such as the Playhouse, could be made more accessible to those living in poverty.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Recommend to Full Council to sign the End Poverty Pledge, including agreeing the general statement and specific commitments set out in section 4 of the report.**
- (2) **Recommend to Full Council to nominate and authorise the Chief Executive to sign the Poverty Pledge on behalf of the council.**

27 FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

The Committee received a report recommending fees and charges for which the Committee is responsible, with the new charges being effective from 1 April 2026.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Antisocial Behaviour in Vicinity of Wellbeing Centre.** The Committee noted that bookings for the Wellbeing Centre had seen a decrease in relation to antisocial behaviour in the Centre's vicinity and considered the importance of this matter being addressed. The Head of Housing and Community stated that the matter was known to the Police and was a point of focus for them.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree the fees and charges for the Community and Wellbeing Committee for 2026/27.**

28 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27

The Committee received a report summarising the proposed 2026/27 capital programme and a provisional programme for 2027/28 to 2030/31. The Committee's approval is sought for the programme to be submitted to Council in February 2026.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Lift at Bourne Hall.** In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Accountant confirmed that the proposed works to the lift at Bourne Hall were in relation to replacement of the lift's controls in order to remain legally compliant. There was a suggestion from the Committee that events requiring large equipment were currently unable to be held at Bourne Hall owing to the size of the lift, and that the venue could benefit from increased revenue by upsizing the lift. It was advised that increasing the size of the lift would likely be greatly challenging, if not impossible, owing to the structure of the building. The Chair stated that he would discuss the matter with the Senior Surveyor and Head of Venues for guidance on the matter.

Following consideration, it was resolved:

- (1) **Submit the capital programme for 2026/27 as identified in section 3.1 of the report to Full Council for approval on 10 February 2026;**
- (2) **Submit the additional schemes identified in section 3.4 of the report to Full Council for approval on 10 February 2026 assuming funding is identified;**
- (3) **Note the provisional forecast of schemes for the capital programme for 2027/28 to 2030/31;**
- (4) **Note that schemes subject to external funding from Disabled Facilities Grants will only proceed once funding has been received.**

29 REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27

The Committee received a report setting out estimates for income and expenditure on services in 2026/27.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **Cost of Homelessness.** The Committee considered that homelessness in the Borough remained a high expense for the Council. The Head of Housing and Community stated, following the introduction of the Renters Reform Act and the abolishment of s.21 evictions, it was forecast that there would be a significant reduction in people presenting as homeless. The Chief Accountant stated that the s.151 Officer had been working to

put contingencies in place to account for unforeseen financial challenges that might arise in relation to homelessness.

- b) **Verbal Update from the Chief Accountant.** The Chief Accountant provided the Committee with a verbal update in respect of the Community & Wellbeing Budget to be recommended to Full Council on 10 February 2026. In accompaniment to her verbal update, she provided to Members a supplementary document (subsequently published as a supplement to the agenda item) setting out the information in print. The update set out the following:

Grant funding for Rough Sleeping had been mistakenly double counted in the 2026/27 budget for Community & Wellbeing Committee as detailed within the Draft Budget Book 2026/27 and the Committee papers for the meeting on 13 January 2026. This error had arisen because for 2026/27 the government had rolled it into the Homelessness Prevention Grant, so it had mistakenly been included within that grant figure as well.

To ensure the correct budget figures were considered at Full Council on 10 February 2026, the double counted grant figure of £42,790 had been removed from the Committee budget. No expenditure budgets had changed. The impact was that the budget for the Housing service, and for C&W committee overall, had increased by £42,790.

The table from 4.2 of the Revenue Budget report had been provided within the supplementary document with an additional column showing how the removal of the grant affected the Community & Wellbeing Committee budget for 2026/27.

Members were asked to consider recommending the revised base position to Full Council in February 2026 (as detailed within the table included within the supplementary document). The only changes were to the Housing service and the overall total for the Committee. This change to the budget would be offset by a reduction in the corporate contingency held within Strategy & Resources committee.

The update from the Chief Accountant was noted by the Committee.

Following consideration, Councillor Bernice Froud proposed that the recommendation be amended as follows:

- 1) *Recommend the 2026/27 service estimates, as amended by the Chief Accountant verbally at the meeting, for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2026.*

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Rob Geleit. The Committee voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

Subsequently, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) Recommend the 2026/27 service estimates, as amended by the Chief Accountant verbally at the meeting, for approval at the budget meeting of Full Council in February 2026.**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.10 pm

COUNCILLOR CLIVE WOODBRIDGE (CHAIR)