

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 26 September 2013 in Committee Room C.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday 21 November 2013.

Elected Members:

- * Mrs Denise Saliagopoulos (Chairman)
Mr Chris Norman (Vice-Chairman)
- * Mrs Jan Mason
Mr John Orrick
- * Mr Saj Hussain
- * Rachael I. Lake
- * Mrs Mary Lewis
Mr Christian Mahne
- * Mr Chris Pitt
- * Ms Barbara Thomson
- * Mr Alan Young
- * Mr Robert Evans

Ex officio Members:

Co-opted Members:

Substitute Members:

Mr Will Forster
Mrs Margaret Hicks
Mr Mike Goodman

In attendance

1/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

- Apologies were received from Chris Norman, Christian Mahne and John Orrick. Margaret Hicks substituted for Chris Norman. Mike Goodman substituted for Christian Mahne and Will Forster substituted for John Orrick.

2/13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 11 JULY 2013 & 14 AUGUST 2013 [Item 2]

The minutes of 11 July 2013 were agreed by members of the Committee as an accurate record of that meeting.

A member of the committee asked for two extra points of clarification to be noted in respect of the minutes of 14 August 2013. These were:

- That a member of the committee asked the Section 151 officer whether a business plan had been put in place. She explained that no business plan had been written or requested.
- The Cabinet member for community services made a commitment to come back to the select committee with detailed proposals of the Magna Carta programme as it developed.

3/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

Cllr Saj Hussain declared an interest in Knaphill library. (As Knaphill Library was not one of the 10 Surrey libraries identified to become a CPL library, this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest for the purposes of item 9 so Cllr Hussain was able to take part in the discussion).

4/13 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

One question had been received from a councillor and two questions from members of the public. Written responses from the Chairman were tabled at the meeting. The councillor and both members of the public were present at the meeting to ask one supplementary question.

1. *Cllr Robert Evans* thanked the Chairman for the response to his question. Cllr Evans then asked the following supplementary question: there are inconsistencies in the financial figures provided and some costs have not been accounted for. Is there a business plan for the total cost of this project?

The Cabinet Member for Community Services explained that the costs and savings for the project had been retained in the libraries overall budget. No savings were made in the overall library budget last year

but the project has not been completed as of yet. The library services motive was to work with underperforming libraries that were at risk. Money had been saved through staff savings and the support of volunteers in respect of CPLs, and these savings had been ploughed back into the overall library service budget. The aim is to improve the sustainability of Surrey's libraries.

2. Mr Lee Godfrey thanked the Chairman for the response to his question. Mr Godfrey then asked the following supplementary question: given that the major justification of the CLP project is cost savings, how is this committee supposed to assess the progress of the CPL project when it doesn't have a grip on the costs? I would like to know what the original budget for the project was, how the council is tracking against that budget and how this committee can ensure that taxpayers are receiving value for money from the CLP project?

The Library Operations Manager explained that the overall aim of the project was to make savings of £381,000 per annum, this would come from savings on staff costs. The money to convert the libraries into CPLs would come from these staff savings. Surrey County Council would continue to fund overhead costs such as building, books and IT. She explained that for training and governance purposes CPLs were treated as any other Surrey County Council library. The Library Operations Manager explained that the cost of the support team for the CPLs was not an additional cost as they were already library staff and support of CPLs was just one part of their role. The Library Operations Manager stated the support offered to CPL libraries is of a high quality. The Cabinet Member for Community Services explained that the Council did not wish to close their libraries as was happening in other parts of the Country and CPLs were the solution.

3. Mr Richard Wilson thanked the Chairman for the response to his question. Mr Wilson then asked the following supplementary question: I note that after becoming Community Partnered Libraries, the six CPL's issuing of books has declined at twice the rate of other comparable libraries. Your answer says that "low and declining use" was the reason for choosing the first 10 CPLs. Is it actually the case that 5 of the 10 had *rising usage*? Will Bagshot Library be the first to close? Item 9 Annex 1 on this meeting's documents says that they have expressed concern about their capacity to undertake the task. What is the source of this statement? Isn't it actually the case that they do have the capacity but are concerned about the draft contract and have been cut off by the lack of communication from this council and undermined by Windlesham Parish Council? How many firm commitments have Windlesham Parish Council received from volunteers? Finally, how would the members of this committee feel if Bagshot Library closes due to your policy? Will you feel it like bereavement as many local library users would? Would you resign if that were to happen? Or is that the objective of your policy?

Cllr Goodman explained that he was Chairman of Windlesham Parish Council. A meeting was held in February with the Friends of Bagshot Library but since then things have been at a standstill and Windlesham

Parish Council have not received the support of Friends of Bagshot Library. Cllr Goodman explained that Windlesham Parish Council have therefore been canvassing for support from the local community and stated that they will move to a CPL in due course and make a success of it. Cllr Goodman stated that It is not about statistics but about how we engage with the local community. The Cabinet Member for Community Services stated that she understood that there were some local issues but Surrey County Council wished to move forwards and work with the community to help Bagshot library.

5/13 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. It was noted that a Cabinet response to the Select Committee's recommendations on the Magna Carta Anniversary had been received.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

6/13 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A member of the committee asked for clarification on when the Magna Carta seminar would be held. The Chairman stated the all member seminar would be held on Monday 9 December 2013.

Recommendations:

None

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:
None.

7/13 SFRS INCOME GENERATION STRATEGY AND TRADING [Item 7]

Declarations of interest:
None.

Witnesses:

Kay Hammond, Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services
Russell Pearson, Head of Fire and Rescue, Chief Fire Officer, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
Liz Mills, Chief of Staff, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
Steve Owen-Hughes, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Operations Support, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services briefly introduced the report to members of the committee and explained that questions arising from the previous select committee meeting were answered in the report provided.
2. A member of the committee asked for clarity around the decision not to use the Surrey Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) branding for potential trading activity (paragraph 3 of the report). The member asked what the branding would be and asked for assurances that it would be distinctly different from SFRS. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services stated that there have been legal challenges across the country in using the branding of Fire & Rescue Service's for trading purposes. She explained that a brand for a future trading arm has not been decided yet and the service will need to develop a business case before any branding can be established. However, she could confirm that as a result of the legal advice the service has received the SFRS brand will not be used.
3. A member of the committee raised concerns over staffing levels required for extra income generation activities and questioned if there would be charges for services which were previously free. The Chief of Staff explained that there would be strict separation between core services and business services. The money raised from income generation would go back into core services ensuring that key services would continue to be provided. The Chief of Staff assured the committee that uniformed employees would not be involved in income generation activities but that new staff would be employed for this purpose. She went on to give her reassurance that the service would not charge for services which were previously free, and explained that there are legislative requirements in place to ensure those lines are

not blurred. The Chief of Staff explained that the service would use a business plan to ensure any changes were sustainable.

4. It was commented on by a member of the committee that the fire service was moving into income generation through business and this appeared to be the general direction of travel for the whole Council. The member queried whether this raised any philosophical concerns as regards the direction of travel of a local authority. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services explained that the move towards business was not unique to the fire service. The service needed to be innovative in order to meet their statutory duties and provide the best value for money, at a time when funding from central government was being severely reduced. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services explained that people did not want to lose their fire stations so if the service could find a way to avoid this, then they should look at other options. All directorates of the council were having to take a strategic view on making savings and providing the best value for money
5. Members of the committee recognised that there was a gap in the market for fire and rescue services which SFRS could develop for income generation activities.
6. A member of the committee expressed concerns over SFRS achieving its additional income target of £660,000. The Head of Fire and Rescue stated that they did have significant savings to make as part of the MTFP but the service was slowly gaining confidence in what the arrangements will be in order to work towards these savings. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services understood that there would be some difficulties in achieving this target but that plans would be put in place to ensure the service succeeded in achieving its target. A further question over where the budget to start the income generation proposals would come from was asked by a member of the committee. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services explained that there was some provision from a corporate pot of money to help with this.
7. A question over the possibility of outsourcing the SFRS was asked by a member of the committee. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that this was a possibility but the services had no intention of doing this. Rather SFRS would keep their options open.
8. A member of the committee asked if the income target of £660,000 was the same as the net profit target. Officers commented that the income target was the same as the net profit target. A further question over what the 'turnover' would be was asked. The Cabinet Associate for Police and Fire Services explained that this would be addressed in the business plan.

9. A member of the committee asked if SFRS was currently charging for services it was entitled to charge for. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that the service had gone out to public consultation on this and proposals to do this were not supported during the consultation. It was recognised that the service needed to engage locally and find out what the public wanted in local areas. The Head of Fire and Rescue went onto explain that the SFRS contract with the Isle of Wight was bringing in a net profit of £1.42m to the service, at zero cost, so successful income generation was viable.
10. The meeting was adjourned at 11.40am for a private member briefing. The meeting recommenced at 12:15pm.

Recommendations:

- a) To note the content of the report.

Actions/further information to be provided:

SFRS to continue to update the select committee on the development of its income generation strategy.

Committee Next Steps:

None

**8/13 CUSTOMER SERVICES OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE REPORT
[Item 8]**

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Mark Irons, Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support
Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The report was introduced by the Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support. He explained the purpose of the report was to introduce customer services and detail each of the teams it contained. The Head of Customer Services explained that historically there were lots of contact numbers for different directorates and no performance measuring. The aim of the centralised customer services team was to reduce cost and increase levels of customer satisfaction.
2. A member of the committee asked if the contact centre had received more calls with the recent fire service strike. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support stated that the contact centre had not received any increased volume of calls.

3. A member of the committee expressed concern over the misuse of blue badges and asked what could be done to ensure people used them correctly. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support explained that the district and boroughs policed the use of blue badges and that SCC issued them. SCC was working with district and boroughs to ensure any concerns were being addressed.
4. The Cabinet Member for Community Services offered members the option of visiting the contact centre and learning more about how the contact centre works.
5. A member of the committee identified a possible income generation opportunity if the contact centre were to make provision for taking calls on behalf of district and borough councils. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support explained that a Surrey Contact Centre Group which included representatives from district and boroughs had been set up to discuss the possibility of taking local calls. This is something the service would be interested in undertaking but ultimately the choice rests with the district and borough councils.
6. In reference to page 41-42 of the report, a member of the committee asked what happened to complaints that were not answered in 10 working days (i.e. outside the response target). The member asked when these complaints would be answered. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support explained that the 10 working days was a statutory target for the council. If complaints were not answered within this timeframe, it did not mean that responses went well beyond the target, in some cases responses just missed out on meeting the target e.g. 11, 12 or 13 days. The Head of Customer Services explained that he could provide exact figures in respect of this.
7. Some members of the committee raised concerns over the high number of children's social care complaints which were not answered in the 10 working days response target. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support explained that the adult social care and children's social care teams had their own complaints teams and procedures. The adult social care and children's social care complaints had been included in the report for illustrative purposes. The nature of children's social care complaints was varied and complex which affected timescales.
8. A member of the committee congratulated the contact centre on its 90% customer satisfaction rating. The member referred to a recent experience she had in calling the contact centre on an urgent issue, being directed to the children's social care team, but experiencing a delay in receiving an initial response from them. The member asked if it was possible to get the Customer Service Excellence programme implemented in the children's social care team. The Head of Customer

Services and Directorate Support explained that a CRM (customer relationship management) system could help with this sort of situation, as at the moment once a call was put through by the contact centre, it was very difficult to monitor it to resolution. He explained that a customer focus board (based on the customer service excellence framework) which aims to drive customer service improvements had been set up. The board will feedback to the corporate board on changes and improvements it feels need implementing.

9. A member of the committee explained that when correspondence was directed to the contact centre and a response was received, it would be helpful if the response could be linked to the original correspondence to create a trail. The Head of Customer Services acknowledged that this would be helpful and agreed to investigate further.
10. A member of the committee congratulated the work of the blue badge team for turning things around very quickly for a constituent in difficult circumstances.
11. A member of the committee recognised that a large number of Environment & Infrastructure complaints were escalated to Stage 2 and asked how this could be reduced. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support explained that complaints at stage 2 did not necessarily always qualify as stage 2 complaints. He further expressed the need for the service to respond more intelligently to stage one complaints to ensure that they did not escalate to stage 2.
12. Members of the committee asked for clarification on which libraries would provide a blue badge checking service. The Cabinet Member for Community Services agreed to find out the details relating to this and would let members know if this service was available in their area.
13. Some members commented that the information on the public website was not always up to date. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support stated that if residents were not happy with a webpage they now had the option to provide feedback whilst on that webpage by clicking on the happy, average, or sad smiley face. This would provide targeted feedback in order to push for improvement. The Cabinet Member for Community Services stated that a new look public website would hopefully be launched next month, having taken account of feedback received from members and customers.
14. Members of the Committee remained concerned with the poor performance against the target response rate for children's social care complaints as identified on page 42 of the report and asked for this to be raised with the Children and Education Select Committee.

15. A member of the Committee asked if Local Committees could have clarification on the use of blue badges. The Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support expressed his support for this and explained that a four minute video guide on blue badges had been set up and would be sent to members.

Recommendations

- a) Note the report.
- b) The Children & Education Select Committee scrutinises the poor performance against the target response rate for children's social care complaints in 2012/13.

Actions/further information to be provided

For the Interim Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support to provide advice and information on the use of blue badges to local committees.

Committee Next Steps:

None

9/13 COMMUNITY PARTNERED LIBRARIES PROGRESS REPORT [Item 9]

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Susie Kemp, Assistant Chief Executive
Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member for Community Services
Peter Milton, Head of Cultural Services
Rose Wilson, Library Operations Manager
Gill Woods, Member of Management Committee at Warlingham CPL
Lesley Harling, Steering Group Representative at Virginia Water CPL
Judie Knobloch, Volunteer from Virginia Water CPL

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman welcome county council officers, the Cabinet Member for Community Services and the external witnesses who had come to speak on the progress of the CPL libraries. The external witnesses Gill Woods, Lesley Harling and Judie Knobloch introduced themselves. Lesley Harling explained that she was originally a volunteer at Virginia Water CPL but now sat on the Steering Group. Judie Knobloch explained that she was a volunteer at Virginia Water CPL. She explained that she had come to this whole project with hesitation but was now completely convinced about it. She described the experience as a great challenge but a huge success. Gill Woods explained that she was from Warlingham CPL and had been involved from the very beginning. She stated that she was on the management committee but was also a volunteer as well as a Parish Councillor. She explained that

Warlingham was a victim of their own success with regards to the summer reading challenge which produced some resource issues.

2. A member of the committee asked how these witnesses had been chosen to speak at committee. The Library Operations Manager explained that she had emailed all the steering group reps and volunteers working in the CPL libraries about speaking at committee. She received a large number of responses but invited those who had not previously spoken at committees. The witnesses at today's meeting represent the two different CPL models.
3. A member of the committee asked the external witnesses how they had found the support and training they had received from SCC. Judie Knobloch stated that volunteers at Virginia Water had received superb support. SCC allowed for volunteers to find their own solutions but were always willing to help. There was also a detailed procedures book which was kept regularly updated. Lesley Harling also commented on the great support received, the SCC team were committed and flexible, but stated that during the initial start up there were some communication issues. However, she explained that there have been huge improvements in this regard since and volunteers are enjoying themselves. Virginia Water CPL currently has a volunteer waiting list. Gill Woods echoed Lesley Harling's comments.
4. A member of the committee commented on the 20% of CPL opening hours which is shared with an SCC staff member and asked how long this procedure would continue for. The Cabinet Member for Community Services stated that the service was committed to supporting CPL's and will continue with support staff remaining in the CPL libraries for as long as it was required. The Head of Cultural Services explained that the 20% had been formalised in the MOU (memorandum of understanding) to provide comfort to the CPLs but that this figure may change as the libraries changed and grew. The Head of Cultural Services explained that the support staff were not solely dedicated to CPLs and that they were at the same time doing their other duties for the Library Service.
5. A member of the committee echoed the great support the county was giving to CPL's and asked the external witnesses for their advice and assistance as Bagshot library moved into CPL status. The volunteers stated that they would be more than happy to assist Bagshot library.
6. A member of the committee asked the volunteers what training they had received to help them run the library. The member asked how long training was for full time library staff. Gill Woods explained that volunteers had received two sessions, one of these was a classroom session and the other was a practical session in the library. The training included customer role plays, equalities and diversity training,

shelving books and using library equipment, health and safety etc. Judie Knobloch stated that no computer training had been received and hence the need to recruit volunteers with ICT skills. The member went on to further ask where the volunteers felt they were not doing as well as they would like. Gill Woods commented on not being able to access information about library users and communicate with them due to data protection issues. This would be useful to do, to follow up after events such as the Summer Reading Challenge. The Library Operations Manager explained that a key part of the CPL libraries is its self-service offer which limited data protection issues. The service understands the issues with volunteers not being able to look up customer data but stated that the library service was speaking to the IT service about piloting new self service equipment which would give volunteers more protected user access. The Library Operations Manager confirmed that the induction programme for full time library staff was 1 year.

7. Members recognised the importance of libraries in local communities and asked if more was being done to integrate the library within the community. The external witnesses stated that the libraries in which they volunteered were used by the police, Citizens Advice Bureau outreach and parish councils. Judie Knobloch went on to say that plans were underway for a toilet to be built at Virginia Water CPL. The CPL also planned to increase story time sessions, rent out rooms to the community, and had recently extended opening times on Wednesday in order to attract new users e.g. commuters.
8. A member of the committee expressed concern that the flagship CPL in Walton on Thames had no toilets and stated that he was told this was because of health and safety reasons. The Head of Cultural Services stated that the services strategy was to get toilets into libraries but because many of the properties were on lease this sometimes made it difficult to build toilets.
9. A member of the committee asked what plans there were in place to increase the number of service users to CPL's. Lesley Harling explained that opening hours were being extended and links were being made with local primary schools. The Cabinet Member for Community Services expressed her support for the work volunteers were doing and asked for committee members to visit CPL's to see the good work which was being done.
10. A member of the committee expressed concerns over the costs for setting up the CPL's especially because some had been delayed; Ewell Court CPL being an example. The Cabinet Member for Community Services commented that the reason Ewell Court had not opened was because of leasing issues but further added that assistance from the local member would be welcomed.

11. A member of the committee asked about the opportunity cost of CPLs. The Head of Cultural Services explained that there was a target of £381,000 worth of savings to be made which had not yet been reached. The project was being funded through these savings. The Head of Cultural Services explained that there have not been any additional staffing costs but there had been a realignment of staff roles, with one team focusing on CPL's and the other on normal library services.
12. A member of the committee asked for the select committee to be provided with a budget sheet so there could be a comparison between the budget of CPL's and normal libraries. The Head of Cultural Services stated that financial data would be included in the report going to Cabinet.
13. A member of the committee asked what impact the lack of mobile signal was having on the service receiving library user numbers. The Library Operations Manager stated that the library service had mechanical receptors for many years but were now working off a mobile signal. The benefit of this being more up to date information. However there are places in Surrey which do not receive this mobile signal which means some libraries must revert back to using mechanical receptors. The Library Operations Manager assured that these would still give the library reliable results. The member went onto ask when a lease on Bramley CPL would be agreed. The Library Operations Manager explained that the lease for the library was with Bramley Parish Council and discussions were still ongoing.
14. The Cabinet Member for Community Services, Chairman and Select Committee thanked the witnesses for the work they were doing with CPLs and for attending the meeting and answering questions. A member of the committee asked for the Cabinet Member for Community Services to provide an update to all members on the progress of the CPL's. The Chairman asked for member's feedback on how they felt the meeting went.

Recommendations:

- a) The content of the report was noted.

Actions/further information to be provided:

The Cabinet Member for community services to provide an update to all members of the Council on the progress of the CPL's.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

10/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 10]

The next meeting will be held on 21 November 2013.

Chairman