

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 21 November 2013 at Committee Room C, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday 15 January 2014.

**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

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

Apologies were received from Alan Young. Richard Walsh substituted for Alan Young.

Due to a prior appointment Robert Evans arrived late.

**2/13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 26 SEPTEMBER 2013 [Item 2]**

The minutes of 26 September 2013 were agreed by members of the Committee as an accurate record of that meeting.

**3/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were none.

**4/13 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were none.

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

No issues had been referred to the Cabinet at the last meeting, so there were no responses to report.

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

The recommendations tracker and forward work programme were noted.

**7/13 HALF-YEAR OUTCOMES-BASED PERFORMANCE REPORT ON VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE IN SURREY [Item 8]**

**Declarations of interest:**

None.

**Witnesses:**

Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Mary Burguieres, Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager introduced the report to members of the committee, and stated that this was the first time the service had received timely performance information about Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Surrey Community Action. Having this type of information would help the service understand the

needs of the local community better and would also ensure better outcomes for residents.

2. A Member of the Committee asked what checks were being done on volunteers before they could start volunteering. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager explained that in most cases volunteers would require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The need for a DBS would be dictated by the voluntary organisation.
3. Another Member went on to ask what costs were involved with DBS checks and if there was anything the County Council could do to support these costs. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager explained that in some cases bigger voluntary infrastructure organisations may have in-house DBS checking facilities, however smaller ones without this service may find it harder to cover the costs for DBS checking. The Cabinet Member for Community Services stated that the County Council gave money to support the infrastructure of voluntary bureaux. The cost of DBS checks was part of the infrastructure support offered by the County Council. It was noted that costs for DBS checks should be included as part of the VCFS infrastructure organisation's business plan. The Cabinet Member for Community Services expressed her support for the new outcomes-based framework which would show how priorities were being met and how taxpayers' money was being used.
4. Members of the Committee raised concerns over the fact that funding was only proposed for one year, whereas in the past it had been granted on a 3-year basis. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager stated that the service aspired to return to 3-year funding arrangements and the introduction of a new outcomes-based performance management framework for VCFS infrastructure was a positive step in ensuring this could be achieved. The Cabinet Member for Community Services went on to comment that the County Council had met with the Chairman of Surrey Compact to discuss issues around volunteering pressures. To progress to funding on a 3-year basis the County Council would require the necessary information and evidence on outcomes from voluntary infrastructure organisations.
5. Members of the Committee asked whether there were any issues around getting the required specific information from voluntary infrastructure organisations. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager explained that CVSs and Volunteer Bureaux gathered information which was then collated by colleagues from the service. Colleagues from the service would then visit the bureaux and look at the systems in place. The service has been disciplined with the information it used and did not ask for any information that was not necessary.

6. A question was asked about whether local committees had been included in the discussions around the new outcomes-based performance framework. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager stated that she would be meeting with the Community Partnership Manager to discuss involvement with the local committees.
7. Some Members of the Committee expressed concern that the amount of information being requested by the service would be burdensome to some VCFS infrastructure organisations. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager went on to state that the information requested of VCFS infrastructure organisations, was always relevant and necessary to these organisations business plans. The service would provide expertise and would collate the information, ensuring there was no extra burden.
8. Members of the Committee asked whether key trends could be reported on a quarterly basis. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager confirmed that this would be possible, however, as the outcomes based performance framework was relatively new, the service would need at least a year before trends could be reported.
9. Turning attention to paragraph 17 in the report, a member of the Committee asked if there were any plans to merge any of the VCFS infrastructure organisations to save costs. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager stated that there was no intelligence stating that any of the VCFS infrastructure organisations were planning to merge, however discussions were underway around the effectiveness of joined up working. The Cabinet Member for Community Services stated that any merger would have to be the initiative of the VCFS infrastructure organisation itself.
10. A Member of the Committee commented on the possibility of merging Voluntary Action Elmbridge and Voluntary Support North Surrey. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager stated that Voluntary Support North Surrey covered a wider geographical area, one part of which was Elmbridge.
11. Members raised concerns that '35% of organisations stated they did not have a business plan in place'. The Cabinet Member for Community Services explained that the new framework would give VCFS infrastructure organisations the opportunity to learn and improve ways of working. The Policy and Strategic Partnership Lead Manager explained that over 1000 volunteers were placed in the first half of 2013/14; however there were also a large number of people who had registered to volunteer but had not been placed in a voluntary role. The Committee queried whether there was an adequate age spectrum

for the voluntary activities available and the Policy and Strategic Partnership lead manager stressed the importance of questioning and determining why potential volunteers were not placed.

### **Recommendations**

#### **It is recommended that officers,**

- a) Share VCFS performance and outcomes data with local committees if requested.
  
- b) Bring a report to the Select Committee in July 2014 with full year performance information analysis and trends.

#### **Actions/further information to be provided**

None

#### **Committee Next Steps:**

None

### **8/13 SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE UPDATE: 2013-16 ACTION PLAN REVIEW [Item 7]**

#### **Declarations of interest:**

None.

#### **Witnesses:**

Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Russell Pearson, Head of Fire and Rescue, Chief Fire Officer, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Rob Jamieson, Asset Strategy Partner Projects Officer

Eddie Roberts, Area Manager East Area Command

Julia McDonald, Policy Officer

#### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The report was introduced by the Head of Fire and Rescue who explained that the Public Safety Plan (PSP) had been extended to cover 2011 - 2020. The service had felt the plan required some updating due to a range of factors including population growth. So far there had been positive results in the journey to achieve the 12 PSP outcomes.
  
2. A Member of the Committee asked when the work to replace Guildford fire station would commence. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that work had been delayed due to the discovery of archaeologically significant items but that had commenced on 11 November 2013.
  
3. The Member went on to ask if a location for a new fire station in the Elmbridge area had been identified. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that proposals for a new fire station in Elmbridge would progress during 2014 alongside the public consultation. The chosen

location for the fire station would depend on other fire related work going on in the County. The Asset Strategy Partner Projects Officer explained that it was difficult to find a suitable location for a fire station in Hersham which had good access out of the town.

4. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that the Sir Ken Knight report could possibly affect the PSP, in which case a further update would be required next year.

*Mr Robert Evans joined the meeting at 11.44*

5. A Member of the Committee stated that his understanding of the discussion at one of the public meetings for the Spelthorne consultation was that an interim consultation report would be made widely available. The Policy Officer stated that the intention had been to make it clear at the meeting that the report would be produced for the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet Associate for project progression purposes rather than for publication to a wider audience, and that any further sharing of the report would be at the discretion of those Members. The Policy Officer said that she would send through the consultation report with confirmation from the Chairman of the Committee
6. Members of the Committee asked if there had been anyone in favour of the Spelthorne proposal. The Head of Fire and Rescue commented that there had been negative public reaction to the proposal; however, a for the proposal had to be put forward as part of the plan. The Area Manager East Area Command stated that a feedback meeting for the Spelthorne proposal had been organised with stakeholders for Wednesday 27 November, 10-11am in County Hall.
7. Members of the Committee raised concerns around the Spelthorne consultation report going to Cabinet before it could be scrutinised by the Select Committee. The Cabinet Member for Community Services stated that she would make a request for the report to be delayed so that the Committee could see it first. She went onto further state that she understood the Committee's frustrations but that delaying the report to Cabinet would affect the budget.
8. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that the report going to Cabinet in December would provide a holistic picture to the Cabinet. Efforts would be made to ensure that the Committee could view the report before it is presented to Cabinet in December. The Head of Fire and Rescue felt there was strong merit to the proposal which the Cabinet would be considering.
9. Concern was expressed over the low response rate in the consultation report and it was asked if costs for the proposal could be disclosed.

The Head of Fire and Rescue stated that he was happy with the numbers of responses in the consultation report. He went onto explain that both Sunbury and Staines fire stations were in a bad state of repair, and therefore a positive outcome of the proposal would be a new modern fire station being built. Only when details from the consultation report were available would final costs be finalised. The details relating to cost would be included in the final report to Cabinet.

10. The Head of Fire and Rescue reported that the cost of a new fire station was approximately £3.5million, however he was not in a position to confirm cost of any specific new fire station, .The Asset Strategy Partner Projects Officer explained that the money set aside for a fire station in Spelthorne was only an estimate and that there was no project in place to identify real costs. The site of Staines fire station was not owned by the Council but had a long lease attached to it.
11. A Member of the Committee raised concerns over the costs associated with attending false alarms. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that attendance at false alarms had significantly reduced over the years. When an alarm was sounded, particularly at commercial properties, checks were made to ensure it was a true fire.
12. It was asked if there were any threats to the capital budget and if the Service was confident the capital to deploy the plan was available. The Head of Fire and Rescue explained that there was a risk when trying to identify the right location for fire stations. Working closely with the Property Service, the Head of Fire and Rescue was confident the correct capital budget for the project had been identified. The Asset Strategy Partner Projects Officer stated that the capital allocated to the project was based on estimates. The Property Service had since found that the estimates for new projects were less than the previous allocated estimates.
13. Select Committee Members were encouraged to attend the consultation feedback session on Wednesday 27 November in County Hall.

**Recommendations:**

- a) That the draft updated public safety plan come to Select Committee for scrutiny next year.
- b) That the final consultation report to be circulated to select committee as soon as available for comment back to the service.
- c) That the Cabinet Member for Community Services and the Chairman agree how best to consult with the Select Committee on the options for fire cover in Spelthorne prior to their consideration by Cabinet in December 2013.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None

**Committee Next Steps:**

None

**9/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 9]**

The next meeting will be held on 28 November 2013.

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**Chairman**