

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **RESIDENT EXPERIENCE BOARD** held at 10.00 am on 13 October 2016 at Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Board at its meeting on Tuesday, 22 November 2016.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Mr Colin Kemp (Chairman)
- \* Rachael I. Lake (Vice-Chairman)
- Mr Mike Bennison
- \* Mr Robert Evans
- \* Mrs Yvonna Lay
- \* Mrs Jan Mason
- \* Mr John Orrick
- Ms Barbara Thomson
- \* Mr Karan Persand
- Mr Alan Young
- Mr Ramon Gray
- \* Ms Denise Turner-Stewart
- Mr Richard Wilson
- Mr Richard Walsh

**Ex officio Members:**

Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Chairman of the County Council  
Mr Nick Skellett CBE, Vice-Chairman of the County Council

**Substitute Members:**

Mr Mike Bennison  
Ms Barbara Thomson  
Mr Alan Young  
Mr Ramon Gray  
Mr Richard Wilson

**In attendance:**

Mr Richard Walsh, Cabinet Member for Localities and Community Wellbeing

### **73/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Mike Bennison, Barbara Thomson, Alan Young and Ramon Gray.

Richard Wilson had agreed to attend as a substitute for Mike Bennison but was unable to attend the meeting at late notice and gave his apologies.

### **74/16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING [Item 2]**

Minutes from the previous meeting would be available at the next Board meeting on Tuesday 22 November.

### **75/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests from Members in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting were received.

### **76/16 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

Three public questions were received from Surrey resident Sue Johnson. The questions and their responses are attached to these minutes as **Annex A**.

As Ms Johnson was unable to attend the meeting, supplementary questions were tabled at the meeting. The Chairman decided to prepare answers to these supplementary questions after the meeting.

### **77/16 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SCRUTINY BOARD [Item 5]**

There were no responses from Cabinet to report.

### **78/16 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]**

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

None

#### **Witnesses:**

Peter Milton, Head of Cultural Services

1. The Chairman explained to the Board that the Forward Work Programme needed to be amended significantly after the publication of the agenda. As part of these changes, the Chairman explained that the Flooding Engagement item would be held in early Spring 2017 as part of Environment and Infrastructure's Flooding Strategy consultation.

2. As result of the changes, an up to date version of the Forward Work Programme would be available at the next meeting.
3. Regarding the Recommendation Tracker, the Board noted the responses and information enclosed in the agenda pack.
4. The Head of Cultural Services provided the Board with an update regarding the Registration Service's recommendations, REB24/2016 – 29/2016 & 31/2016, as outlined in the Tracker; the response is attached to these minutes as **Annex B**.
5. The Board was informed that Phase Three of the MARS software package required further resource to be completed, and as a result was not being progressed any further. It was explained that this final Phase was key for helping the Registration Service realise planned savings, as well as freeing up staff time.
6. Members of the Board discussed potential avenues to explore to obtain the funding required to complete Phase Three of the project. Members were in full support of the Service and it was suggested that the funding could potentially be secured following a recommendation to all Members asking for contributions from their Member's Allowance towards the project.
7. Though the Board was keen to make a recommendation at the meeting in support of continuing Phase Three of the project, the Head of Cultural Services agreed to keep the Board informed of any negotiations and developments from IMT regarding this work.

**79/16 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S HERITAGE SERVICES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FUTURE STRATEGY [Item 7]**

**Declarations of interest:**

None

**Witnesses:**

Barrie Higham, Heritage Manager  
Nowal Shaikhley, Archaeological Operations Manager  
Julian Pooley, Public Services and Engagement Manager  
Michael Page, County Archivist  
Peter Milton, Head of Cultural Services

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman explained the Board that the meeting was being held at the Surrey History Centre (SHC) in Woking so that Members could have the opportunity to experience what the service provides Surrey's residents first-hand.
2. A Member questioned Officers regarding income generation, asking for Officers to clarify SHC's current position, particularly around room hire, and for the Officers to expand on any ideas of future income streams in the future. It was explained that SHC has two rooms which

generate income from room hire. The spaces are available to external organisations and individuals, as well as internally for Surrey County Council employees and teams. Officers emphasised that they receive lots of room hire enquiries and gave examples of organisations that have expressed their interest in the rooms.

3. Officers highlighted some concerns with regards to room hire. Firstly, the SHC rooms were frequently booked by internal Surrey County Council teams and officers without charge. It was also noted that SHC was unable to generate income from tea and coffee refreshments from internal bookings either.
4. The second concern was regarding out of hours booking enquiries, which were very frequent. Due to the original setup of the building, for any out of hours bookings, the whole building would need to be opened up, operational and staffed. As these costs would need to be recovered by a prospective hirer, these limitations often acted as a deterrent for business.
5. The Heritage Manager proposed making the meeting rooms and foyer independent to the rest of the building in a move to maximise the business potential of the Centre. Continuing, Officers advised Members that the alarm system would need to be modified for the rooms and foyer to be separated from the whole building alarm system, allowing this section to be used out of business hours by other organisations.
6. The Board recommended that Officers prepared a business case including: the projected cost of the modifications to the building's alarm system; projected income from room hire, both during and out of operational hours; projected costs for caretaking of the building for outside hirers.
7. Members proposed the following suggestions for Officers to explore:
  - a) Withdraw the SHC from the Surrey County Council booking system so that the rooms cannot be booked free of charge for common use.
  - b) Restrict internal teams to specific days for booking the SHC rooms so that so that the SHC can accept additional external bookings at prime times in the working day.
  - c) Charging internal teams at a full or discounted rate for hiring the SHC rooms.

The Cabinet Member for Localities and Community Wellbeing expressed support for the suggestions raised, provided that the business cases for each option were assured and that any changes made were after consultation with the appropriate Council policies around room booking.

8. A Member expressed concern with the delays the service may encounter from Property Services in retrieving a quote and suggested that Officers approached the independent company who installed the original alarm system and to obtain a quote from there.
9. A Member asked for clarification on what geographical area the SHC covered within its archive. Officers explained that although the

County's boundaries have altered over time, there was no hardened rule for the archive. Most new records received were according to the modern County border, though for some major projects and other statutory depositories the ancient County borders were used.

10. A Member queried accessing records and whether there was a charge for this service. Officers explained that free of charge access to records held within the archives was a statutory right. For some subscription services, such as Ancestry.com, for which Surrey Libraries held a corporate licence, Surrey Libraries users received free access when using IT equipment at the Centre or other Surrey Library branches. It was noted that income from royalty fees from Ancestry.com was also a good supply of income to the Service.
11. A discussion was had around the draft Heritage Strategy, exploring details within the three key themes identified in the strategy: Discovering, Preserving and Celebrating. The Board commended the work completed on the draft Strategy and fully supported the key themes identified within it. The Board also recommended that Officers worked to receive Cabinet Member sign-off for the Strategy in time for the April 2017 submission deadline for The National Archives Accreditation Scheme.
12. It was noted by Members that events organised by the SHC took bookings in advance, therefore it was put forward to the Officers to have advertising material also distributed to Members who may also publicise the event to raise more awareness and maximise numbers.
13. Officers informed the Board that Cultural Services had made a lot of improvements in cross promotion of their services; it was also noted that Surrey Heritage was very successful at "piggy-backing" major County and National events and generating a presence and platform for self-promotion.
14. Members suggested that Surrey Matters should consider running a feature article on the Surrey History Centre to raise awareness and promote a wider understanding of its services
15. The Heritage Manager informed the Board that the service had links with BBC Surrey Radio. Members commended this relationship and suggested that this resource continued to be explored and used to help broadcast the promotion of the SHC and to inform residents of the high quality service it provided.
16. The Chairman invited Officers to raise any concerns of their own with the Board before closing the meeting. Officers highlighted that the Council strategies and policies regarding the management of modern County records were in need of thorough review and improved implementation. Officers continued to express that manual and digital record management was not robust enough. As an example, records of Council decisions may only be kept in email form. Officers did not feel confident that records were being kept as thoroughly as they ought to be.

17. The Board noted the concerns raised and recommended that Officers pursue a refresh of the Council's modern record keeping strategy.
18. The Cabinet Member explained that when taking proposals to Cabinet, it was helpful to have support from scrutiny Members, as a collective voice was stronger than a single voice. The Board agreed and suggested that a visit by Cabinet to the SHC might be beneficial.

**Recommendations:**

The Board recommends;

- Officers explore options for generating further income from room hire at the Surrey History Centre (SHC), including:
  1. withdrawing the SHC from the Council internal booking system;
  2. restricting internal teams to specific days for booking the SHC rooms;
  3. charging internal teams at a full or discounted rate for hiring the SHC rooms;to allow better public availability throughout the working day.
- Officers prepare a business case including: the projected cost of the modifications to the building's alarm system; projected income from room hire, both during and out of operational hours; projected costs for caretaking of the building for outside hirers.
- That Surrey Matters runs a feature article on the Surrey History Centre to raise awareness and promote a wider understanding of its services.
- That when Surrey Matters runs any article with historical content or references that they contact the Surrey History Centre for materials or quotes, whenever possible.
- Officers supply Members with promotional materials for Surrey History Centre events and for Members to spread the word locally for these events.
- That Cabinet pursue an update of the Council's born-digital records strategy, to ensure the long term preservation of key decisions given electronically.
- Officers continue to develop the Heritage Strategy on the agreed key themes of Discovering, Preserving and Celebrating Surrey's Heritage in conjunction with the Cabinet Member, and with a shared target for completion in time for the April 2017 submission deadline for The National Archives Accreditation Scheme.

**80/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 8]**

The next public meeting of the Board will take place on Tuesday 22 November 2016 at County Hall.

Meeting ended at: 2.20 pm

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**Chairman**

**Public Questions to Resident Experience Board  
Thursday 13 October 2016, Surrey History Centre**

**Question 1 from Sue Johnson**

Having heard about the Resident Experience Board in Surrey Matters, I am pleased to see that in the latest edition, unlike the last time, a reference was given for the Board's website. What measures are being taken to ensure the Council/Board get their promotion right first time? As the majority of all Board and Committee meetings are held in the daytime at County Hall this disadvantages those residents who work and are unable to travel to Kingston. What measures are being taken to ensure this Board is made more accessible and is effectively promoted to residents across Surrey so that others can contribute their experiences in the future?

**Reply:**

The Resident Experience Board has received a mention in two recent editions of Surrey Matters and would like to thank the Surrey Matters team for the inclusion within this countywide magazine. The Board aims to engage with Surrey's residents to learn from their experiences of living and working in and around the County; and by working with Surrey Matters we hoped to raise awareness of the Board, what it does and what it is about. We have learnt from both our appearances in Surrey Matters that there is room for improvement, and will continue to work closely with our colleagues to promote the Board better across the County.

The majority of Surrey County Council's Boards and Committees meeting during the daytime within the working week, although seven of our eleven Local Committees and the Corporate Parenting Board meet in the evening or late afternoon. As many County Councillors are also Members of their local Borough or District Councils, Surrey's meetings are scheduled during the working day to avoid clashes with other local committee meetings throughout the county. Surrey's Board and Committee meeting dates are also published online for each Board and Committee, often over a year in advance, and notification of meetings are published in public Council buildings, such as libraries.

Our website, also offers residents to sign up to notifications for Boards and Committees that are of interest to them on an opt-in subscription arrangement.

In a bid to make meetings more accessible to residents that cannot attend during the day, the Resident Experience Board, along with Council, Cabinet, Planning and Regulatory Committee, Surrey Police & Crime Panel and Woking Joint Committee all have their meetings webcast live and are also archived for catch-up for six months. However on occasions such as today's meeting of the Resident Experience Board at the Surrey History Centre, webcasting facilities are not available.

Democratic Services has begun using social media this year and direct engagement with Surrey's Boards and Committees is welcomed on their Twitter account, [@SCCDemocracy](https://twitter.com/SCCDemocracy). Over the summer, Democratic Services officers have been looking into making it easier for residents to get involved with the Board; such as by suggesting topics for scrutiny, and providing information on attending meetings and giving evidence. Though this is still in development it is hoped that new tools will be available by the end of the year. The Board also publishes a newsletter relating to news and stories from Council services within its remit available at: <https://surreyreb.interests.me/>

Despite all of this, very little can beat direct input and involvement with Surrey's residents such as yourself. I would like to thank you for your questions to the Board and hope that other residents may be encouraged to get involved in the near future too.

**Colin Kemp  
Chairman of the Resident Experience Board**

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**Question 2 from Sue Johnson**

Some residents may wish to report local problems or issues to their Local or County council; however, due to a lack of clarity around where responsibility or ownership lies, some people may be put off as there is no single point of contact to refer to. Has Surrey County Council considered a joint contact approach with District and Borough Councils and otherwise, what plans are in place to communicate the different roles and responsibilities of Surrey County Council and the eleven District and Borough Councils to residents in a clear and simple manner?

**Reply:**

All District and Borough Councils have a local committee which is always a good point of contact for local residents to ask questions, report problems and find out what is going on in their area. Details of your local committee can be found [here](#).

The joint Borough and County approach is one that the county have been promoting over the last couple of years. Woking Borough Council was the first to have a Joint Committee, which has been operating for two years now. Woking Joint Committee is made up of both County and Borough councils with officers from both authorities. These meetings are held during the evening and public engagement is encouraged on all agenda items. I am pleased to say Spelthorne will also be using this joint model from later this year and I know many other authorities are looking at adopting the joint model too.

As to communicating roles and responsibilities, although each authority has some clear duties the delivery of these can often be a partnership role between Parish, Borough, District and County councils working together to deliver the best service for our residents. I would suggest a good point of contact is your local committee and they can obtain a reply from either authority to any question you may have.

**Colin Kemp**  
**Chairman of the Resident Experience Board**  
**13 October 2016**



### **Question 3 from Sue Johnson**

My local library, Ash Library, is the heart of the community and a lovely place to visit, relax and meet people. Recently I have noticed that some changes to the library has caused it to lose its 'community feel'. Library staff are no longer able to personally issue or return books; communication with customers seems to be discouraged at the main counter by a physical barrier; book reservation collections is now self-service, resulting in a loss of privacy on what customers choose to read; changes to the way book club members can collect their books which leads to customer inconvenience, and losing the personal welcome from staff as a result of constant personnel changes. I would like to know why these changes have been made to Ash Library and what can now be done to get back that 'community feel' that has been taken away?

#### **Reply:**

Thank you for your kind comments about Ash library and its importance to the community. Against a background of declining local government funding in Surrey we have sought to keep all our libraries open. You will be aware that across the UK many public libraries have closed or are closing. This has meant however to achieve savings while maintaining the service we have had to look at everything we do and often change the way we do things.

We have been introducing self service across all libraries in Surrey since 2005. Having self service helps us deal with declining staff numbers in a positive way in that staff are released to interact with and help borrowers with things like homework queries or computer help. Staff still aim to provide good customer care and will always be available at and around the self service machines to support borrowers.

The self service has proved popular with many of our users as it reduces queues at the counter and many customers report that they feel an increased sense of privacy when issuing their own books- particularly important in a community library like Ash where staff may know their customers and their families.

The reserved books have been moved to a trolley near the self service machines for those who want to pick up their books quickly. The service appreciates that people may not always want their choice of requested books to be visible. If customers do not want their books kept on the reserve shelf then we are able to store them behind the counter for collection if you put a note on the request.

The library service agrees that the counter at Ash is rather higher than we would like nowadays. Unfortunately there is a high cost in changing this which we cannot meet at present but we do encourage staff to move away from behind the desk and proactively interact with library users looking for help.

Book clubs are encouraged to issue their books at the self service again to reduce pressure on staffing. If anyone needs help from the staff then they would be more than willing to assist.

The library service has gone through some staffing changes in the last few years and the staff are sometimes working at other libraries to gain experience or training which helps them provide a better service when they return to Ash but the main personnel at Ash are the same staff as have always been there.

With the introduction of these new procedures the staff now have more time to interact with the wider community and encourage a broader audience. Earlier in the summer all the classes from the local infant school came for visits. The staff had time to show them how the library works, why they can find in the library and how to use it, and encourage the children to bring their families to the library. Ash library has also had a very successful Reading Challenge in the summer for the children and the staff have other ideas for projects in the future.

With all this now happening after a period of change we hope that Ash will be in a position to become even more involved with the local area and enhance the community feel that it has had.

Thank you for your continuing support to the library service.

**Colin Kemp**  
**Chairman of the Resident Experience Board**  
**13 October 2016**

**REB24/2016 – 29/2016 & 31/2016**

Update from Peter Milton, Head of Cultural Services:

IMT gave the Registration Service a demonstration of the MARS software package on 5 October. The demonstration went well and MARS will provide a replacement to the current system (SMACS) as well as providing some enhancements which include automating outstanding fee and notice of marriage processes and sending automatic customer emails.

The first phase of MARS (Guildford and Leatherhead area ceremonies) is due to be handed over to the service at the end of October with a view to going live mid November. The second phase will include migrating the Weybridge area ceremonies and this is expected to be delivered in December.

The MARS Project Board were informed on 10 October that currently IMT only have the development resources up until December 2016, which means that Phase Three of MARS:-

- the public being able to book and pay for their ceremony online;

is currently in jeopardy, as are the additional enhancements that are required to ORBIT which will considerably improve the customer experience.

This is obviously a considerable concern to the Registration Service, and there will be a need, working with IMT, to try to find additional funding to complete the MARS project and make the necessary enhancements to ORBIT.

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