

MINUTES of the meeting of the **RESIDENT EXPERIENCE BOARD** held at 10.30 am on 19 November 2015 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 13 January 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
- * Mr Chris Pitt
- * Ms Barbara Thomson
- * Mr Alan Young
- * Mr Saj Hussain
- * Mr Ramon Gray

- * denotes attended
- A denotes apologies

Ex officio Members:

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

14/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies for absence were received from Robert Evans.

15/15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 16 OCTOBER 2015 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

16/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

No declarations of interest were received.

17/15 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

18/15 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SCRUTINY BOARD [Item 5]

There were no responses to report.

19/15 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

The Board noted that all actions and recommendations on the Recommendation Tracker remained outstanding.

The Board was informed that two pieces of scrutiny work were to be completed around the Library service; the first as an overview of the Surrey Library Service and the second looking at the changing role of the Library Service in relation to new demands and pressures facing a modern library service.

The Chairman suggested that a workshop for the Board to look at 2016/17 budgets would be arranged for January 2016.

The Board was informed that a formal response to the “Enabling Closer Working Between the Emergency Services” consultation was submitted to Cabinet for response. The response outlined that the Board agreed with and supports collaboration between the emergency services, but had reservations about the possible governance structure proposed in the consultation.

Actions:

Surrey Libraries and 2016/17 Budgets were added to the Forward Work Programme.

Alan Young arrived at 10.41am
David Hodge arrived at 10.42am

20/15 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE IN HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT [Item 7]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

David Hodge, Leader of the Council
Mark Irons, Head of Customer Services
Mike Dawson, Customer Service and Improvement Manager, Environment and Infrastructure
John Furey – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding
Richard Walsh, Cabinet Member for Localities and Community Wellbeing
Richard Wilson – Chairman of Member Reference Group on Customer Service Excellence
Mr Thompson, Surrey Resident
Mr David Innocent, Surrey Resident
Mr Roger Spolton, Surrey Resident
Mr John Hoskins, Surrey Resident
Ms Marianne Meinke, Surrey Resident
Mr Ross Daniell, Surrey Resident

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. Officers introduced the Customer Service Excellence and the importance held for it by the Council.
Officers suggested that the Resident Experience Board represents a desire to improve the Surrey residents' experience with the Council, and that Customer Service Excellence helps provide a research grounded framework, focused on driving improvement to public services.
2. Officers outlined the process for achieving the Customer Service Excellence Award and that each improvement framework is based upon a review of the service in question, and the Award is retained after addressing areas of improvement after independent annual review.
3. Officers informed Members that, as well as Surrey Highways, Business Operations, Finance, Customer Services and the Community Partnership Team had achieved the Customer Service Excellence Award and that other Surrey services are working towards accreditation.
4. The Board was informed by Highways Officers that despite retaining the Customer Service Excellence Award for another year, Highways viewed customer service as part of its ongoing improvement scheme and thanked the Customer Service Member Reference Group for its support.
The external assessment of Highways highlighted further areas for improvement: using customer insight to improve the service and improving communication with customers throughout the life of their enquiry/complaint and keeping customers informed with updates.

5. Officers reported to the Board of the introduction of a new works management system which is now linked in to the main contractor database. The new software improves links within the County Contact Centre and that new features allow residents and customers to view photographs and responses to reported road faults and enquiries. The Customer Service Excellence annual review found this as an item of best practice.
Officers also reported the launching of the www.roadworks.org website, designed to be more informative for customers, providing more information on roadwork schemes, diversions and signposting customers to self-service channels online.
6. When addressing improvements from customer insight, Officers reported of the introduction of the Highways Customer Panel, a survey of which was tabled in the report, though no improvements had been drafted from the results from the panel as it was in it's infancy.
7. Members raised queries over the timeline for Highways enquires and complaints. Officers clarified that reports to Highways are inspected within five days, after which a decision is taken dependent on the severity of the enquiry judged by an assessment of risk to the public. Complaints are taken through the County's general complaint procedures with the Customer Relations Team.
Officers confirmed that where enquiries are logged by a number of customers they will receive the same enquiry ticket number, but each report is logged individually. The practice assists officers with their information gathering for each enquiry.
8. Members expressed concerns of increasing workload pressures for local highways teams with limited numbers of staff and resource. Officers explained that the increased responsibility would give the local teams more powers and responsibilities to manage their orders and resources. The Cabinet Member confirmed that a qualified Highways Officer would be recruited to each local team to deal with the new responsibilities.
9. Members requested that a publicity document be created to provide residents with further guidance on the Highways enquiry procedures. Officers reported a newsletter had been created for this purpose and that Highways was evaluating further customer information before circulating publically.
10. Members raised the point that all Members of Council can help their local residents by endeavoring to find answers to their queries from information already made available to them, consequently reducing some of the workload and pressure from local Highways Officers. This position was backed by the Leader.

David Hodge left at 11.22am.

11. Resident Mr Daniell joined the Board to discuss his experience of Highways. Mr Daniell, a resident of the Knaphill area, had experience of reporting issues of antisocial driving. Mr Daniell reported that communication from Highways was often slow and outside the response targets.

Mr Daniell had received erroneous notifications claiming works had been completed when in fact they hadn't started. In his experience the error fell on the customer to chase up and instigate corrections. Officers acknowledged that an issue with email notifications had resulted in erroneous updates being sent to customers and that the issue had been addressed.

Mr Daniell took an issue to his local joint committee but did not receive a satisfactory answer. At the joint committee meeting he was promised a meeting with a local highways officer, however this was not forthcoming.

Members queried whether there was a mechanism to feed back issues and enquiries brought up at joint committee meetings. Highways Officers outlined that the service relies on the officers present at the meetings to feed the enquiries back onto the highways system.

Mr Daniell commented on the lack of communication of decisions made by Highways in response to enquiries, especially around how officers reached a decision or decide a cause of action for each enquiry.

Officers reported the service was actively promoting a culture of openness and honesty with their customers. Highways contractors are required to photograph completed works which are then linked with information available to customers online.

12. Resident Mr Thompson, a resident of Epsom, joined the Board to discuss his experience of Highways.

Mr Thompson commended the staff at the Surrey Contact Centre but queried whether their training was always the same as some staff appear to work differently to others.

Officers responded; Contact Centre staff received the same training before operating the front line service but that there is no suggested script for calls, leading to potentially different working methods around the same systems.

When reporting issues with highways furniture, such as lamp posts or signs, by asset number Mr Thompson has experienced occasions where additional information has been requested. On occasion this information has led to apparent errors in the asset cataloging system. He suggested that highways assets are catalogued more accurately in order for customers to report faults easier.

Highways Officers conceded that enquiries should only require an asset number and road name however Contact Centre staff had been asked to acquire additional information as a method of gathering information for highways officers on the ground. The additional information also generates a background for risks of the area with the enquiry.

Mr Thompson also commented on out of date signage left on highways after road works or road events have passed or expired. Officers, Members and the Cabinet Member agreed the issue required addressing and confirmed that steps were being undertaken.

13. Molesey resident, Mr Hoskin joined the Board to discuss his experience of Highways.

Mr Hoskins reported that he had seen an improvement in communication from Highways in the past twelve months, citing the text service in particular.

Mr Hoskins had reported issues with contractors leaving a completed roadworks site with debris and loose material across the highway surface. Questions around potential damage to vehicles and personal safety for road users, especially cyclists, were raised.

Highways Officers reported they expected contractors to fully clear away the road surface and that local highways officers spot check completed works and are responsible for reporting any back issues. Officers also highlighted that in some cases responses to an enquiry highlight that a major repair is the required solution, yet part of the road defect requires an initial temporary repair.

Members queried whether this information was reported back to customers and Officers conceded it was not as a matter of course.

14. Ms Meinke, a resident of Woking, joined the Board to discuss his experience of Highways. Ms Meinke informed the Board of the varied range of enquiries and complaints she had reported to Highways covering fly-posting, blocked drains, double-yellow lines, street lighting.

Ms Meinke's primary example was that of a loose drain cover that she originally reported to Highways three years previously. Initially the drain cover was deemed not strong enough and a repair was made, however the issue returned.

A year later Highways informed Ms Meinke that the drain cover belonged to Thames Water and that they should undertake a suitable repair. After contacting Thames Water directly, Ms Meinke was advised the drain cover was the property of Surrey County Council. Ms Meinke initiated an official report into the problem which highlighted serious issues with communication. The report was completed in July 2015 yet the drain cover remained an issue.

Ms Meinke re-reported the issue via email and online and informed the Board that obtaining reference numbers for enquiries has improved greatly. The last communication received from Highways suggested the drain cover belonged to Thames Water. The issue remained outstanding.

Officers apologised to Ms Meinke for the problems experienced with the drain cover and informed Members of the Board that Highways can approach utility companies regarding highway faults of their concern, however does not have any authority to ensure the companies action any repair. Officers also conceded that this issue had a link to the

required improvement of the asset register, which was underway. The Cabinet Member agreed that there were issues with utility companies and roadwork sites and informed the Board that options were being explored to improve this situation in the future.

15. Mr Spolton, a resident of South Cheam, joined the Board to discuss his experience of Highways.

Mr Spolton queried whether checks to Surrey roads being carried out every three months was sufficient and raised that checks should be more frequent.

Officers reported that the frequency of inspections to roads varies depending on the nature of the road in question and that the Highways' checks of roads in Surrey fall within accordance with a national code of practice. Officers also commented that increasing checks would incur increased costs and funding was not currently available to accommodate this.

Mr Spolton also commented on the delay in repairs of street furniture after road incidents and recommended better communication between the Council and Surrey Police in order to resolve damage sooner. Officers reported that damage to street furniture is considered as damage to Council property and that delays were caused when gathering payment for repairs from motor insurance companies prior to repair works being carried out.

Mr Spolton queried whether measures were in place to ensure a continuity of work quality when changing contractors. The Cabinet Member informed the Board that the current contractor, Kier, had worked very closely with the Council to improve the service and efficiency. The Kier contract was valid for fourteen years and contained reviews and break clauses. The Cabinet Member, Board and Officers noted that the Kier contract falls within the remit of the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board.

16. Mr Innocent was the last resident to join the Board to discuss his experience of Highways.

Mr Innocent commented that responses and communication from Highways was very poor. An enquiry, reported in July, regarding overgrown vegetation around a junction following a road traffic incident was cited. It was reported that communication only became forthcoming after Mr Innocent contacted Cllr Richard Walsh.

Highways Officers apologised for the poor communication around the enquiry and thanked Mr Innocent, and all the resident witnesses present, for raising real-world issues as they outlined that the Highways service had further to go in order to improve customer service.

Officers informed the Board that the service can receive between ten and twelve thousand enquires a month and that, although not an excuse, it was possible that some enquiries get missed.

17. Members thanked all the residents for attending the Board meeting and concurred that the point had been made that improvement to communication was required. Members agreed that Members of Council could do more to manage residents' expectations and that

residents' needed to be aware that there is a degree of prioritisation to roadworks.

18. Members queried the process of contacting the utility companies and questioned whether it was usual practice to assume the customer makes the enquiry with them.

Officers reported that although Highways notifies utility companies under Section 81 of the Building Act 1984, the authority has no power to ensure that repair work is carried out. In practice, it was reported that the utility companies were more inclined to respond and repair a fault should a customer contact them directly, rather than the County.

19. Members questioned whether there were any ramifications for contractors should repair work be unsatisfactory, and how often roadwork sites inspected.

Officers reported that checks were a random selection and that if the contractor has not completed work to a satisfactory standard there is a financial penalty; contractors would be required to attend the site again and make good the repair at their own cost.

20. Members questioned whether the Contact Centre could deflect customers when reporting a fault already logged in the Highways system.

Officers replied saying that new systems are improving and that having multiple calls for a single fault can help gather information for highway officers on the ground.

Ms Meinke expressed the opinion customers could feel "fobbed off" if their calls were not dealt with individually.

Recommendations:

That the Board requests that the Highways team:

- Develops the asset management system to ensure that all assets are logged (request update in 3 months)
- Distribute the information leaflet brought to the Board to all Surrey libraries
- Develops a plan of engagement with local and joint committees to enable feedback that is given there to be logged into the main system.
- Write to all residents who attended the Board explaining what went wrong and steps that are being taken to address these issues, and to copy this to the Board.
- Work with County Councillors to emphasise their role in distributing key information to residents.
- Encourage the Member Reference Group to continue monitoring the standard and timeliness of response to residents.

Lunch 13.05pm - 13.40pm

**21/15 MAGNA CARTA 800TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION DEBRIEF
[Item 8]**

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member (formally responsible for the Magna Carta programme)

Peter Milton, Head of Cultural Services

Graham Cook, Project Manager for the 15 June 2015 event

Richard Walsh, Cabinet Member

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers tabled a presentation to debrief the Board on the events and activities celebrating the Magna Carta 800th Anniversary. The presentation only contained information on parts of the celebration which Surrey County Council made a financial contributions. The presentation contained:
 - a. Images of the main anniversary event as well as events leading up to and after 15 June 2015.
 - b. Information on the background and preliminary work at the beginning of the planning process for the event, negotiations and collaborative work with The National Trust, who manage the Magna Carta site.
 - c. A brief overview of the Magna Carta app, created and supported by Royal Holloway.
 - d. The Magna Carta garden exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show, since relocated at the Runnymede Hotel.
 - e. The Magna Carta banner project and the county flag project undertaken by Surrey schools.
 - f. Events, displays of the Salisbury Magna Carta facsimile and David Starkey author talk and book launch event at Guildford Cathedral.
 - g. Events held by the Surrey Ethnic Minorities Forum, promoting the importance of Magna Carta.
 - h. Artwork and plaque unveilings at the Magna Carta site.
 - i. Details of the visits from members of the Royal household at the 15 June 2015 event.
2. Officers reported that an initial bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by the local stakeholder partnership for improvements to Runnymede Meadows had been unsuccessful, but that a second bid of £2m was being prepared for submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund South East Committee for the improvement of access to the site.
3. Members questioned whether there remained any ongoing costs after the Magna Carta event. Officers informed Members that an archiving process would be undertaken to ensure that a record of the anniversary events will be available for future generations. Officers reported ongoing investigations into obtaining a facsimile of the Surrey copy of the Magna Carta dating from 1297, which is owned by the

Australian Parliament, for the use of display and exhibiting in the county. Under the terms of The Juror's loan agreement the National Trust are responsible for the maintenance of the artwork.

4. Members sought clarification of the infrastructure costs outlined in the report and Officers informed Members that the infrastructure costs were for the installation and packing up of stages, portable track ways, towers, audiovisual equipment hire and seating.
5. Members expressed their thanks to the Officers and all Officers involved in the Magna Carta anniversary events, and for ensuring the event came within budget.

22/15 WELFARE REFORM TASK GROUP VERBAL UPDATE [Item 9]

Barbara Thomson reported that the Welfare Reform Task Group had nothing to report and that work was continuing and an update will follow.

23/15 PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SUB-GROUP VERBAL UPDATE [Item 10]

Rachael Lake gave the Board an update from the recent meeting of the Performance and Finance sub-group, at which the sub-group discussed:

1. Socrata, a public online performance analysis tool currently being rolled out across all Surrey services
2. A recommendation from the Council Overview Board to consider the scrutiny of Local Committee Budgets
3. An audit report on Surrey Arts
4. An update on the Fire Transformation Grant.

Recommendations:

1. The Board is impressed with the Socrata tool and feel it is highly valuable in terms of reassuring residents of the service that Surrey provides them. The Board requests that the officers consider a search function for the website and to ensure that relevant information is presented on the pages.
2. The Board would like to see every department that collates performance data included on Socrata by the end of 2015.
3. The Performance and Finance Sub-Group has given consideration to the request from the Council Overview Board that Local Committee budgets be scrutinised by the Resident Experience Board. The Sub-Group does not feel that they can add value to this process and notes that scrutiny arrangements for some of the issues raised are already in place.

The Sub-Group considered the direct benefit to residents, and although they felt that it would be difficult to scrutinise without looking at each individual case, which is done already by the Member and the Local Committee, they agreed it was a benefit to our communities.

The Performance and Finance Sub-Group asks the Board to recommend to Cabinet that they protect this service which is valued by our residents and communities.

4. The Board is satisfied with the progress made by Surrey Arts on the actions in the Management Action Plan, and recommends that Internal Audit conducts a follow-up review in April 2016.
5. That Surrey Arts considers the use of volunteers and looking at its business model.
6. The Board is satisfied with the progress made by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service on the actions in the Management Action Plan, and recommends that Internal Audit conducts a follow-up review in the summer of 2016.

Actions:

- *Officers to send recommendation 1 and 2 to Tim Yarnell.*
- *Colin Kemp to report back to Eber Kington at next Council Overview Board meeting.*
- *Officers to send recommendation 3 to Cabinet.*
- *Officers to send recommendation 4 to Internal Audit and Surrey Arts.*

24/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: [Item 11]

The next full public meeting will be held at 10.30am on 13 January 2016 at the Ashcombe Suite, County Hall.

Meeting ended at: 2.49 pm

Chairman

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