

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **RESIDENT EXPERIENCE BOARD** held at 10.30 am on 19 May 2016 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Board at its meeting on Thursday, 30 June 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
- a Mr Saj Hussain,
- \* Turner-Stewart Denise
- a Mr Ramon Gray

**Ex officio Members:**

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

**In attendance**

Mr Richard Walsh, Cabinet Member for Localities and Community Wellbeing

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

Apologies were received from Saj Hussain and Ramon Gray  
Richard Wilson attended as a substitute for Saj Hussain

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

Corrections to the minutes to be made; Richard Walsh, not Wash; the date of the next meeting was 19 May, not Thursday 9 May; and Alan Young was in attendance. The remainder of the minutes of the meeting on 17 March 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

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

The following declaration of interest was noted:

Jan Mason informed the Board that her son served in the Armed Forces.

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

There were no questions or petitions.

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

There were no responses to report.

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

1. Yvonna Lay and Karan Persand agreed to join the Board's Libraries Task and Finish Group.
2. The Board discussed the responses received from recommendations from previous meetings. It was commented that some of the responses did not fully address the issues raised.
3. A Member referred to recommendation REB 4/2016 which related to the creation of a social media hash- tag and for it to be adopted and used by Trading Standards, as a channel of communication between residents and consumers to report and follow up on issues and complaints raised with the Services. The Member had the opinion that the response to this recommendation was not satisfactory. The Chairman noted this and informed the Board that a report on Trading Standards communications was planned for the July meeting, and would address the concerns raised.
4. The Vice-Chairman gave an update to the Board about the Performance and Finance Sub-Group meeting which took place on 26 April 2016. The Board was told that a work programme had been agreed and that the Group intended to scrutinise budgets and future planned savings for Key Services within the remit of the Board at meetings across the year. The

Chairman recommended that the work programmes be circulated to the full Board.

5. The Chairman reminded the Board of its Extraordinary Meeting on Thursday 30 June that would focus on three Surrey Fire and Rescue Service items.
6. A Member informed the Board of developments at West Horsley Place, and the prospective opening of Grange Park Opera. Members agreed that the development may provide an opportunity to promote the County's cultural scene.

**Recommendations:**

1. For the Performance and Finance Sub-Group work programme to be circulated to the full Board.

**7/16 SUPPORTING ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN SURREY [Item 7]**

**Declarations of Interest:**

Jan Mason informed the Board that her son served in the Armed Forces.

**Witnesses:**

Councillor John Kingsbury - Woking Borough Council  
Canon Peter Bruinvels – Surrey CC Civilian-Military Liaison Officer  
Karen Webster -Civil Engagement Officer, 11 Infantry Brigade  
Major Jodie Kennedy-Smith - SO2 Transition, 11 Infantry Brigade  
Wing Commander David Bramley -Branch Secretary, SSAFA Surrey  
James Painter - Community Partnership Manager  
Sarah Goodman - Community Partnership and Committee Officer  
Zafar Iqbal – Senior Policy Officer, Woking Borough Council

**Key points raised during discussion:**

1. Officers introduced the report to the Board and highlighted some of its key points. It was reported that Surrey County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant (the Covenant) in 2012 and that the Covenant's main objective was to ensure that any member of the Armed Forces (AF) community is treated fairly and not put at a disadvantage. The key areas which can be an issue for the AF community in Surrey are education, employment, health, housing, family life, debt, divorce. The Covenant also aims to further support Cadet units, as well as attracting more adult volunteers within the Cadets.
2. The purpose of the review was to raise awareness on how to refer people effectively, consider actions going forward the next few years, to ensure the AF community can benefit and support Surrey's delivery of the work of the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board.

3. The Board was informed that service personnel are encouraged to branch out earlier into civilian networks and “put down roots” through their service ahead of resettlement. This new approach is designed to help veterans transition back into civilian communities. The initiative aims to remove the barriers associated with resettlement by promoting integration through effective means.
4. There was a discussion around how the Covenant functions and works to meet its objectives. Witnesses from Woking Borough Council informed the Board how local businesses were encouraged to sign the Covenant and to get involved with, support and to help prevent any discrimination or disadvantage against military personnel. Furthermore, Officers emphasised how the Covenant offered a wide range of benefits to AF personnel. An example given to the Board was the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant by Woking Football Club, which promoted communication and integration between two communities.
5. Officers also expressed how they were keen to engage with manufacturing companies to promote the Covenant and broaden the support and widen the employment opportunities available to AF personnel.
6. It was explained to the Board that the catalyst for creating a more thorough support network for Surrey’s military population was Surrey County Council signing the Covenant. Subsequently, the District and Borough Councils had signed the Covenant and appointed Armed Forces Champions; some also creating Armed Forces Panels. Officers also stressed the importance of the work of the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board.
7. Members expressed concerns with homelessness and wanted clarification on how veterans were sought out in these conditions and then supported. Officers explained to the Board, how statistically the figures for homelessness were not high as they’re portrayed to be in the media, the percentage included ex-servicemen who chose to not receive help, and this was at 3%.
8. Witnesses introduced the work of SSAFA, one of the biggest charities providing support to the Armed Forces and their families. It was reported to the Board how SSAFA’s case work helped secure funding from one of the 600 charities listed on their data base to support any serving or retired AF personnel. Their wide remit allowed SSAFA to use their resources to accommodate veterans who are sleeping rough, or require support with other issues, such as housing or drug addiction. The Board commended the work of SSAFA and agreed their

service was valuable and a good point of call for the AF community.

9. Members of the Board explored the issue of social stability amongst the AF community and how it was necessary to support the AF community to put down roots to ensure resettlement back into civilian life was not unnecessarily complicated. Officers explained to the Board that the Military were encouraging families of the servicemen/women to work near where they reside because it helps them to integrate in the community and encourages them to live in that area upon later resettlement.
10. Members of the Board wanted clarification on the notice period given to the AF personnel for housing. Officers informed the Board that waiting lists were extensive and affordable housing in Surrey was difficult. The Board took this into consideration and explained that housing was a key area that was considered by its Community Integration Task Group.
11. A Member of the Board raised concerns with sustainability with regards to support and whether vulnerable people were fast tracked, with the resources in place. Officers referred back to SSAFA and how their service can provide support to any servicemen and the resources available can also be accessed for emergency situations. It was suggested that AF Champions promote awareness and signposting to appropriate support.
12. The Chairman addressed and informed the Board that it had been delegated, by the Leader, the responsibility to appoint an Armed Forces Champion for Surrey, and the Board's Vice-Chairman, Rachael Lake, took on that appointment.
13. A Board Member commented that smaller Borough and District Councils would potentially struggle to meet the demands for all AF personnel in need and suggested that the Cabinet Member write to Government to raise awareness of the issue further, and to seek additional funding to help support the AF community in Surrey. However, witnesses made a point that the scale of support required is not well defined enough to successfully bid to Government.
14. The Chairman proposed that the AF Champion for Surrey researches what data is available to officers currently and what can be done to improve information for supporting AF personnel in Surrey, to address the key issues indicated.  
Officers circulated a job description of the AF Champion role to the Board, and offered to support the Surrey AF Champion with this.
15. A Member of the Board encouraged awareness to be promoted round the County Council further to applying for the Gold Award, having

successfully been awarded the Silver Employer Recognition Award in 2015 for supportive behaviour towards the AF community, sharing good practice for others to follow by example.

**Recommendations:**

The Board recommends that witnesses and officers:

- Circulate case study video on the employment of Armed Forces personnel to the Board.
- Expand and improve the information available to all Surrey County, Local and Parish Councillors on the issues facing Armed Forces personnel and veterans, including specific case studies.
- Raise Councillors awareness of the range of support and resources available to serving and retired Armed Forces personnel.

The Board also recommends for all Members to promote the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant through their role as Councillors.

**BREAK 11:55AM - 12:01PM**

**8/16 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS [Item 8]**

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

**Witnesses:**

John Kingsbury – Woking Joint Committee Vice-Chairman and Leader of Woking Borough Council

Beryl Hunwicks – Woking Borough Councillor

Nick Skellett – Tandridge Local Committee Chairman

Sandie Bolger – Senior Practitioner (Woking), Youth Support Team

Philip Stubbs – Woking Resident & Chairman of Knaphill Residents Association

Victoria Eade – Community Partnership and Committee Officer (Tandridge)

Sarah Goodman – Community Partnership and Committee Officer (Woking)

James Painter – Community Partnership Manager

Jane Last – Head of Community Partnership and Safety

Sandra Brown – Community Partnership Team Leader – East

Richard Bolton – Local Highways Services Group Manager

**Key points raised during discussions:**

1. Officers introduced the report and summarised the main objectives of the Community Partnership Team, including engagement, governance & devolution and funding. It was reported that following the Customer Service Accreditation in 2015 there had been a focus to transform the

resident experience at Local Committees, and to widen public engagement.

2. Officers informed the Board that the best way to improve engagement with residents at Local Committees is to use simpler terminology and removing any language barriers containing complex jargon. It was reported that all Local and Joint Committees had adopted PowerPoint Presentations to help attendees navigate through meetings. Another way to widen engagement was via live broadcast using social networks; online engagement could reach a broader population in addition to those attending formal meetings, which officers reported were sometimes poorly attended. It was reported that residents may directly input into meetings at the Chairman's discretion. The Board were also updated on the improvements made to advertising material such as posters, making them more attractive and easier to understand.
3. In relation to communication, a Member of the Board conveyed that, to help raise awareness, Local Committees would need to have a good presence on social networks, signposting to meetings taking place as attendance in the past was, at times, sparse. The Board was informed that, on top of the established use of Twitter, Officers were looking at other social networks, such as Facebook. It was identified that print advertising could also be more prominent to help promote future engagement from residents at Local Committee meetings.
4. There was a discussion around promoting Governance and Devolution; the Board noted that a decision tracker had been created so residents were kept informed of the progress made on an issue raised at Local Committees, until removed from the tracker on completion.
5. The Tandridge Local Committee Chairman commented that the Joint Committee model was designed to make decisions at local committees more relevant to residents, as well as also giving more councillors, local and county, more opportunity to influence decisions. A further envisaged advantage was to create stronger ties between the County and District and Borough Councils.
6. Witnesses commented that they believed the Joint Committee model demonstrated a more joined up way of thinking and generally more effective. A given example of this was that witnesses found the Joint model more effective at reaching the correct officers at both County and Borough level, and that a shared funding arrangement kept the best interests of both Councils at the front of each decision made. Witnesses also commented that the Joint Committee model improved relations with other partners. Highways Officers commented that

positive engagement at Local Committees varied.

7. It was reported to the Board that residents may have felt more welcomed at Local and Joint Committees, or affiliated Sub-Committees, if less formal settings were explored. Officers added that residents may be more inclined to ask questions and take part in discussions. The Board noted this suggestion and proposed the Chairman in these meetings needed to be more flexible, in allowing a more relaxed setting to take place for residents to engage and feel more comfortable.
8. There was a discussion around an issue resource and officer support for Local committees. The Board noted this observation and agreed Local Committees would appreciate more finance and support.
9. The Cabinet Member commented that decisions on Local Committee spending are in the hands of Councillors, though he agreed with the principal that local committees would benefit from additional funding.
10. A Member of the Board voiced concern with not knowing much detail of the difference between Local and Joint Committees. The Board proposed support and information to be provided to enable Members and staff to become more informed and able to outline the key differences and benefits.
11. The Board agreed that more publicity was needed around Member's allocations, promoting openness and transparency to residents.
12. From the discussion the Board also agreed that that Local and Joint Committees are a County Council vehicle for decision making at a local level, and engaging residents in that process. Although there are examples of good practises throughout the county, the method of delivery varied.

### **Recommendations:**

The Board recommends:

- That Officers explore possibilities for strengthening local committee delivery structure that the committees operate under with an aim to reaffirm the purpose of the committee.
- That Members and Officers engage with the Cabinet Member to consider whether constitutional changes or modifications to local committee terms of reference would achieve the most appropriate committee model arrangements, to aid consistent partnership working across Surrey.



- that Officers provide further support and training to County and Borough frontline staff outlining the role, importance and work of Local and Joint Committees for their local residents, and instructions on how to forward enquiries to the Committees.
- That all Local and Joint Committees publicise how Committee budgets and Members Allocations are spent, and how this will benefit their local communities.
- The Cabinet Member engages with Local and Joint Committee Chairman to:
  - review and share best practice on public engagement at local committee to ensure all residents feel valued and listened to
  - create closer working relationships and positive engagement with Officers and elected Members, at both County and Borough levels, and
  - explore, through closer working relationships, working towards a Joint Committee structure.
- That all Members challenge Local Committee Chairmen regarding public engagement at Local Committee meetings.

**9/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: [Item 9]**

The next Resident Experience Board will take place on 30 June 2016 at 10:30am in County Hall.

Meeting ended at: 1.45 pm

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**Chairman**

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