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Friday 24 August 2018

Sent via email FAO:

Cllr Tim Hall, Chair of Mole Valley Local Committee

Cllr Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport

Cllr Clare Curran, Member for Bookham and Fareham West

Dear Members

Statement for Consideration by Surrey County Council's Mole Valley Local Committee, Wednesday 5 September 2018

Flooding in Bookham

As you are aware, a petition was created over the summer to trigger a discussion at Surrey County Council's Mole Valley Local Committee about funding to address flooding concerns in Bookham. [The petition](#) set out the difficulties experienced by residents and shoppers at times of severe flooding, and was signed by 190 people at the deadline of 14 July 2018.

The Trustees of The Grange Centre in Bookham were invited to support the petition, but felt that it may be useful to provide more detail in a separate letter, given the specialist nature of our services. Whilst I realise that this reaches you after the closing date of the petition, we hope that this letter may help to inform discussions by the Local Committee Wednesday 5 September. Moreover, I would be delighted for The Grange to be represented – and indeed to speak – if that were considered helpful. It may be that one or two of the people we support would come too, as it is the voices of more vulnerable people which do not always get heard in a debate of this kind.

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About The Grange

As you may know, The Grange Centre is a charity providing residential and supported living for adults with learning disabilities, both on our site in Bookham and in neighbouring towns and villages. We also run a highly regarded skills and activities programme, which has resulted in close working with other charities and businesses in the area. Our shops, The Grange @No5, in Church Road in Bookham and Inspirations in Dorking, showcase of textiles training and the end results. Much of our funding comes from Surrey County Council through contracts for care and skills, and we benefit from active engagement with committed County Council staff working in social care.

This year we celebrate our 80th anniversary. As longstanding residents of Bookham, The Grange very much considers itself to be part of the local community, getting involved with a host of village events, and also welcoming hundreds of people through our doors on tailored visits, as volunteers, to enjoy our 'Simply Scones' café or for meetings.

One of our goals is to encourage integration wherever we can. To this end, we are keen for the people we support to make use of community facilities in Bookham and further afield, and also to welcome people onto our site to participate in the life of The Grange. The route between Rectory Lane and Bookham High Street is an exceptionally well-travelled one.

People We Support

We support around 100 adults at any time, and are constantly reaching out to more of the learning disability community through summer programmes and other outreach. Our tenants and the people who take part in our skills programme generally have mild to moderate learning disabilities, often accompanied by other physical disabilities ranging from mobility and visibility impairments to more 'hidden' conditions such as digestive system disorders or heart problems.

By and large, they lead active lives. Our mission is to inspire independence in whatever shape this takes. For many of the people we support, personal fulfilment comes from regular work in a local charity shop; from leading education sessions in nearby schools or from shopping in the Coop where they bump into neighbours who have got to know them very well over the years. Bookham is very safe and well-ordered, with a caring and socially-minded community. In part due to this location we have helped many people to reach greater levels of independence than they or their families might ever have believed possible when they were younger.

Whilst most of the people we support love novelty, routine is the foundation stone of their lives. Disruptions to routine cause disproportionate levels of disappointment, anxiety and confusion.

I explain this so that you can see the impact that flooding can cause in a localised area like Bookham. If our people cannot travel between the centre of the village and The Grange or to their usual activities elsewhere, their whole week crumbles around them. Life can be dull at the best of times for someone with learning disabilities, for whom going out is a carefully pre-planned exercise, limited by transport options and the availability of support. Every environment need to be assessed for risk. If you remove the weekly pattern of activities, you remove a great deal more than might at first be apparent.

It is very rare that someone we support has their own vehicle, so walking and bus transport are their main forms of transport. In times of flooding, impassable pavements, accessing bus stops in deeply pooled water, or drenchings from passing vehicles can put an abrupt halt to the planned weekly programme.

Moreover, having generally been through some kind of 'travel training', the people we support need to be sure they can follow set patterns or procedures. This means that – for example - not being able to cross at their designated 'safe place' or not to be able to see the kerb, trip hazards or pot holes through the flood water, has a significant impact on their confidence.

Closing Considerations

Whilst our Trustees completely understand that Surrey County Council is trying to stretch diminishing resources ever further, we would ask you to consider the petition with the following points in mind:

- a) Surrey County Council already makes statutory provision for adults with learning disabilities, with your social care teams ensuring that people are well-housed, safe, fulfilled and healthy. It makes sense to take a '360 degree' view of this provision by ensuring that the road network on which these people rely is also conceived and maintained with their needs in mind. We are reluctant to progress the development of a Green Travel Plan for The Grange until we are confident that the Highways Service can provide the infrastructure to support it.
- b) Bookham is an unusual location, with its large community of adults with learning disabilities. The 100 people we support – together with over 200 staff and volunteers who walk, cycle or take the bus to The Grange – should bring special focus to the debate about flooding in this village which other villages perhaps do not have.
- c) In its current consultation on a 'Vision for 2030', the County Council has made special efforts to engage people with learning disabilities, in order to ensure that Surrey people can continue to live in the County with a high quality of life

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in the years to come. The draft talks about “People living healthy, active and fulfilling lives, independently in their local community with choice and control” and adds, “Everyone can travel safely, easily and predictably, and people make choices about transport that are mindful of environmental impacts”. This seems to be an opportunity to ‘live the vision’ just two days after your consultation programme has closed – to the benefit of the whole Bookham population.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this letter. I would be happy to answer any queries you may have. I look forward to hearing the outcome of the Committee’s deliberations on 5 September.

On a final note, I would like to invite all of you very warmly to attend our Annual General Meeting and Review at 11am on Thursday 6 September.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eloise Appleby', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eloise APPLEBY
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Sarah J Smith, Partnership Committee Officer, Pippbrook, Reigate Road, DORKING
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