

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
16 January 2024**

Present:

Councillor S.M. Doran (Chair)
Councillor M.M. Attewell (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

M. Arnold	M. Buck	K.M. Grant
C. Bateson	S.A. Dunn	P.N. Woodward
L.H. Brennan	A. Gale	

Substitutions: Councillors J.R. Boughtflower

Apologies: Councillors E. Baldock and O. Rybinski

In Attendance: Councillors M. Beecher

1/24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2/24 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell, Buck, Doran and Dunn declared that due to their involvement as members on the Grants Panel, they would not vote on item 10 on the Annual Community Grants Report.

Councillor Attewell would abstain from voting on item 11 on the Greeno Centre Alterations due to her involvement in the project.

3/24 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

4/24 Ward Issues

There were none.

5/24 Fees and Charges (as part of the budget process)

The Committee considered the Fees and Charges under the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee's remit as part of the annual budget process. It was explained by the Chief Accountant that the intention that the discretionary Fees & Charges increases increased by at least 5% remained, except in exceptional circumstances, to allow the Council to partially recover the shortfall from 2023/24 (when increases were significantly below prevailing inflation).

The Committee raised concern regarding the increase in fees and charges, particularly for discretionary services offered to the most vulnerable residents including Meals on Wheels, OPAL Group and Luncheon Clubs. The Committee **resolved** to agree that the following fees and charges should not increase for 2024-25, and that the shortfall of income should be covered by the Day Centres Large Hall hire fees.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Review the proposed Fees and Charges for 2024-25 for this Committee.
2. Approve the proposed Fees and Charges for 2024-25 for this Committee, except that the fees and charges for the following services: Meals on Wheels, OPAL Group and Luncheon Clubs will not increase and the shortfall of income be covered by the Day Centres hire of hall costs.
3. Recommend to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that they approve the proposed Fees and Charges for 2024-25 except that the fees and charges for the following services: Meals on Wheels, OPAL Group and Luncheon Clubs will not increase and the shortfall of income be covered by the Day Centres hire of hall costs.

6/24 Service Plans (as part of the Budget Process)

The Committee considered the Service Plans under the Committee's remit for 2024-25. The Service Plans set out the proposed revenue growth bids and savings plan for the next financial year, and provided the basis of the 2024-25 budget. The Chief Accountant explained the budget setting process in more detail, underlining key dates in relation taking the closing budget and reaching an opening budget for this Committee.

Some Committee members raised concern in regard to the Capital Programme budget figure on Street Property Acquisitions as highlighted in the Housing Service Plan. Members noted that decisions leading to an

expenditure of £5.2 million should be considered at full Council for total visibility and integrity. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee approved participation in Rounds One and Two of the Local Authority Housing Fund Scheme, and that individual property acquisitions (each being separate transactions with different counterparties were all individually well below £1m) are approved by Development Sub-Committee and forwarded to the Knowle Green Estates Board for final approval. Moreover, the total gross costs for each acquisition has always been clear, with 40% of costs covered by grants funds and the remaining costs to the Council are refunded from monthly rental income from the property.

The Committee queried the purpose of the Benwell Day Centre costs in the Detailed Budget Report since this centre was no longer in operation. The Committee further queried the figure on Bed and Breakfast emergency accommodation costs as well as the increase in First Aid Allowance. The Chief Accountant confirmed that he would look into each figure and provide a written note of clarification to all Committee members.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Formally review the proposed revenue Growth Bids and Savings Plan for 2024-2025 for this Committee.
2. Approve the proposed Revenue Growth Bids and Savings Plan for 2024-2025 for this Committee subject to officers sending clarification to the Community Wellbeing and Housing Chair and Vice-Chair on any errors within the report.
3. Recommend to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that they approve the proposed Revenue Growth Bids and Savings Plan for 2024-25 subject to officers sending clarification to the Community Wellbeing and Housing Chair and Vice-Chair on any errors within the report.

The meeting adjourned at 20:38 and reconvened at 20:54.

7/24 Detailed Budget Report by Cost Centre

After publication, this item was included as Appendix E to item 7 on the agenda, and as it was considered under that item, it does not need separate consideration.

8/24 Net Expenditure Budget for the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee

After publication, this item was included as Appendix D to item 7 on the agenda, and as it was considered under that item, it does not need separate consideration.

9/24 Annual Community Grants Report

The Committee considered a report from the Community Development Manager which sought approval for the Grants Awards for 2024/2025. The report outlined funding recommendations for applications received following consideration by the Grants Panel. Following final determination of the annual budget by Council, the grants awards would be allocated to charities and voluntary sector organisations operating in the borough.

Councillor Boughtflower, seconded by Councillor Bateson, extended thanks on behalf of the Committee to members on the Grants Panel for their hard work during this process.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Note the recommendations of the Grants Panel regarding the proposed recipients of the 2024/2025 community grants
2. Make a decision and recommendation to Council
3. Note the other support that Spelthorne Borough Council provides to the voluntary/charity sector.
4. Any underspend from the Council Grants and Better Neighbourhood Grants budget will be carried forward to the next financial year.
5. Note the potential changes to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

10/24 Greeno Community Centre Alterations

The Committee considered a report on the Greeno Community Centre Alterations which sought approval to endorse a reconfiguration of the entrance lobby and tea bar at the Greeno Community Centre in Shepperton. The Group Head, Community Wellbeing and Housing explained that the current layout of the centre was not open and did not encourage circulation of members. It was therefore recommended in principle to approve making improvements to the centre going forward, with the intention of creating a more café style space, subject to funding being received from Your Fund Surrey.

The Committee agreed to approve option 2 as set out in the report and **resolved** to:

1. Endorse the Council's approach of improving the flexible use of space in the Greeno Community Centre by means of internal configuration.
2. Endorse the use of external funding to fully fund the alterations.

11/24 Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Forward Plan.

12/24 Exclusion of public and press

It was proposed by Councillor Boughtflower, seconded by Councillor Arnold and **resolved** to exclude the public and press in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

13/24 Urgent Item- Local Authority Housing Fund Extension

14/24 Urgent Item- Household Support Fund Verbal Update

The Committee considered a verbal update on the Household Support Fund Phase Four. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this phase was slightly different to previous rounds as it covered an entire year (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 inclusive). Spelthorne Borough Council received an allocation of funding through Surrey County Council from Central Government which totalled £413,000. As previously agreed by this committee at its meeting on 17 January 2023, the process of allocating funding had progressed, with £379,000 paid out to households in need. At this point, there was now £33,541 remaining in the general allocation pot, which would now be applied through working with the Disabled Facilities Grants team, identifying children with disabilities and those using extensive motorised equipment by the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to note the verbal update.

Meeting ended at 22:23.

15/24 Actions arising from the meeting

The following actions arose from the meeting:

The Chief Accountant agreed to not increase the 2024-25 fees and charges for Meals on Wheels, OPAL Group and Luncheon Clubs. The income shortfall would be covered by an increase in the Day Centres Hall Hire fees.

The Chief Accountant agreed to send a written note clarifying the purpose of the Benwell Day Centre costs in the Detailed Budget Report.

The Chief Accountant agreed to send a written note clarifying the increase in the First Aid allowance.

The Chief Accountant agreed to send a written note clarifying the narrative around the growth bid on Bed and Breakfast emergency accommodation.

The Group Head Community Wellbeing agreed to send out a written note from the Housing Benefits Manager clarifying the current number of Housing Benefit claimants.