

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13 May 2014**

Present:

Councillor P.A. Broom (Chairman)
Councillor A.E. Friday (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

F. Ayers	D. Gohil	M.W. Rough
C.A. Davis	C.M. Frazer	D. Saliagopoulos
R.D. Dunn	I.T.E. Harvey	S. Taylor

Apologies: Councillors A. Ayub, C.A. Bannister and M.J. Madams

In Attendance:

Councillor R.L. Watts – Leader of the Council, Cabinet member for Strategy and Corporate Governance

Councillor V.J. Leighton – Cabinet member for Planning and Corporate Development

Councillor A.J. Mitchell – Cabinet member for Environment

Councillor J.M. Pinkerton O.B.E. – Cabinet member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Independent Living

105/14 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

106/14 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

107/14 Matters Arising

There were none.

108/14 Call in of Cabinet Decisions

No decisions had been called in.

109/14 Residents' Associations – engagement with key Council services and opportunities for involvement

The Chairman welcomed representatives from the following Residents' Associations to the meeting.

Anne Damerell – Staines Town Society

Richard Hewitt – Shepperton

Kath Baker – Stanwell Moor

Paul West – ANRA

Richard Kennedy – Charlton Village

Nik Keyser – Silvery Sands

Michael Wakefield – Kempton

The Residents' Associations were invited to ask questions and give their comments on:

- Are residents satisfied with the services the Council delivers?
- What, if any, improvements can the Council make to its services?
- What matters most to residents?

Some questions had been submitted in advance and these are attached, with the responses given and supplementary questions, as an appendix to these minutes.

The Residents' Associations discussed the ways in which the Council communicated, the importance of using different channels to reach out to both the older and younger residents; and whether existing printed information, such as the Borough Bulletin, were of value. They asked the Council to explore how it communicated information to residents. The representatives confirmed that they welcomed communications in both paper and electronic formats.

The issue which mattered most to residents was the condition of roads and pavements and knowing when works for repair were scheduled. The Chairman agreed that a letter would be sent to County Cllr John Furey, Cabinet Member for Highways at Surrey County Council, to advise that this topic was the top concern of residents.

The Residents' Associations were broadly satisfied with the delivery of Council services recognising that the Council was doing all it could within the financial constraints. Some Residents' Associations would welcome the return of the Area Forums, particularly for older people, and at least for those areas of the Borough where attendance at such events had been well supported in the past.

Resolved to:

- (1) send information about computer training courses for older people to all Residents' Associations;
- (2) send information about registering for the Council's e-newsletter to all Residents' Associations;
- (3) provide information to Residents' Associations about the different methods available for engaging with the Council;
- (4) ask Residents' Associations how they wished to be communicated with;
- (5) explore how the Council captures residents' data (email addresses) in order to communicate more effectively;
- (6) commit to continue using various forms of media for communication to cater for all preferences and
- (7) write to County Cllr John Furey to advise that residents had raised the topic of roads as their top matter of concern.

At the conclusion of the discussion on Council services, Cllr Alfred Friday, Vice-Chairman, and officers presented information about opportunities for community involvement provided by the Localism Act 2011.

Although this is of interest the Residents' Associations did not feel they had enough information to progress these opportunities and asked for more details on how to get started and what the process involved.

Resolved to send more detailed information on the opportunities and processes for Neighbourhood Plans and Assets of Community Value, including case studies of how other communities (where there are no parish councils) were getting involved, to Residents' Associations.

110/14 Leader's Task Groups

The Committee received reports from the Leader's Task Groups looking at Environment and Waste and Fixed Assets on the work undertaken to date.

Fixed Assets Task Group

Councillor Leighton, the Lead Member on the Fixed Assets Task Group gave an update on progress with the work undertaken to date. The Task Group was investigating opportunities to develop a number of assets with a view to generating revenue and capital receipts for the benefit of the Council.

Members raised concerns about a recently revealed proposal by Heathrow Airport for airport parking which had the potential to undermine the Council's proposal to redevelop an allotment site in Stanwell Moor for the same purpose. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to feed back to the Committee on Heathrow's proposals and its impact on the Council's plans for airport parking once more information was available.

Environment and Waste Task Group

Councillor Mitchell, the Lead Member on the Environment and Waste Task Group reported that the group had concentrated its work on the development of Laleham Park and increasing recycling rates. He thanked Sandy Muirhead, Head of Sustainability and Leisure and Jackie Taylor, Head of Streetscene for their assistance.

Resolved to:

- (1) note the work undertaken to date by the Leader's Task Groups for Environment and Waste and Fixed Assets, and
- (2) receive feedback on Heathrow Airport's proposals for airport parking.

111/14 Rail Transport – update

The Head of Planning and Housing Strategy gave an update on proposals for improvements in rail provision both within and close to the Borough. He gave details of the policies and strategies supporting the development of rail

provision and highlighted a number of new projects which were in the early stages of planning.

He concluded that the Council had an important role in giving support to those proposals that were of proven benefit to local residents and businesses and arguing for their funding and implementation. It was also important that when specific schemes came forward that these were assessed thoroughly to ensure they best met local needs and any concerns.

The Committee agreed that the Council should do all it could to push forward beneficial proposals and asked to be kept updated of any developments in the proposed schemes, so that they may have an opportunity to examine them at an early stage.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the update on rail transport be noted;
- (2) the approach to supporting proposals of proven benefit to local residents and businesses be endorsed and
- (3) any developments in proposed rail schemes be reported to the Committee for consideration at an early stage.

112/14 Budget Issues

The Chief Finance Officer briefed the Committee on the Council's approach to securing a balanced budget in 2015-2016 and beyond. He highlighted three areas which were being focussed on to achieve this: income generation – aiming for a minimum of an additional £1m per annum within next three years; reduced accommodation costs – options for relocating from Knowle Green and a structure review of the Council.

Initial recommendations were likely to be made in autumn 2014 providing an opportunity for this Committee to consider a further update in September 2014.

Resolved to:

- (1) note the update on budget issues from the Chief Finance Officer and
- (2) receive a further update at the September 2014 meeting of the Committee.

113/14 Projects update

The Committee received an update report on progress made with current projects and the work of the corporate project office.

Resolved to note the update report on Project Management.

114/14 Waste Strategy and Management update

The Committee received an update report on waste and recycling activities both within Surrey and specifically local activities in Spelthorne.

The Surrey Waste Partnership (SWP) had undertaken a waste composition analysis across Surrey in 2013 and the resulting data would assist authorities to more effectively target communication campaigns.

The report outlined activities undertaken in 2013/2014 which included:

- moving 4000 hard to reach properties onto the weekly collection system;
- food waste roadshows at schools and supermarkets reaching 2000 residents;
- reducing abused 'bring sites' and improving those remaining;
- projects with the SWP for best practice and joint working/procurement and
- garden waste scheme extended to full capacity.

The areas of work planned for 2014/2015 included:

- Improving recycling performance through communications and roadshows and reduction of contamination with resulting improvement in recycling rates by 3%;
- Improving recycling rates at flats through better systems and education, targeting at least 2000 properties;
- Continuing with rollout of weekly collections to hard to reach properties and
- Working with SWP on projects to enhance recycling rates and meet best practice.

The Committee was concerned that Spelthorne's recycling rate was the lowest in comparison to all other Surrey authorities. The Committee asked for a further report with more information on the resources that were needed to achieve the 3% improvement target, to be brought to a future meeting. The Committee was concerned that councillors were not being automatically informed about any pro-active measures being provided to residents to help them reduce and reuse their waste.

Resolved to:

- (1) note the update on waste strategy management
- (2) receive an update at the November meeting of the Committee with more information on the resources that were needed to achieve the 3% improvement target and
- (3) request officers to ensure that councillors are informed of pro-active measures given to residents.

115/14 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Resolved to note the Forward Plan.

116/14 Work programme 2014/2015

The Chairman noted the items currently on the Work Programme for the July 2014 meeting which included a presentation by A2D Housing and a request to Abellio to attend in connection with the re-routed 441 bus service. She also advised that a housing consultant would attend to speak about the Council's housing strategy.

117/14 Any other business

No other business was reported.

Advance questions/comments from Residents' Associations - Overview and Scrutiny Committee 13 May 2014

Anne Damerell - Staines Town Society

Appreciation of all the flood relief work.

We are thankful for these comments.

Hope that Staines residents will be seriously consulted over plans for Staines Regeneration, and their views taken into account, perhaps in a Planning Brief. What mix of housing/office/retail, and how high? Do residents want the 11-storey offices previously agreed, or would they prefer something more in keeping with the rest of the town?

I would like to re-assure the Staines Town Society and the wider community that the Council is committed to seeing Staines-upon-Thames remain as a vibrant town centre, and that it has a clear focus on getting a number of key sites moved forwards. We will enter into full pre-application discussions with the local community before any applications are submitted on land that we own within the town centre.

There are a number of planning briefs on key sites within the town which will be used to guide 'appropriate development', and we are encouraging the landowners of 'stalled sites' to speak to the Council with a view to seeing how the schemes can be 'unblocked'.

In the longer term there is clearly an opportunity to develop a longer term vision for Staines-upon-Thames, and this would need to be done as part of any review which is undertaken of the adopted Local Development Framework.

Anne Damerell asked at the meeting for reassurance that local people would be consulted on the plans for re-development of sites in Staines-upon-Thames. The Regeneration Manager confirmed that the Council would have early discussions with Residents' Associations on plans for developing council-owned sites.

Appreciation of SBC programme of grants to voluntary organisations and its acceptance that they provide value for money (subject to scrutiny of course).

Again we thank Anne for her comments and support with the organisations she represents

Regret that so far SBC has not found, or persuaded partners to find, a small sum to pay for administration of its community forums for older people and for people with disabilities.

In the past, community forums have been supported by health providers; the Council has been actively seeking assistance for these groups via the voluntary sector but so far not been successful.

Hope that SBC will become more pro-active in preventing neglect of Listed Buildings, e.g. Staines Town Hall, Fire Station, Blue Anchor, 25-27 Clarence Street in Staines town centre alone.

The Council has always worked with owners of key listed buildings within the town centre and will continue to do so. The Planning service will work alongside Staines-upon-Thames Regeneration Manager (as an additional resource) to work more proactively with owners. This is very time consuming and is often a matter of persuasion as the Council has fairly limited powers when it come to do anything more than ensure a listed building is watertight. However we recognise that there is considerable benefit in targeting key buildings and sites to 'lift' the town overall. It is also worth saying that as a Council we are in no way atypical in having a handful of buildings requiring attention, and we have to consider how best to prioritise our resources.

Is the River Ash Path Planning Brief still valid, and when will it be implemented?

The Planning brief is no longer valid. The concept of a continuous River Ash Walk from Staines to Sunbury was a proposal included in earlier Local Plans (1991 and 2001) with a supporting Planning Brief. Significant sections now exist at the Staines end and also at Shepperton. However the feasibility of a continuous route as originally envisaged is questionable due to ownership and security issues around the Queen Mary reservoir and other points where it would need to go through private land. For that reason the proposal was not carried forward into the current Allocations Development Plan Document.

The chief executive of Runnymede BC has urged Defra to restore the delayed £120m funding for the Environment Agency's Lower Thames Flood Relief scheme. Has the chief executive of Spelthorne BC done the same, and if not, please will he?

Thank for your query regarding the River Thames scheme and future funding. We can confirm that the Leader of the Council and chief executive have, like Runnymede, written to Mr Cameron about the future funding of this scheme

Kath Baker - Stanwell Moor

What, if anything, has been done regarding the horses in our recreation ground, both tethered and running in a trap?

Under the parks byelaws horse grazing is not permitted and recently two horses were removed from Stanwell Moor. However, the byelaws do not definitively cover a pony and trap so we are reviewing the byelaws to amend them going forward. As this requires consultation and referral to the Secretary of State for approval the process takes some time.

Paul West - ANRA

Is there a community KPI for those services provided to see if the quality of these such services provided meet the standards required, and if not how many revisits or complaints are due to those not meeting the standards which would I guess also have an extra cost to SBC.

Is it known to those on the committee how much work needs doing within SBC, and how much is actual carried out to those standards required?

Thank you for your question.

Spelthorne uses a range of indicators and other measures to assess how well we are performing and to monitor the effectiveness of our services. We are currently in the process of reviewing these to ensure that they are relevant to our priority areas of work and that they monitor things that matter most to our residents. We are also planning to undertake a residents' survey later this year where we will seek their views on our services.

The diverse range of functions undertaken by the Council makes it difficult to have a common community key performance indicator to monitor the quality of our services and measuring such a parameter effectively can be difficult as people's views on quality can be very subjective. Some of the functions we are legally required to undertake may not be particularly popular (e.g. the collection of Council Tax) and some of our duties require us to take enforcement action against people (e.g. when dealing with neighbour complaints). This can strongly influence people's views of our services, however effective we are in providing them.

Most of our monitoring is used for internal performance management and tailored to the individual service area involved. This can include such parameters as response times to service requests, the number of visits and time taken to resolve complaints, and outcomes from any action taken. Some services also undertake ongoing or periodic customer satisfaction surveys, the results of which are used to help improve service delivery. In dealing with any service request, the Council would look to resolve matters as efficiently and effectively as possible, to prevent unnecessary revisits and minimise the costs involved.

All of our main service areas are required to produce an Annual Performance Review, which outlines the team's main achievements and performance against their specified indicators. The reviews for the last financial year are currently being drafted and should be available for people to view on our website within the next month. Some of our services are also required by statute to produce a separate annual report which can contain more detailed performance information (such as the Planning Monitoring Report). The performance of some of our services are subject to review by internal and/or external auditors each year and both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee can call service managers to account where there are concerns over performance in a particular area.

Complaints about our services are monitored and investigated thoroughly by our managers and we have a procedure for escalating this to senior management and the Head of Corporate Governance should the complainant still not be satisfied with the service we have provided. If, following this process, a resident is still not happy they can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman who would undertake an independent investigation.

If you are interested in the performance of any particular service please contact our Assistant Chief Executive, Lee O'Neil (Tel: 01784 446377, email: l.o'neil@spelthorne.gov.uk), who would be happy to discuss this with you.

Michael Wakefield - Kempton

Communication with old people is lacking. Many in their late seventies, eighties and nineties do not have computers. Services and aids for old and disabled people.

Our main piece of print is the Borough Bulletin which goes to all homes and is widely read, particularly by older age groups. This is backed up by lots of printed material to promote all kinds of events and projects including the recent floods where leaflets were being produced, daily for a while, to inform residents – of all ages – about what was happening and where various meetings and events were being held. This seems to be effective as, at many of our major public meetings, it is largely older age groups who attend.

Of course, like all other public authorities, the Council has to consider the expense of printed material – particularly as it also has to be distributed either by a dedicated company or else the post. This is costly.

The Council is, therefore, making use, where possible, of electronic communication which is both quick and cheap and has the added benefit of meaning that we get feedback from residents and can react to them appropriately. It is also unstoppable – the recent SOCITM Better Connected report quoted that 84% of people in the UK now use the Internet for a variety of personal and business reasons and this is growing all the time.

We have not forgotten though, that for some, this will not work which is why we continue to try and create a reasonable balance between print and electronic communication.

The Council produces a bound booklet which is an A-Z of Services for Independent Living. It has recently been updated and reprinted and is about to be distributed to GP surgeries, hospitals, libraries, museums, CAB, individual clients

In addition the Independent Living team produce an Independent Living service guide with details of all our services. This has been re drafted and is with Vicky in Communications. Once finalised it will be distributed in a similar manner to the A-Z

All new Independent Living clients receive a copy of both publications, as do new Spelride users.

Finally Independent Living have been trying to re-name the 'High Needs' group that use day centre services. Communication has taken place with staff and centre users to get a shortlist, which will now be the subject of a 'vote' including users of the Greeno day centre, Come and Meet Each Other (CAMEO) group etc to select a new name

I have been given a pack of support information produced for elderly. (SPAN network, Day centre activity guide, A-Z for Independent Living)

We do a lot of inter personal work with older clients particularly those who are anxious about visiting a day centre for the first time, undertaking home visits and accompanying them their first couple of times etc.

Michael Wakefield asked at the meeting for action to be taken on providing seats at bus stands for older people. Councillor Pinkerton, the Cabinet member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Independent Living advised that Surrey County Council (SCC) were looking at facilities for all the buses serving Ashford Hospital. Anne Damerell was able to confirm that SCC now had funding to address the lack of seating and the siting of the shelter with the bus stop.