

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
7 January 2025**

Present:

Councillor S.M. Doran (Chair)

Councillors:

M. Arnold	L.H. Brennan	R.V. Geach
M.M. Attewell	S.A. Dunn	K.M. Grant
C. Bateson	A. Gale	A. Mathur

Substitutions: Councillor P.N. Woodward (In place of O. Rybinski)

Apologies: Councillors M. Bing Dong and O Rybinski

48/25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

49/25 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell, Doran and Dunn declared an interest in relation to item 8 on the Annual Grant Awards 2025/2026. As members of the Grants Panel, they would not participate in the debate or vote for this item.

50/25 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

51/25 Forward Plan

The Committee **noted** the Forward Plan

52/25 Community Wellbeing & Housing Draft Detailed budget for 2025/26

The Committee considered a report on the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee's detailed budget for 2025/26. The purpose of the report was to give the Committee an opportunity to comment and shape the Budget before it was further finalised by Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and approved by Council in February. The Deputy Chief Executive provided a summary of the budget and highlighted the main adjustments reflected in the budget codes across the Committee's remit. This included increased national insurance contributions, and the impact of the 2-year pay settlement on salary payments, with a total budget increase of £231k for the committee.

The Committee observed that Appendix one on the detailed budget breakdown was difficult to understand and felt more clarity was needed around certain figure increases. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed the intention of the appendix was to provide full transparency, however it was agreed to circulate a summarised version of the budget to assist members' understanding.

During the discussion, members questioned the inclusion of the Benwell Centre, to which the Deputy Chief Executive explained was for transitional cost purposes with plans for deletion in the final budget. Other Councillors raised concerns about the clarity of documents, particularly regarding the tracking of salary budgets and income from the community centres which was explained by the Strategic Lead, Independent Living. One member inquired about the significant increase in Afghan relocation scheme temporary staff salaries, and officers confirmed to liaise with colleagues to provide a written response on this. Following on from this, the Homes4Ukraine payments were explained as a government-funded scheme supporting households who hosted Ukrainian families.

Committee **resolved** to agree the Community Wellbeing draft detailed budget for 2025/26 and made a recommendation to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to approve the proposed budget.

53/25 Community Wellbeing & Housing - Draft Detailed capital budget for 2025/26

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive on the Community Wellbeing and Housing draft detailed capital budget which was in parallel to the previous detailed budget report, but instead incorporated the capital elements of the budget. The main capital costs captured in appendix one showed the disabled facilities grant funding, noting the projected funding for up to four years which was dependent on government direction.

The Committee queried whether the Disabled Facilities Grant Funding was being spent to its full extent each year. The Deputy Chief Executive reinforced the effectiveness of the DFG and Assisted Living team who were adept at allocating funding to meet demands, despite challenges. The Strategic Lead, Independent Living also confirmed that this year we had spent £947k of the funding, with another £300K committed before the end of this financial year. Although there was provision for this allocation, the work relied on occupational therapy referrals in consultation with adult social care colleagues.

Members acknowledged the hard work carried out by the DFG and Assisted Living officers and extended their thanks to the whole team.

Committee **resolved** to agree the Community Wellbeing draft detailed capital budget for 2025/26 and made a recommendation to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to approve the proposed budget.

54/25 Annual Grant Awards 2025/2026

***Councillors Attewell, Doran and Dunn did not participate in the debate or vote on this item due to being members on the Grants Panel.**

The Community Development Manager, Lisa Stonehouse, presented the Annual Grant Awards report for 2025/2026. The report aimed to make a decision and recommendation to the Council regarding the allocation of community grants as proposed by the Grants Panel. The baseline grant funding budget for 2025/2026 was £231,200, with an additional carry forward of £1585.85 from the financial year 2024/25, making a provisional budget of £232,785. As demand for funding far outstripped the available budget, out of the 37 organisations that submitted applications, the Grants panel recommended either partial or full funding to 19 organisations (allocation total being £232,715).

The Committee suggested that it would be beneficial for Councillors to donate their remaining Better Neighbourhood Grant Funding to those organisations who were partially funded or missed out on grant funding. The Community Development Manager agreed to compile and distribute a list of those organisations who did not receive expected funding to be sent to all Councillors.

The Committee further queried the grants application process and how this was advertised. The Community Development Manager confirmed that the application process opened on 3 September 2024 and closed on 2 October 2024. The link to the application form and further information on the eligibility criteria was available on the Council website and the Voluntary Support North Surrey website. The process was also promoted heavily on various social media platforms and previous applicants were notified directly by email.

The Committee expressed thanks to members of the Grants Panel for their hard work in deciding suitable funding recommendations and to officers for their assistance in the process.

Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve the recommendations of the Grants Panel regarding the proposed recipients of the 2025/2026 community grants and made a recommendation to Council.
2. Approve the recommendations of the Grants Panel regarding indicative grant funding for the 5 core funded organisations for 2026/2027.
3. Note the other support that Spelthorne Borough Council provides to the voluntary/charity sector.
4. Note the proposal that 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

55/25 Eclipse Leisure Centre Additional Spend

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Lead, Leisure on proposed works at the Eclipse Leisure Centre to address operational issues which required additional expenditure. The report focused on three main elements including options for sauna coils, the rooflights, and the protection of the turfed area at the front of the building. The need for immediate action was highlighted to address these issues to ensure the leisure centre's full operational status and to avoid potential compensation claims from the operator.

The Committee expressed their disappointment towards the operational matters outlined in the report and noted that the issues should have been foreseen by the Leisure Centre Project team. The Committee also conveyed particular concern regarding the £500 spend per week on a temporary barrier around the rooflight over the swimming pool and emphasised that the permanent solution should be installed promptly. The Strategic Lead, Leisure assured that the Leisure Centre was fully compliant with Building Regulations and had been approved by planners, however the issues arose during the operational phase. The Council had also now placed an order for a permanent barrier to be installed around the rooflight, with works anticipated to commence towards the end of January 2025.

The committee discussed various options for protecting the turfed area. There were suggestions for more environmentally friendly solutions, such as the

planting of trees or cherry laurel hedging rather than box hedging as this attracted caterpillar infestation.

The Committee voted on the options in relation to the sauna coals as follows:

Option 1: 11
Option 2: 0
Option 3: 0

Decision: Option 1 carried (Non-Combustible Timber Upstand)

The Committee voted on the options in relation to the grass protection barrier as follows:

Option 1: 0
Option 2: 0
Option 3: 0
Option 4: 11

Decision: Option 4 carried with the amendment to explore alternative hedging options

Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve option one and a budget of £3000 in relation to the sauna coals.
2. Approve option 4, subject to exploring alternative hedging solutions and a budget of £10,000 in relation to the barrier to protect the turfed area.
3. Delegate approval of the final solution in relation to the design barrier to protect the turfed area to the Group Head Community Wellbeing in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

The Committee adjourned at 20:23 and readjourned at 20:33.

Councillor Brennan left the meeting at 20:33.

56/25 Leisure and Culture Strategy

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Lead, Leisure on the Spelthorne Leisure and Culture Strategy for 2025-2035. The strategy emphasised the importance of leisure and culture in improving community health and wellbeing, and the need for a strategic approach to secure external funding and support the council's corporate priorities. The strategy aimed to

encourage leisure and cultural activities, advance a positive environment, enhance social cohesion, and address climate change.

During the discussion, the Committee highlighted the positive feedback from the Ashford Youth Club regarding the Youth Survey and noted feedback received on addressing transport and climate change issues, particularly in more deprived areas like Stanwell. The Strategic Lead, Leisure responded that the strategy set out intentions to collaborate with partners to address issues, though it did not provide specific solutions. One example of partner collaboration was the promotion of community outreach with the new leisure centre operator and through social prescribing. A more detailed delivery plan would be developed to address issues more directly.

The Committee questioned whether it was the right timing to initiate a new strategy in light of local government reorganisation plans and also queried the appropriateness of references in the report to Spelthorne's relative deprivation levels. It was clarified that having a robust strategy will focus service delivery and will also provide the evidence base to draw in external funding. In addition, the strategy was informed by data sources which provided background into key indicators including deprivation levels to ensure the strategy was designed to target the needs of relevant communities in Spelthorne.

Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve and adopt the Spelthorne Leisure & Culture Strategy 2025-2035
2. Agree delegated authority to the Group Head, Community Wellbeing in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair of Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee to make necessary changes to the Spelthorne Leisure and Culture Strategy, 2025 – 2035.

57/25 Household Support Fund Phase 6

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Lead, Independent Living on the Household Support Fund, Phase 6. A background into this process was provided in which at the Community Wellbeing committee on 28 November 2024, it was agreed to use Household Support Fund to subsidise the Meals on Wheels service. However, current guidance required the funds to be used within the year which would not have allowed sufficient time and was not legally advised. The alternative proposal was to now distribute the funds equally among the nine members of the Food and Welfare Network, giving each approximately £9,555 (out of the total allocation of £84,091). This approach will minimise administrative costs and will ensure a more efficient approach in supporting to residents.

In the timescales allocated, the Committee understood the rationale behind the preferred recommendation. It was also reiterated that a number of organisations in the food and welfare network already received substantial funding from Surrey County Council, separate to the Household Support Fund. The Committee queried the timescales for distribution and whether the members of the food and welfare network will be able to allocate funds by 31st March 2025 deadline. The Strategic Lead, Independent Living confirmed that the County had already been informed of the approach, and subject to Committee approval, funds will be transmitted instantly with confidence they will be used by 31 March 2025. Organisations were also required to provide updates to county on how the funding was making a difference.

The Committee additionally requested the names of the nine organisations in the food and welfare network be stated clearly in the report for future reference. The Strategic Lead, Independent Living agreed to this proposal.

Committee **resolved** to:

1. Agree the proposed scheme of distribution of Household Support Fund Phase 6 as per preferred option 3.
2. Agree that in the event of any funds being unallocated that they are moved to the "General Allocation Pot" at the end of March 2025.

58/25 Community Centre Saturday Opening

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Lead, Independent Living on the continuation of the six day Community Centre Saturday Opening. The Committee were informally updated on this matter at the previous Committee on 28 November 2024, however this report requested to ratify committee approval. The report set out the proposal to continue opening the Fordbridge and Greeno Centres on alternate Saturdays for another six months with delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with Chair and Vice-Chair of Community Wellbeing to continue approval of extensions to this initiative within the permitted budget provision. This extension aimed to support vulnerable residents during the cost of living and energy crisis.

Committee **resolved** to:

1. Continue to endorse the Council's approach of expanding the Community Centres provision to take account of the impact of current cost of living, energy and social isolation crisis on our communities.
2. Continue with the provision of opening at least one community centre within the borough of Spelthorne for 6 days a week, which is currently in place, engaging centre staff to provide the additional provision as per option 2.

3.To agree delegated authority to Deputy Chief Executive Terry Collier in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair of Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee to agree a continuation every 6 months within the permitted budget envelope.

59/25 Exclusion of Public and Press

It was proposed by Councillor Bateson, seconded by Councillor Dunn 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.

60/25 Options for Pricing Meals on Wheels

61/25 Options for pricing OPAL (Older Persons Active Living) Group

62/25 Bringing the Service at White House and Harper House in House

Due to time constraints, this item was not considered. In consultation with the Chair, it was agreed that this report would be circulated to Committee members for comment by email.

The meeting ended at 22:30.

63/25 Actions arising from the meeting

-Finance colleagues to circulate a summarised version of the Community Wellbeing draft detailed budget

-Finance colleagues to provide a written response on the reason for Afghan Relocation temporary staff cost increases

-The Community Development Manager agreed to compile and distribute a list of those organisations who did not receive expected funding to be sent to all Councillors.

-Leisure colleagues to explore the option of cherry laurel when deciding on the final solution in relation to the design barrier to protect the turfed area

-In future Household Support Fund reports, it was agreed to explicitly state the names of organisations for clarity