

**Overview of the  
Community Wellbeing and Housing  
Teams**

## **Leisure and Wellbeing**

The Leisure and Wellbeing team work in partnership with internal colleagues and statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that residents of all ages have access to positive leisure and wellbeing activities including sport, active lifestyle, arts, and heritage. The team also take the lead on safeguarding children and adult issues. Examples of areas of work include:

### **Sport, Facilities, and Active Lifestyle**

- The Leisure Centre Contract monitoring - Everyone Active currently operate both Spelthorne and Sunbury Leisure Centres. Planning permission to build a new Leisure Centre was approved on 23/6/21. A Leisure Centre Operator specification is being written as part of the procurement process.
- Club4 - Working with local sports clubs and five youth groups to provide physical activity and healthy food at summer holiday sessions. Club4 is funded by the Government Holiday Activities and Food Programme.
- Surrey Youth Games - This year due to COVID-19, activities are being provided locally rather than a mass participation event. Working with youth clubs and Club4.
- Walking for Health, Cycling for Health and Disability Sports Club (volunteer led).
- Health and Wellbeing. Currently working on producing an updated strategy
- Xplorer events for primary age children and families in parks in the school holidays
- Four skate parks and a wide range of sports courts and pitches in Spelthorne.
- Play scheme vouchers – issued every year to those in need to access holiday clubs, in liaison with schools and internal colleagues such as Housing and Family Support.

### **Arts and Culture**

- Creative Skills Workshops for young people, Youth Awards, various Dance 21 activities. Other creative schemes such as mosaic projects, arts walks.
- Arts and Craft Open Days and workshops at Staines Resource Centre scrap and arts and craft store, arts and craft packs and regular activities posted during COVID-19.
- Work closely with Spelthorne Museum volunteers on various projects.
- Free summer concerts in the Sunbury Walled Garden.
- Arts Council England funding - Applying for funding to lease an empty unit in the Elmsleigh Centre in partnership with Staines Rotary to host cultural and community activity. Also, potential to use the central space for evening events.
- Creative People and Places Fund - Working with Staines Rotary, The Local Conversation in Stanwell and Farnham Maltings to apply for funding to organise cultural events aimed at those who have minimal access to the arts.
- Cultural Development Fund Application. Currently working with Staines Business Improvement District (BID) and Spelthorne Museum to submit a funding application of between 2 – 5 million, to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport. The application will be to refurbish the Oast House listed building in Staines upon Thames, including a new adjoining 300 seat theatre, creative industry workspaces, studios for community activity, a café/bar and exhibition space. A report has been produced which identifies the need for such a facility and has previously been presented to Cabinet. The deadline for expression of interest is 23rd July. The full application deadline is October 2021.

### **Safeguarding and General**

- Spelthorne Safeguarding Policy (recently refreshed), coordinating the Strategic and Operational Groups and completion of statutory audits.
- A Leisure Directory is compiled every year. (online this year due to COVID-19).

## **Independent Living Services**

This incorporates

- Wellbeing Service / Social prescribing
- Meals on Wheels
- Spelthorne Personal Alarm Network (SPAN)
- Older People Actively Living (OPAL) group
- Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's)
- 4 Community Centres

The Independent Living team provide information and signpost to the services our clients may require or benefit from.

### **The Wellbeing Services**

We offer residents telephone and face to face support with both their emotional and practical needs for up to 6 weeks. This can include introducing them to the local community centres and other local clubs and groups helping with social interaction. The service also covers information on benefits, housing needs, transport options and any help needed to stay independent at home the service works closely with other departments within Spelthorne and Surrey CC.

### **Social Prescribing**

GP surgeries refer patients to the Social Prescribing Service for many reasons, including inactive lifestyles, loneliness and isolation, anxiety, financial concerns, poor nutrition, and those struggling with daily routine. Social Prescribers take a holistic approach and work with residents to identify their needs and requirements, connecting them to a range of organisations and information. This can help them to access practical and emotional support and become more independent, physically active, increase their skill base, obtain advice, or become more socially connected, leading to a generally healthier and more fulfilling lifestyle. We are currently employing two social prescribers in partnership with the ICP/ NWS Alliance. Funding has been agreed for this to continue for a further two years.

### **Meals on Wheels**

We provide hot nutritious meals 7 days a week to elderly and vulnerable residents at lunch time and / or evening delivery, we can also offer sandwiches and frozen options. This also gives us the opportunity to carry out regular welfare checks. The cost is £4 per dinner and £1.80 for a sandwich, we froze these prices last year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

### **SPAN (Spelthorne Personal Alarm Network)**

SPAN is an alarm system aimed to help older or disabled people to live independently in their own homes. Residents are linked to a Care Call Centre providing help 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The Care Centre holds details of friends and/or family and will contact someone should the alarm be activated. They can also contact emergency services should this be required. The alarm is fitted and maintained by the SPAN team. Cost of basic alarm is between £4.30 & £6.00 per week, you can also have additional add on's such as smoke alarms, sensors and aids at an additional cost

### **Opal groups (Older People Actively Living)**

The OPAL Groups are set in a safe and friendly setting within our Ashford (Fordbridge) and Shepperton (Greeno) Community Centres. They are designed for older people who have some additional support needs, such as mobility issues, memory loss, partially sighted or hearing loss, mild or onset dementia, Parkinson or other long-term conditions, wheelchair, or other mobility aid users. Our aim is for our OPAL clients to enjoy social interaction, stimulating activities and a hot nutritious meal during the day with any help being provided by our support workers.

Opal clients can be transported to and from their home by the centre minibus and a support worker (£7.10 return journey). A hot lunch and pudding with many choices is offered daily for £4. All other refreshments are included in the daily fee, this includes hot drinks, a sausage roll, biscuits, and fruit.

OPAL offers a variety of stimulating activities each day, chair-based exercise, quizzes, Memory games, singing, puzzles, snooker, bingo, trips out, arts and crafts. activities are designed to keep the clients active both in body and mind and to enable people to socialise and to join in activities with others. We work closely with our colleagues in adult social care as an assessment of need might be required to see if funding is available. There is a daily charge of £40 to attend the group. This can be met by the client themselves if they have sufficient income, or as part of a social care package.

### **Disabled Facility Grant (DFG)**

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is available under the [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996](#) from Local Authorities to pay for essential housing adaptations to help disabled people stay in their own homes,

A grant can be used for adaptations to give better freedom of movement into and around the home and/or to provide essential facilities within it. A means test, like that for income support is applied unless the application is made for the benefit of a child or a young person under the age of 19. The applicant must be an owner occupier, a private tenant, a landlord with a disabled tenant, housing association tenant, or a local authority tenant. The maximum mandatory value of works is £30,000.

### **Four Community Centres, (Benwell, Fordbridge, Greeno, Staines)**

Our Community Centres are somewhere you can go for friendship, sign posting and support. We offer a wide range of activities for mental & physical wellbeing such as Yoga, Thai Chi, 121 computer lessons, learning a new language, bridge, carpet bowls and of course bingo & quizzes. Centre members can also see a hairdresser, chiropodist or a beautician.

We also offer a wide range of snacks and home cooked lunches, puddings. Also available are pack lunches to take home.

## Housing Benefit

The Housing Benefit team currently deals with four main areas of work:

- Housing Benefit applications
- Council Tax Support applications
- Discretionary Housing Payment requests
- The administration of Test and Trace self-isolation payments

The main function of the Housing Benefit team is to assist residents on a low income and in financial difficulty to help them pay their rental costs in rented accommodation and their council tax liability.

We also provide residents with information and support within the benefit field.

Since September 2020 the team has also been administering the £500 Test and Trace self-isolation payment system (£500 grants per eligible household). As of 21.06.21 we have received 639 applications and we have processed 616 claims. We have paid 358 claims at a cost of £179,000 and refused 258 claims. The remaining claims are waiting for further information. Of these 358 claims paid 168 claims have been paid out of the main core fund and 190 from the discretionary portion of the fund. Both core and discretionary payments are taken from the funding supplied by central government. The Government announced this week that it is extending the scheme to September

We currently have 19 staff – 8 full time and 11 part time staff which in total equates to 14.94 FTE

Our current caseload is as follows:

- Housing Benefit claims – 3,004
- Council Tax Support claims – 4,663

### **General information points:**

- We claim subsidy from central government to cover our housing benefit expenditure – we claimed £23.4 million for the financial year 2020/21
- We currently pay out £5.8 million per annum in Council Tax Support for Spelthorne residents
- We are also responsible for the issue of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) with a budget of £400,000 to help vulnerable residents with their rental liability due to any shortfall in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement. The budget is made up of central government and local authority contributions
- We spent £475,716 in DHP's in the financial year 2020/21 with an issue of 451 separate awards (we had additional funding available that year due to funding carry over from the previous year)
- Due to amount of expenditure this department has issued over the years in housing benefit over 400 million over the last twenty years we currently have £3,033,014 outstanding covering the same period in housing benefit overpayments which we are seeking re-payment of from claimants and ex-claimants.
- With regards performance for the year 2020/21 our department processed 3,744 new claims for benefit in an average number of days of 20.33 days. We also processed 29,359 change of circumstances with an average of 3.86 days.

## Community Development

The vision of the Community Development Team is to improve the quality of life and the wellbeing of the local community through strategic partnerships and community engagement and to shape what happens in our locality by working constructively with a wide range of partners from the third sector.

The main areas of work undertaken by the team include:

**Partnership Development:** Working with other public sector organisations such as Surrey County Council, Health, Education and Business communities as well as the voluntary sector, community and faith groups. Areas we have developed include:

- Supporting and promoting partnership working, particularly linked to the Council's priorities
- Managing the Council's relationship with the voluntary sector.
- Developing and maintaining relationships with borough's schools. This includes organising annual events such as citizenship education such as parliament and democracy and a school quiz

**Community Engagement:** Work with Spelthorne residents via Residents Associations, social and sports clubs, interest groups that represent the entire spectrum of communities throughout the borough.

Areas the team covers include:

- To organise, promote, attend and evaluate appropriate Community Engagement such as Residents' Associations meetings to achieve successful outcomes in terms of attendance and issues addressed.
- To support public events on behalf of the Council in relation to specific topics e.g. flooding, Heathrow, planning issues etc. Invitations are distributed via: Residents' Associations; schools and colleges; places of worship / faith communities; Neighbourhood Watch groups.

**Discretionary Annual Revenue Grants:** The team administer discretionary annual revenue grants (charity, community and leisure grants) on behalf of the Council and work with a panel of Councillors to assess applications and allocate funding. Community development also monitor how grants are being used by individual organisations throughout the year either through SLAs with the top funded organisations or periodic checks with recipient organisations

**Covid-19:** Throughout the pandemic and to date the Community Development team have worked closely with our community organisations, in particular with Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS), our local foodbanks and our Covid Champions. Community Development were also active in other areas such as assisting with the provision of boredom buster packs for elderly residents and enabling recognition for our local volunteers.

## Housing Options

The team has three main functions

- **Housing Register and Allocations to Social Housing.**

This is a statutory responsibility under the Housing Act 1996 part 6

- **Homeless Service**

This is a statutory service under the Housing Act 1996 part 7 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018)

- **Housing Strategy and Policy**

Some aspects such as a Homeless Strategy and Allocations Scheme are legal requirements

There are currently 2,979 households on the Housing Register. 600 of whom are existing social tenants wanting a move and the rest are home seekers. Applications are made online through our Searchmoves scheme and the majority of properties are advertised for customers to bid on through a choice-based lettings scheme.

There are currently 259 households wanting help as being homeless. 100 of them have been placed in emergency or temporary accommodation. Last year we prevented 200 households from becoming homeless. We operate an appointment system to see customers and take a proactive early intervention approach to homeless prevention. We also have a duty officer to deal with emergencies.

Housing Strategy are currently working on the management arrangements with Metropolitan Thames Valley for our new buildings Harper House and White House.

Other initiatives include a new homelessness forum, new tenancy strategy and revised allocations scheme.

There are 28 fte posts within the team.

Other services provided by Housing include:

Working with Knowle Green Estate to identify affordable rental and key worker tenants for Benwell House and identify affordable rental tenants for the West Wing scheme

**Rough Sleeper Service.** Numbers vary daily. We are currently providing emergency accommodation for 9 people who have slept rough. We have had 2 reports of people sleeping rough in the past week and have no one who is an entrenched rough sleeper. We are grant funded from the Governments Rough Sleeper Initiative which funds a rough sleeper post and a Housing First Worker.

**Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme.** This is a scheme to access the private rented sector where we guarantee a fair market rent to prospective landlords for 2 years.

**Tenancy Sustainment.** Many of our customers are vulnerable or have additional support needs which this service helps to provide. A consultation covering this area is schedule for July

**Health and Housing Integration.** One of the most important policy issues is the link between Health, Housing and Social Care. This post helps link these up for example ensuring during the covid pandemic that we enable patients to leave hospital promptly into suitable accommodation (9 step down units) to minimise the time spent in hospital.