

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
23 November 2021**

Present:

Councillor S.A. Dunn (Chairman)
Councillor S.M. Doran (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

C. Bateson

S. Buttar

J. Vinson

In Attendance: Councillors Beecher and Dunn

574/21 Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors M Attewell, M Madams, O Rybinski and V Siva.

Councillors R Chandler and N Islam were not present.

575/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

576/21 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

577/21 Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

578/21 Ward Issues

There were no ward issues to discuss at this meeting.

579/21 Verbal Update on the Community Wellbeing Covid Recovery Plan

The Committee received an update on the Community Wellbeing COVID recovery plan from the Joint Head of Community and Wellbeing, Deborah Ashman.

The Committee were advised that there were currently 20 Community Champions in the Borough who had helped the residents with queries relating to services offered by the Council during the pandemic. COVID Outreach volunteers would also be targeting areas where the take up of vaccinations had been low in comparison to the rest of the Borough.

Community Centres across the Borough had opened up but were not operating fully and COVID figures and Government guidelines were monitored carefully to ensure that it was safe to leave the centres open. All practicable measures had been put in place to prevent the spread of the virus such as staff vaccinations, wearing of masks and social distancing.

Positive feedback had been received from vulnerable residents attending the centres for the first time since re-opening after the lockdowns.

Deborah advised the Committee that a grant of £126k had been received from Central Government that was to be used to assist residents within the Borough that currently rented private properties; £14k of this was to be used to assist ex-offenders with their rent and £36k was to be used to assist residents that had been affected by domestic violence. The remaining £76k was to help families living in private rented properties.

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

580/21 Step Down Service Partnership

The Committee considered a report from Marta Imig Strategic Lead, Housing that sought agreement for officers to ask the North Surrey Health Alliance to continue to commission the Step Down Service and Partnership Agreement for a further 12 months from April 2022.

Karen advised that this service was introduced during COVID and was a partnership between Spelthorne Borough Council, A2Dominion, Elmbridge Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council, The Whitely Homes Trust and Woking Borough Council with Spelthorne Borough Council being the lead authority.

The scheme was designed to help patients leave hospital and go into short term accommodation for a maximum of six weeks. Here they would receive some additional support on discharge prior to moving into their own accommodation which would free up hospital beds. This service could also be used for residents needing additional help to prevent hospital admission. It was anticipated that by the end of the year 50-60 residents would have benefited from this service and the average stay in the 'step down' accommodation had been 38 days.

The Committee **resolved** that officers can ask the North West Surrey Health Alliance to continue to commission the Step Down Service and Partnership Agreement for a further 12 months from April 2022.

581/21 Capital Monitoring Q2 (July - Sept)

The Committee considered the Capital Monitoring Report 2021/22 Q2 30 September 2021 that outlined the capital projects that fell under the remit of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

582/21 Revenue Monitoring Q2 (July - Sept)

The Committee considered the Revenue Monitoring Report 2021/22 Q2 30 September 2021.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

583/21 Oast House - Bid for Cultural Grant Update

The Committee received a verbal update on the bid for a Cultural Grant for the Oast House from the Deputy Chief Executive, Terry Collier.

Terry advised the Committee that a bid had been submitted on time and that the decision would not be made by the Cultural Development Fund until 22 February 2022.

A public consultation had taken place to ascertain the views of residents on cultural activities within the Borough. 187 responses had been received with 87% stating that they would like to see more cultural activities within the Borough. If successful, the Council would be looking at cultural activities that would create jobs, be financially beneficial to the Council and would bring additional footfall into Staines.

The Committee agreed that any increase in cultural activities within the Borough would be positive and would help residents that currently feel isolated within their homes and could potentially generate more night time revenue.

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

584/21 Household Support Fund

The Committee received a verbal update on the Household Support Fund from the Joint Head, Community and Wellbeing, Deborah Ashman.

The Council had received £307k central Government funding allocated via Surrey County Council to use to support vulnerable residents with food and utility bills. All the money had to have been committed by end of March 2022 as any remaining would be taken back by Surrey County Council.

A local scheme had been agreed that would result in one-off payments being issued to residents currently in receipt of qualifying benefits. These payments would be as follows:

£50 – residents over 70 years
£60 – residents aged 18-70 years
£80 – families

A ratio of spend had been agreed as follows:

60% - families
20% - to single households
20% - households over 70 years

It was anticipated that approximately 4400 people in the Borough could be helped under this scheme. The scheme was being widely publicised throughout the Borough in order to reach as many residents as possible.

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

585/21 Shared Ownership Strategy

The Committee considered a report on the Shared Ownership Strategy from the Stephanie Green, Housing Strategy & Policy Officer and presented by the Joint Head of Community and Wellbeing, Karen Sinclair, that sought approval to adopt the revised Shared Ownership Strategy.

Karen advised the Committee that the existing Shared Ownership Policy was last reviewed in 2019 and that it required updating.

The Government had recently introduced a new model of shared ownership that would operate alongside the Affordable Homes Programmes for the next five years. Karen stated that whilst this was welcomed and provided potential residents with another option to afford to purchase a property the Council's preference would lean towards affordable homes. The Shared Ownership Scheme would be administered by a local agent and not the Council.

A provision had been written into the revised scheme that provided housing suppliers with specific guidance on how the properties would be marketed. The developer would be required to concentrate marketing within local areas for the first three months to attract Spelthorne residents.

The Committee **resolved** to approve the adoption of the revised Shared Ownership Policy.

586/21 Refugee Settlement Update

The Committee received a verbal update on refugee settlement in the Borough from the Deputy Chief Executive, Terry Collier.

Terry advised the Committee that another family had recently arrived in the short term temporary accommodation in the Borough bringing the number of people in temporary residences to 73. 14 families had now found permanent housing elsewhere in the country and had now moved out of the Borough.

Two properties had been sourced within the Borough to provide permanent accommodation but the Committee were advised that a further 3 properties were being sought. The Council had already received notification from the Home Office that they had identified a family that they would like to place in one of the existing 2 houses.

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

587/21 Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to note the Forward Plan.

588/21 Exclusion of press & Public

It was proposed by Councillor Dunn and Seconded by Councillor Doran and **resolved** to move the exclusion of the Press and Public for the remaining items on the agenda in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

589/21 Leisure Operator Procurement Project Update

The Committee received an update on the Leisure Operator Procurement Project from the Joint Group Heads, Deborah Ashman and Karen Sinclair.

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