

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
17 January 2023**

Present:

Councillor M.M. Attewell (Chairman)
Councillor O. Rybinski (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

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| C.L. Barratt | S.A. Dunn | J. Vinson |
| C. Bateson | H. Harvey | S.J Whitmore |
| J. Button | R.W. Sider BEM | |

Substitutions: Councillors R.O. Barratt (In place of N.J. Gething)

Apologies: Councillors N.J. Gething

In Attendance: Councillors M. Beecher

1/23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2022 were considered by the Committee.

Councillor Harvey requested that the minutes be amended to include an agreed action from discussion on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). The Committee **resolved** to agree the proposed amendment.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2022 were approved as a correct record of proceedings subject to the agreed amendment.

2/23 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Button declared he was trustee of a charity which had received a grant from the Annual Community Grants panel in 2022.

3/23 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

4/23 Ward Issues

There were none.

5/23 Review of Spelthorne Winter Warmer Project

The Committee received a verbal update on the Spelthorne Winter Warmer Project from the Strategic Lead Independent Living. The Fordbridge and Greeno Community Centres had successfully opened on alternate Saturdays, and this would continue until February 2023. Surrey County Council and local churches had made further contributions to provide extra warm hubs across the borough. The Council had promoted opening hours of these hubs and other organisations which offered similar support to residents.

The Committee queried how this project was publicised other than through the website. It was confirmed that communications were publicised through delivery of papers across borough organisations, word of mouth and through social media channels.

The Committee noted the success of this project and anticipated a need for this service to be available for the duration of February due to cold weather. The Committee **resolved** to agree extension of this project to cover Saturday opening hours for the month of February.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update and extended thanks to all staff who volunteered at the Community Centres on Saturdays.

6/23 Household Support Fund Phase 3

The Committee considered a report on the Household Support Fund Phase three from the Strategic Lead Independent Living which sought approval of the recommendations outlined in the report.

The Committee were advised that the allocation for phase three was £244,000. In this round of funding there had been additional emphasis to ensure those with disabilities received support, alongside working-age families in receipt of benefits, pensioners, and those in receipt of funding from phases one and two. An estimated 150 new applicants would be newly eligible to apply for phase three. The Committee were advised that option 2.1 was the preferred option as this would be the fairest way of distributing funds without excluding those already eligible in phase two.

The Committee queried the overall cost of implementing this scheme and were informed based on a previous phase administration, there were

estimated costs of £14,000. If the budget was not spent, funds would be put in a general allocation pot.

The Committee **resolved** to agree option 2.1 and approve the five recommendations outlined in the report.

7/23 Urgent Item- Cost of Living Crisis

The Chair agreed to the consideration of this item, in accordance with paragraph (4)(b) of section 100B of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following reason:

“Due to the cycle of committee meetings this item needs to be discussed and approved at tonight’s meeting in order to progress distributing first tranche of support to families in need as quickly as possible”.

The Committee considered a verbal report from the Deputy Chief Executive on application of the £200k Cost of Living Crisis Fund agreed by councillors to be set aside to support residents and communities across the borough through the current cost-of-living crisis.

The Committee were asked to consider allocating a cash grant for children and families identified as having high energy costs for both heating and medical equipment usage. 25 families identified by the children’s locality team could receive support in the region of £1000, with an option to increase this. The Deputy Chief Executive raised another aspect of utilising the Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund which concerned continuing discussions with foodbanks across the borough to provide additional funding.

The Committee queried the number of foodbanks being considered to receive additional funding and were advised this included at least six of the main foodbanks across the borough.

The Committee **resolved** to agree allocation of £1500 per household to the families (approximately 25) and supported continued discussion with foodbanks for additional funding.

8/23 Annual Community Grants Report

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Lead for Leisure and Community Development that sought approval for the Grants Awards for 2023/24. 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. The Committee were also asked to consider transferring their unallocated Better Neighbourhood Grant monies to the Grants budget for distribution.

Councillor Sider raised concern that the Shepperton Village Fair had not received Grant funding for 2023/24 as the Fair was an important community event which gave opportunity for charities to raise funds. Any Grant funding would help with building of infrastructure, safety, and security. It was proposed by Councillor Sider and seconded by Councillor C Barratt and **resolved** that the Shepperton Village Fair be awarded a grant of £1000.

The Committee requested that newly elected Councillors be reminded of their Better Neighbourhood Grants during training in May 2023.

Resolved:

1. Approve the grants awards for 2023/24,
2. To note all other support Spelthorne Borough Council provides to the voluntary/charity sector and;
3. To transfer unallocated Councillors Better Neighbourhood Grant monies for 2023/24 are transferred to the Grants budget for allocation.

9/23 23/24 Budget

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the draft budget, fees and charges, growth bids, savings bids, and capital bids for the Committee's areas of responsibility.

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the Net Expenditure Budget and highlighted items where significant changes between the current and previous year were reflected. Overall, the draft budget for the Committee had been reduced by £150,000.

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Detailed Budget, noting that following the move to a new financial system the presentation would be refined in future. The Committee requested clarification on the high salary costs and miscellaneous costs recorded within the budget. The Committee was provided with a detailed budget breakdown and there were some specific queries. The Committee questioned the budget of Benwell Day Centre which no longer officially operated and requested that savings in this area be considered. This would be reviewed and raised at the Council Budget meeting.

The Committee queried the figure on projects within the homelessness prevention category. A written note on this would be provided to the Committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Savings Bids which had been reviewed by Officers and would be incorporated into the net budget. The Deputy Chief Executive further presented the Growth Bids and explained both staffing posts were fully funded by external sources.

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Fees and Charges and explained that these had been increased by at least 5% in accordance with instruction

from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. The Committee raised concern about the impact of this increase on particular services such as Meals on Wheels. The Committee requested that the Deputy Chief Executive explore options to not increase the fees for the Meals on Wheels service.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee approve the draft 23/24 budget with respect to the Committee's Budget.

10/23 Feedback on 23/24 Budget Setting Process

The Committee provided feedback on the 23/24 Budget Setting Process during discussion of the previous item.

11/23 Leisure Centre Update

The Committee received an update from the Strategic Lead for Leisure and Community Development on the Leisure Centre project. The project was progressing as planned. Request for approval of the preferred leisure operator bidder would be presented to the Committee in June to make a recommendation to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and Council in July 2023.

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

12/23 Forward Plan

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

The Committee requested that the Review of the Tenancy Strategy be moved to the meeting scheduled 28 March 2023.

The Committee **resolved** to add the following items to the forward plan following discussion throughout the meeting:

- 1) Review of Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee's Policies and Strategies that Impact on Knowle Green Estates.
- 2) Capital Funding for Afghan and Ukrainian Homes
- 3) An Update on Deferred Items From The Grants Panel
- 4) Presentation from Surrey Officers on Youth Initiatives

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan subject to the agreed amendments.