

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee  
24 September 2024**

**Present:**

Councillor O. Rybinski (Vice-Chair)

**Councillors:**

M. Arnold

L.H. Brennan

K.M. Grant

M.M. Attewell

S.A. Dunn

C. Bateson

A. Gale

**Substitutions:** Councillors S. Beatty, T. Burrell, and S.C. Mooney

**Apologies:** Councillors S.M. Doran, M. Bing Dong, R.V. Geach and A. Mathur

**26/24 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

**27/24 Disclosures of Interest**

There were none.

**28/24 Questions from members of the Public**

There were none.

**29/24 Community Safety Partnership Plan and Priorities 2024-2026**

The Community Safety Manager presented the report on the creation of a new Community Safety Partnership Plan and Priorities 2024-2026. This plan replaced the previous plan and incorporated statutory and local crime and disorder reduction measures through the Spelthorne Safer Stronger

Partnership. The plan had recently been sent out for public consultation to assess the community perception of crime and disorder.

Members acknowledged that this was an informative report which provided useful information for residents. The Committee queried how long the consultation on community safety will be open to the public. The Community Safety Manager confirmed the survey will be open for six weeks from 9 September until 18 October 2024. Thereafter, a noting report on the results of the consultation will be published.

The Committee raised there had been significant increases in Spelthorne this year in acquisitive crimes compared to last year, and queried whether targeted plans to resolve these crimes, particularly in established hotspots was being considered. The Community Safety Manager confirmed that the current defined hotspots for retail crimes was Staines Town Centre and Sunbury Cross. Plans for dealing with priority areas including acquisitive crime were outlined within the report.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Note the report; and
2. Approve the Community Safety Partnership Plan and Priorities 2024-26.

### **30/24 Q and A with Borough Commander**

The Borough Commander, Inspector Matthew Walton introduced himself and invited members to raise any issues that they or residents may be concerned about.

The Committee noted that incidents of violent crimes had heightened recently with concerning reports regularly being shared on social media. The Borough Commander explained that violent crimes had increased nationally, however arresting and charging perpetrators of serious violent crimes was a priority. Various violent crime reduction projects were also ongoing across the country and there were aspirations for Surrey Police to progress these ideas in our borough.

The Committee acknowledged that many of those engaging in crime within Spelthorne were travelling by train from outside the borough into stations such as Sunbury and Ashford where there was no manned presence or barriers to prevent them from leaving. The Committee queried whether Surrey Police could trial a manned presence around these stations and see if it makes any difference to wider offending. Inspector Walton clarified that safety in train stations fell into the remit of the British Transport Police, however, Surrey Police were in regular contact to raise concerns with this force as well as British Rail. Consideration would be given to initiating a targeted operation in future on certain stations together with British Transport Police.

Members raised that residents were often reluctant to report crimes due to lengthy response times and asked what steps were being taken to improve this situation. The Borough Commander detailed that ever increasing demands, lack of staff and funding, the increasing number of incidents and prioritisation of incidents was collectively contributing to slower response times. Generally, physical risk was prioritised over property risk however Surrey Police were making all efforts to mitigate delays for all reports.

The Committee questioned whether Surrey Police had sufficient resources to support staff, particularly in relation to wellbeing. Inspector Walton identified that there were budget and resourcing challenges within the force, which had knock on effects on staff physical and mental health. There were a number of wellbeing services which police staff and officers could access for support.

Members highlighted that recent plain clothes patrols in Shepperton High Street had been useful in developing intelligence related to shopliftings to support local businesses. Members insisted that similar proactive operations should follow as many small shops were losing stock and customers were intimidated. Inspector Walton reinforced that a number of targeted operations were in place to reduce retail crimes in Spelthorne's high streets.

The Committee asked how understaffing was impacting the force. The Borough Commander responded that although recruitment into the force was doing well in some areas, there was still a lack of PCSOs and Police Staff which resulted in warranted officers spending more time in office rather than on the street. There were further issues with retention and the fact there was a growing young force who were less experienced in policing.

The Committee stated that drugs offences were taking place regularly in the same locations across the borough, and asked whether a breakthrough on identifying repeat offenders was approaching. The Borough Commander informed that drug dealing reporting had gone up by 13-14 percent in the last year which was positive as intelligence from the community was necessary to carry out arrests and enforce closure orders on residences.

The Committee discussed growing concerns around knife crime, particularly for the parents of children transitioning into Secondary Schools as this was their first experience of independence. The Committee agreed youth programs were good forums to educate and deter younger people from engaging in knife crime, and the police should communicate any available opportunities to parents and schools. The Borough Commander concurred that Youth Clubs and projects were useful and similar groups were being piloted in organisations across the borough. For instance, the recent Junior Citizen event was well received and further sessions were due to be scheduled.

The Community Development Manager presented the report on the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy 2024-2028.

The current safeguarding policy had been updated to comply with statutory requirements. The main amendments to the policy included a revised continuum of support, updated guidance on referrals and captured new information on data sharing when dealing with safeguarding incidents.

The Committee queried the scope of Spelthorne's Strategic Safeguarding Board and how it fed into the wider County safeguarding function. The Community Development Manager advised that the board was held quarterly with agenda items featuring training updates, learning from serious case reviews and any concerns around referrals. The current focus was on developing appropriate safeguarding training for Councillors. Spelthorne worked in partnership with the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and the Surrey Adult Safeguarding Board (SSAB) and referred all safeguarding concerns to Surrey County Council as they had the statutory responsibility for this in Surrey.

The Committee asked whether communications between all safeguarding agencies in Surrey were sufficient enough to ensure a streamlined reporting process. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that at Spelthorne there was a streamlined procedure for Safeguarding Champions to make referrals however it was for Surrey County Council as the lead authority to comment on the investigation of referrals.

The Committee requested an indicative timeline of when Councillor safeguarding training will be scheduled. The Community Development Manager suggested there were a number of training options to consider and logistical points to clarify including choosing a provider and whether they could facilitate online training. Lisa agreed to explore training options and anticipated this will be confirmed in the next three to six months.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Make a recommendation to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to approve the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy 2024-2028.
2. Make a recommendation to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to delegate authority to the Strategic Safeguarding Lead in consultation with the Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee to approve minor amendments and updates to the Policy.

### **32/24 Group Training Licences in Parks**

The Committee considered a report from the Leisure Development Manager on Group Training Licences in parks. The report set out the objective to adopt a new procedure and invite applications to ensure fitness instructors who use

our parks have licences in place. This would also include a new pricing structure, offering a lower price for groups with less participants.

The Committee initially expressed that this was a proactive arrangement which would regulate activity in our parks, particularly as all fitness trainers will be required to provide risk assessments and public liability insurance.

Other members raised that the proposal to issue licences along with fees and charges was not a priority for the Council. This new arrangement was seen to disadvantage self-employed individuals and would potentially discourage trainers from using our parks. It was suggested that an alternative process should be implemented to instead register with a one off nominal fee and allow trainers to carry digital passes for identification purposes. The Leisure Development Manager emphasised that this procedure was intended to safeguard residents as well as trainers. The pricing structure had been moderated since this report was previously presented at Neighbourhood Services Committee in March 2024 and was also based on other authorities, presenting good value for money.

The Committee considered whether there was a risk that associated fees and charges may increase in future to cover the costs to supervise the activity in parks. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that he did not expect the fees and charges to increase.

It was proposed by Councillor Bateson, and seconded by Councillor Arnold to approve the preferred recommendation subject to reviewing this arrangement after one year and reporting back to Committee to ensure this new arrangement was working well and that fees and charges remained the same.

The Committee voted on the amended recommendation and by majority vote, the Committee **resolved** to approve the issuing of licences for fitness training including the proposed pricing structure whereby instructors pay a nominal fee subject to reviewing this arrangement after one year and reporting back to Committee.

### **33/24 Establishment of Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Working Group and Terms of Reference**

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Lead, Housing on the establishment of a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Working Group and Terms of Reference which was intended to support the on time delivery of the strategy. Four members had already volunteered to sit on this Working Group, and approval will allow them to continue playing an active role from the outset.

The Committee considered whether the task group was required as it was unnecessarily involving members in strategic activities and creating extra work for Officers involved. The Strategic Lead, Housing confirmed that the

working group will allow expertise to be shared by colleagues to inform new strategic priorities and will facilitate ongoing engagement with members outside of formal committee meetings. Other members noted that it was good practice to facilitate a working group to involve interested councillors.

The Committee requested that further details on the timeline and implementation of the strategy be provided and to clarify whether the strategy will be referred to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for final approval.

Committee **resolved** to:

1. Agree the establishment of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Working Group ('the Working Group').
2. Agree the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Working Group, outlined in Appendix A.
3. Agree membership of the Working Group, including the nomination of any Elected Members.

#### **34/24 Forward Plan**

The Committee **noted** the Forward Plan

#### **35/24 Exclusion of Public and Press**

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

#### **36/24 Bringing the service at White House and Harper House in house**

#### **37/24 Actions arising from the meeting**

-Lisa Stonehouse, Community Development Manager agreed to explore Councillor Safeguarding training Options and schedule a session in within three to six months.

-Mary Holdaway, Leisure Development Manager agreed to explore alternative Group Training Licensing procedures suggested by members that could be considered in future.

-Steph Green to provide further details on the timeline and implementation of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.

-The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to provide a more detailed service plan on bringing the service at White House and Harper House in house with further financial breakdown to be provided to committee members during the budget setting process (To be actioned by the Strategic Lead, Housing and Group Head Assets).