

**Minutes of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee
11 June 2024**

Present:

Councillor S.M. Doran (Chair)
Councillor O. Rybinski (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

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

In Attendance: Councillor M. Beecher

16/24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

17/24 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

18/24 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

19/24 Terms of Reference

The Committee considered the Terms of Reference for Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to note the terms of reference.

20/24 Strategic Priorities for 2024/2025

There were no comments on the Strategic Priorities for Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee 2024/2025.

21/24 Housing Allocations Policy Amendments

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Strategic Housing Lead which sought approval to make amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy. The report detailed that following Committee's approval of a new Housing Allocations Policy in June 2022, a contradiction in the policy wording was identified which required correction. The discrepancy was currently impacting a small handful of applications who had not been unduly disadvantaged, however the number may increase if the errors were not addressed.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Approve the amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy.

22/24 Spelthorne Annual Grants 2025/26

The Committee considered a report from the Community Development Manager which sought approval to make three decisions and recommendations to Council regarding the Spelthorne Annual Grants 2025/26. The first recommendation related to providing indicative grant funding for the five-core funded voluntary organisations for the financial year 2026/2027 when the 2025/2026 grant award is made. This would be beneficial as an additional year of indicative funding would assist the charities with forward planning, staff recruitment and retention.

The second recommendation proposed to ring fence a minimum of £3,000 of the grants budget to sport and active lifestyle projects and £3,000 to arts projects. This would ensure that funding for sports and arts organisations continue as they have an important role in the community by providing services which positively impact on wellbeing.

The third recommendation was to amend the grant eligibility criteria to exclude schools and Parent Teacher Associations from applying. This was because borough councils hadn't previously provided funding for schools, and there were other more suitable funding sources.

The Committee requested that it be made clear to all Councillors when the grant application process begins. The Community Development Manager confirmed she will ensure any communications are sent out in advance of the application window opening in September 2024.

The Committee **resolved** to approve Option 1, Option 2 and Option 3 as set out in the report and **resolved** to:

1. Agree and recommend to Council about providing indicative Grant funding for the five-core funded voluntary organisations (Voluntary

Support North Surrey, Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne, Homestart, Age UK and Shopmobility) for the financial year 2026/2027 when the 2025/2026 grant award is made.

2. Agree and recommend to Council to ringfence a minimum of £3000 of the grants budget to sport and active lifestyle projects and £3000 to arts projects. (subject to receiving applications from sport and art organisations).
3. Agree and recommend to Council to amend the grant eligibility criteria to exclude schools and parent teacher Associations from applying.

23/24 Community Centre Saturday Opening (a continuation)

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Lead, Independent Living on the Continuation of the Community Centre Saturday Opening provision. Currently two of our three community centres opened on alternate Saturdays to offer a 6 day week centre offer to support our most vulnerable client group. The Committee were asked to consider endorsing the continuation of the 6 days a week approach and then review this again in six months (December 2024). There was provision within the North West Surrey Alliance Prevention Fund to further fund this initiative. However, for this initiative to become a permanent provision, a growth bid would need to be submitted to embed the additional budget implications.

The Committee noted it was important to manage expectations and emphasise to residents that this was a discretionary addition to the Community Centre service offer, should the return to the 5 day a week provision be reinstated.

The Committee made some potential suggestions to extend the Community Centre Saturday opening provision permanently. The Deputy Chief Executive noted the suggestions which could be modelled and explored in more detail by this Committee during the annual budget process. The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that some of the options would be ongoing growth which may require the need for offsetting savings to be identified by the Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee **resolved** to approve Option 2 and **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.

24/24 Forward Plan

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

The Committee requested that the Community Centre Saturday Opening report be added to the Forward Plan (to be presented to Committee on 2 December 2024).

The Committee sought clarification on whether the Borough Commander or Surrey Policy and Crime Commissioner would be in attendance at the upcoming Crime and Disorder meeting (24 September 2024). The Group Head, Community Wellbeing confirmed that preparation for the Crime and Disorder aspect of this meeting will be coordinated by Group Head, Neighbourhood Services.

The Committee **noted** the Forward Plan with the addition of the items agreed during the meeting.

25/24 Late Item- Service Plan 2024/2025

The Group Head, Community Wellbeing introduced the Housing Benefits Service Plan 2024/25 and gave a brief overview of the team. The key projects for 2024/25 were detailed as well as current key issues and risks being faced including staff retention due to the uncertainties arising from the proposed Department for Work and Pensions role in relation to Universal Credit.

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