

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 7th April, 2022 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr S.J. Masterson (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin  
Cllr Jib Belbase  
Cllr M.S. Choudhary  
Cllr R.M. Cooper  
Cllr K. Dibble  
Cllr L. Jeffers  
Cllr Mara Makunura  
Cllr Nem Thapa

## **26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th February, 2022 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

## **27. REGISTERED PROVIDERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP - ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

Cllr Mrs D.B. Bedford, Chairman of the Registered Providers Task and Finish Group and Ms Zoe Paine, Strategy and Enabling Manager, introduced Report No. EPSH2211 on the work of the Group during 2021/22.

Cllr Bedford, advised that no major problems had been identified with the three Registered Providers (RP) that had been scrutinised during the year; VIVID, Stonewater and Metropolitan Thames Valley. However, site visits continued to be restricted due to the pandemic and the Group had had to put trust in the views of the RPs, Officers and residents. It was also noted that, when issues did arise or complaints were made by residents, they were generally dealt with quickly.

In addition to the programmed reviews, it was noted that a number of issues had arisen with A2 Dominion during the year and the Group had requested a meeting with them before the end of April, 2022 to address the issues.

A request was made to review the option of site visits moving into the 2022/23 Municipal Year and to consider the option of drop in visits. It was also noted that Members should be encouraged to feed any issues from residents raised with them directly into the Group.

Ms Paine, commented on the direct access reporting system for councillors, which gave councillors the option to report issues directly on behalf of their residents. This system was now available with both VIVID and Metropolitan Thames Valley. The contact details would be circulated to all Members.

The Committee **ENDORSED** the work of the Registered Providers Task and Finish Group during 2021/22 and **APPROVED** the preparation of a programme of reviews for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Bedford and Ms Paine for their report.

## 28. **CABINET CHAMPIONS**

The Committee welcomed the three Cabinet Champions, Cllr Abul Chowdhury (Equalities and Diversity Champion), Cllr Jacqui Vosper (Armed Forces Champion) and Cllr Mara Makunura (Health and Wellbeing Champion) who had been invited to give reports on their work during the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

**(1) Equalities and Diversity Champion** – Cllr Chowdhury gave an overview of some of the work he had been carrying out during the year, to help build relations with the Borough's diverse communities, increase access to services and instil trust.

- A range of meetings with different community groups had been undertaken to hear their stories and experiences about living locally and accessing local services. Groups represented were from the Nepalese, Fijian, the Cameroon, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Muslim communities and several local church groups representing other BAME communities.
- Issues identified at these meetings were generally around funding and grant assistance to carry out activities within the different communities, Cllr Chowdhury had been able to signpost groups to funding and grant schemes through the Council's networks.
- More complex issues had also emerged for some individuals within these diverse communities, including suitable housing – large enough properties to house large families and understanding of the English language to access services digitally. Cllr Chowdhury reported that he had frequently been called on to assist members of the communities with day to day tasks relating to language or digital access and was in discussion with Officers on how the community could be supported more with these issues.
- It was also noted that several cases of discrimination had been reported during the Municipal Year via the Champion and, with Officer support, those affected had been guided and supported.

**(2) Armed Forces Champion** – Cllr Vosper reported on the activities carried out as part of her role:

- It was noted that the Armed Forces Act had received Royal Assent which enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant in law. Cllr Vosper had been involved in the development of the provisions contained in the Act through her work in the All Party Armed Forces Covenant Legislation Parliamentary Group.
- A review was underway of the structure and working arrangements of the North Hampshire Covenant Partnership. It was felt that a conference could be held 1-2 times a year which would be attended by a range of stakeholders within the military and civilian communities.
- Through the response to the pandemic, joint working between the Military, Council and NHS had enabled improved engagement with service personnel and their dependents.
- It was reported that the Veterans' Hubs in both Aldershot and Farnborough had recently reopened. Through working with the Veteran's Hub in Camberley lessons had been learnt to help improve attendance and identify activities to be carried out locally. Cllr Vosper advised that veterans were often difficult to locate as they didn't want to be found. Work was underway to identify service personnel coming up to retirement/leaving the armed forces to allow for early engagement.
- The Garrison Community Hub had recently been refurbished, the idea for the hub was to become a centre for local civilian and military communities to come together.
- Cllr Vosper reported on the school examination achievements of military children. It was noted that, at secondary school, achievement levels were in line with children from non-military backgrounds, with the exception of GCSE English grades, which were lower and at A-level, grades dropped by 10-15% overall. It was also noted that military children attending state schools were less likely to go on to university than their non-military counterparts. Cllr Vosper felt that these statistics should be better understood.

The Committee were also advised of an initiative to introduce "Pupil Passports" for military children which would detail their education to assist when moving between schools.

- Cllr Vosper had attended a number of events during the year, these included:
  - The Cameroon Festival
  - The Bula Festival
  - Remembrance Sunday events
  - The Community Carol Services – an event organised jointly between the Council and the Garrison
  - The 50th Anniversary on the IRA bombing of the Officers' Mess in Aldershot

**(3) Health and Wellbeing Champion** – Cllr Makunura advised on the focus of her role:

- A range of initiatives had been worked on, in conjunction with Council Officers and key organisations such as Citizens' Advice and Rushmoor Voluntary Services. These included:
  - Health and wellbeing signposting
  - The Grub Hub
  - Increased physical activity
  - Community gardens and Men's Shed
- Cllr Makunura reported on the work undertaken to establish the Rushmoor Accessibility Access Group. Working with key community groups, the Group had been established to raise the profile and awareness of access and inclusion. The Group's aim would be to represent the views of people with disabilities and accessibility issues in order to provide support and advice on key work areas such as planning, and regeneration. Cllr Makunura had been keen to develop the work of the Group further to deliver improvements for people with disabilities. A number of initiatives had been identified for 2022/23, should the role continue, these were:
  - Accessibility at polling stations
  - Increased interaction and communication about access issues with local organisations and businesses
  - Improved local environment to ensure equal access for all
- In response to the pandemic, joint working with the NHS and local Primary Care Networks had enabled improved engagement and partnership working.
- A number of events have been held throughout the year, these included:
  - Delivery of the Heritage Trails and promotion of community walks
  - The "We Can Do It" campaign to promote physical activity
  - Wellness walks to encourage social interaction and reduce loneliness
- Forthcoming activities included The Garrison Community Health Fair on 26th May, 2022 and a project within schools to help address mental health issues supported by B&Q

The Committee discussed the activities of the Champions and a number of suggestions were made, including:

- Consideration be given to attendance at the first meeting of the Committee in the new Municipal Year, to outline plans for the forthcoming year to assist Members to measure effectiveness of the roles and set performance - these would then be reviewed at the last meeting of the Municipal Year
- Consideration be given to change the name to "Council Champion"
- More liaison between Champions and Shadow Champions
- Greater communication with all Members on the work being undertaken, in particular with Ward Members when work impacted their Ward

In response to a query regard the Rushmoor Accessibility Access Group it was agreed that elected Members be given the opportunity to attend and raise awareness of the Group. It was noted that the Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing had also been approached to add the Group to the list of consultees for planning matters.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Champions for their reports And it was agreed that the arrangements would be discussed at the next meeting of the Progress Group.

## **29. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**

The Committee received a presentation from Andrew Colver, Head of Democracy and Community, on progress with the Climate Change Action Plan and proposals for the future.

The Committee was apprised of the background to the work on the Climate Change Emergency declared in 2019, and the philosophy and development of the Strategy Statement and Action Plan. It was noted that, the Action Plan was currently being reviewed in view of the Council's Carbon Footprint findings and new Government policies. The process being undertaken to carry out the review had been to establish a programme of projects that were then assessed by assessing: projects versus business as usual, ranking into achievable deliverables and impacts, assigning projects against budget/resource and prioritising top actions by service. It was also advised that the Climate Change Action Plan would be closely aligned with the emerging Green Infrastructure Plan currently being developed.

The Action Plan highlighted five priority areas with 90 actions spread over three different time frames (2020/21, 2021/22 and 2023 onwards). The priorities included, energy performance, community engagement, planning and delivery of adaptation and mitigation measures in regeneration projects, introduction of a food waste service and waste minimalisation scheme and, supporting the Council's new ways of working project.

The Committee was advised on actions that had been delivered to date, these included:

- Development of a climate change funding stream database
- Provisions within the Procurement Strategy established to ensure sustainable and ethical procurement
- Introduction of food waste scheme
- Participation in schemes such as the iChoser solar panel scheme and the LAD2 funding scheme
- Webpage update
- Schools outreach – Eco Schools and young people competition
- Southwood tree planting and edible hedgerow planting on the Blackwater Valley Path
- Membership of the Sustainable Business Network
- Joint working with Hart District Council

The Committee reviewed the reserve fund spend to date and it was noted that currently about half of the fund had been allocated. It was noted that a Climate Change apprentice had been employed within the Democracy and Community Team and this role had been funded through the reserve fund. Other spend to note was the work within schools and pump priming resources for EV Infrastructure projects.

The Committee noted that Rushmoor was to join an EV Charging Infrastructure trial with Hampshire County Council. The scheme was currently operating in Winchester and Eastleigh and the trial covered both on street and car park EV charging points. It was hoped that the trial would commence in Rushmoor later in the year.

A number of green events were scheduled to take place in the coming months, this included a Tour de Moon event in June, which was an initiative aimed at young people and consisted of a convoy of electric vehicles and floats housing, amongst others, a pop up cinema and recording studio. A sustainability fair and big green week were also planned for September, 2022.

In response to a query regarding the “on hold” and “removed” items that had been identified in the Action Plan, it was advised that officers had gone through a process of identifying projects within the programme that were resource intensive and/or had a low impact, the main focus for projects were ones that achieved the greatest carbon emission reduction. Details of the identified projects would be shared and discussed with the Climate Change Working Group, in the first instance.

The Chairman thanked Mr Colver for his presentation and it was agreed that the Progress Group should consider any specific areas in the Climate Change Action Plan for further scrutiny.

### 30. **WORK PLAN**

The current Work Plan was **NOTED**.

The Committee thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to scrutinise a wide range of issues during the year and the way the meetings had been handled.

As this was the last meeting of the Municipal Year it was also noted that the Annual Report would be drafted and shared with the Chairman in advance of the Council Meeting on 28th April, 2022.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)

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