

BOROUGH SERVICES POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Monday, 26th March, 2018 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr A.R. Newell (Chairman)
Cllr R.L.G. Dibbs (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Marina Munro
Cllr B.A. Thomas

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr T.D. Bridgeman and Cllr Liz Corps.

18. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd January, 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

19. RUSHMOOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES

The Panel welcomed Mr. Greg Alexander, Chief Executive Officer, Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS), who attended the meeting to give an update on the working arrangements and operations within the service.

Mr. Alexander reported on the core work carried out within the community by the service. It was noted that 380 local groups and organisations were members of RVS, all of which benefitted from information, support, funding advice and partnership working. In addition, RVS hosted a Voluntary Sector Forum on a quarterly basis, and contributed to the Rushmoor Strategic Partnership. The Panel noted that RVS offered training courses in areas such as first aid, minibus driving and mental health, provided a home help service to in excess of 250 clients across the borough and supported the Blooming Marvellous Gardening scheme for mental health sufferers.

The Panel was advised of the current position with volunteers; 200 new volunteers were placed each year locally, providing an economic contribution to Rushmoor of around £7.16 million. RVS had been working with the Cabinet Member for Concessions and Community Support and the Council on initiatives to recruit new volunteers and had jointly hosted a "Volunteers Fair" in Aldershot during 2017; another "Volunteers Fair" would be held in Farnborough during 2018. It was noted that the majority of volunteers were in the 26-49 years age group.

Mr. Alexander advised on the current situation with community transport. It was noted that RVS owned five minibuses for community use, these buses were available for hire by community groups and organisations of which there were 80+ hirings per month. All drivers were volunteers and the operation was self funding. The Panel noted that a potential issue which might affect the minibus service, was that the Department for Transport were currently in the process of reviewing the Section 19/22 permits due to reports of some minibus scheme operators abusing the system and operating as commercial minibus services. It was hoped that the impact of this review would be low on RVS.

An update was provided on the Dial a Ride service operated by RVS on behalf of Hampshire County Council (HCC). The operation was funded equally by the County Council and Rushmoor Borough Council and it was noted that HCC had reduced their funding by 8% for the 2018/19 financial year. This decision had forced RVS to increase the fares from summer 2018. However, it was noted that customers valued the service and were happy to pay the additional cost. Mr. Alexander advised that HCC would be re-tendering the service in 2019/20 for which dialogue would commence in Autumn, 2018.

The Panel was advised on the working arrangements with HCC. It was noted that core funding had been agreed for a one year period in line with the County's T19 Transformation Programme. Going forward the work of RVS would be contained in a set development plan aiming for a standard offer to all Hampshire residents, outcomes of which would be set against Hampshire priorities. The work would involve more signposting to online services, alternative support, involving volunteers in care homes and other settings and placing individuals with support needs into local voluntary groups. Mr. Alexander advised that the proposals would be challenging and concerns had been raised over the level of care that could be provided to those in need if some of the proposals were agreed.

In addition to the core work, RVS managed three charity funds, which offered grants up to £200 to groups/carers. There were also links with the Community Matters Partnership to compliment the work they carried out with local businesses, some of which had used their community volunteering hours to help with RVS led projects, such as school playground maintenance.

Challenges faced by RVS centred around reduced funding, transformation and the Farnborough Community Centre. Mr. Alexander had been involved in talks around the Civic Quarter proposals and the future of the community centre. It was noted that RVS were keen to keep the association going and would consider employing someone to manage bookings and invoicing for the centre and help in whatever way they could to retain the facility. A strategic plan was being developed to look at resources and identify where changes needed to be made; consideration would be given to the pricing structure for minibus and home help services. Unfortunately, helping groups and organisation wasn't a sellable product - to generate income a trading arm would need to be established which was something that could be considered in the future.

The Panel discussed the presentation and the impacts of the reduction in funding from HCC and how this could be mitigated. It was understood that there was scope

to generate more funds from the paid for services provided by RVS, such as minibus hire and Home Help. In respect of seeking new volunteers a suggestion was made to consider those attending the Job Club. Individuals out of work and seeking employment often undertook volunteering roles to enhance their skills. Another place to consider was the colleges; students were increasingly taking a gap year between leaving college and starting university during which they could take on volunteer work. This could assist in areas like IT and computer skills.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Alexander for his presentation.

20. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel noted the current work programme.

The meeting closed at 7.59 pm.

CLLR A.R. NEWELL (CHAIRMAN)
