

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Report of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 27th June, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Marina Munro (Chairman)
Cllr Jessica Auton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Allen
Cllr Jib Belbase
Cllr Michael Hope
Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Calum Stewart
Cllr Becky Williams
Cllr G. Williams

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Cllr Jessica Auton be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

3. APPOINTMENTS 2023/24

(1) Progress Group

RESOLVED: That the following members be appointed to serve on the Policy and Project Advisory Board Progress Group for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

PPAB Chairman	Cllr Marina Munro
PPAB Vice-Chairman	Cllr Jessica Auton
Conservative Group	Cllr Michael Hope Cllr Calum Stewart
Labour Group	Cllr M.J. Roberts Cllr Gareth Williams
Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr Thomas Mitchell

(2) Transformation Task and Finish Group

RESOLVED: That the following members be appointed to serve on the Transformation Task and Finish Group for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

PPAB Chairman	Cllr Marina Munro
Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, Digital and Transformation	Cllr J.B. Canty
Conservative Group	Cllr Ade Adeola Cllr Peace Essien-Igodifo
Labour Group	Cllr Abe Allen Cllr Jules Crossley
Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr Thomas Mitchell

(3) Elections Group

RESOLVED: That the following members be appointed to serve on the Elections Group for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

PPAB Vice-Chairman	Cllr Jess Auton
Cabinet Member with responsibility for Electoral Issues	Cllr Sue Carter
Chairman of Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee	Cllr P.J. Cullum
Conservative Group	Cllr Calum Stewart
Labour Group	Cllr K. Dibble Cllr Becky Williams
Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr Craig Card

4. WORK PLAN

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

It was noted that the Progress Group meeting would take place on 5th July, 2023 at 5.30pm on Teams.

The meeting closed at 7.17 pm.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the Meeting held on Thursday, 20th July, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr K. Dibble (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr S. Trussler

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th June, 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

8. STAGECOACH

The Committee welcomed Aaron Hodgkiss, Operations Manager, Aldershot and Sudib Gurung, Assistant Operations Manager, Aldershot, at Stagecoach, who were in attendance to address matters raised regarding Stagecoach services, performance delivery and challenges, recent changes and potential impacts from changes to service funding.

In addition, Members had been apprised of a current residents survey, undertaken by the Labour Group, on changes to bus services. The survey deadline was yet to be reached, however preliminary findings had been shared with the Committee prior to the meeting.

County Councillor Bill Withers was also present at the meeting, and had been invited to join the discussions.

Members received the presentation from Mr Hodgkiss, which covered;

- Operations – It was noted that the Aldershot depot had been fully staffed with 196 employees, of which, 153 were drivers, this was despite there being a national shortage of drivers. It was also advised that Stagecoach's fleet of buses, which carried 480,000 passengers per month locally, was expected to be sustainably fuelled or fully electric by 2035.

- Data on revenue and passenger numbers – it was advised that following the pandemic, concessionary travel had been slowest to recover. Fare paying travel had recovered well on most routes.
- Current Challenges – Road works and traffic delays were key challenges for the bus services. Understanding post pandemic working pattern and hybrid working, to identify growth areas and effectively serve the community was also noted as a challenge for the operator.
- Bus Station closure – the closure of the Aldershot Bus Station in early May, 2023, had presented some challenges, including temporary traffic orders in Aldershot Town Centre and roadside parking. However, some positives had emerged from the closure, including timetable improvements and improved reliability, the creation of opportunity for change and the provision of more centrally located stops for shoppers. The team continued to manage customer feedback and concerns and were aware of a number of issues relating to accessibility to the Railway Station.
- Future Plans – It was noted that Stagecoach had met with and would continue to engage with the Leader of the Council on local issues and would also be meeting with Labour representatives to discuss the full findings of the survey once the deadline had passed. It was also noted that the Santa Bus would be returning in the run up to Christmas with the aim of raising funds for local charities.

The Committee raised a number of queries, as follows:

- No. 9/10 Service (Voyager House) – it was noted that the current No. 9 only ran till 3pm, causing issues for those attending medical appointments in the afternoon at Voyager House, the No. 10 served the area later in the day but the walk to Voyager House was longer. It was noted that these services would be looked at to see if any changes could be made to improve access to the medical facility.
- Railway Station – data was requested on the routes servicing Aldershot Railway Station. It was noted that the information came from Stagecoach's Commercial Office and some work would need to be carried out to understand the needs and patterns of passengers using the service. Consideration could then be given to improving accessibility to the Railway Station for all users, taking account of road networks, suitable stopping places, accessibility needs etc. County Cllr Withers, advised that he would raise the issues around accessibility links to the Railway Station by bus with Hampshire County Council.
- Stagecoach App/Realtime Information – cancelled services did not show on the App or Realtime Information boards. It was advised that removal of cancelled services had been reliant on the Control Team. Removal could be delayed if a Controller was engaged in conversation regarding a breakdown or incident causing the delay and subsequent cancellation.

- Engagement with Ward Members – Mr Hodgkiss encouraged communication and engagement with local ward Members to address issues, it was felt important to build relationships, understand bus service issues and provide solutions for the community.
- Aldershot Town Centre Stops – The Committee asked that consideration be given to the distance between stops in Aldershot town centre and encouraged better communications for users such as posters in local venues/publications (i.e. Libraries, The Grub Hub, Arena magazine) Realtime Information boards, ambassadors/volunteers etc. In addition, Mr Hodgkiss advised that the current use of Court Road, Aldershot, had been causing issue for both bus drivers and taxi drivers and consideration was being given to alternative options for this area.

ACTION:

What	Whom	When
Further data on services serving the Aldershot Railway Station	Aaron Hodgkiss, Operations Manager, Stagecoach	August, 2023
Data on commercial and subsidised routes across the area	Aaron Hodgkiss, Operations Manager, Stagecoach	August, 2023
Multi-Agency meeting involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagecoach • South Western Railways • Hampshire County Council • Hampshire Constabulary • Rushmoor Borough Council to address concerns, with all stakeholders, relating to access to the Railway Station by bus services in the Borough.	Ian Harrison, Executive Director	September, 2023
It was recommended that consideration be given to funding options for additional Realtime Information Boards and Ambassadors to be located in Aldershot Town Centre to assist users in navigating their journey.	Ian Harrison, Executive Director	September, 2023

The Chairman thanked Mr Hodgkiss and Mr Gurung for their presentation.

9. COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN - PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee welcomed Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive who was in attendance to report on progress made in delivering against the Council's performance management framework and Quarter 4 of the Council's Business Plan 2022-25.

The Council's Performance Management Framework, which had been refreshed in June 2023, was developed to act as a tool to strengthen performance management within the authority and to ensure delivery against priorities. The framework provided a consistent approach to the way performance and quality was managed, monitored, reviewed and reported across the organisation.

Performance management was in place to monitor outputs and performance indicators (PIs), alongside being a tool to drive improvement on performance across the organisation. It was advised that performance management should not be considered as separate from the day-to-day management of the Council and should be used as a tool to plan, review and revise cycles over different timescales and at different levels within the organisation. For example, there was:

- a long-term cycle that set and reviewed the Council's priorities;
- annual service planning and target setting; and
- quarterly collection and review of performance information

The quarterly performance monitoring cycle consisted of a number of stages, starting with data requests from services at the end of the quarter. This was followed by a review stage including, engagement with Portfolio Holders and the Corporate Management Team. Cabinet then reviewed and approved the quarterly monitoring documents before the Committee considered the document and identified areas for more in depth scrutiny.

The Committee were advised on progress in delivering the 2022/23 Performance Management Framework. It was advised that alongside the approval of the quarterly monitoring and the annual report (in quarter 4), an update on the Council's key strategies and plans had been presented to the Cabinet in quarters one and three. All services had produced service plans for 2023/24 and the Council Plan 2023-26 had been agreed. In addition, a Performance Management audit had been carried out with an outcome of Assurance Level – Substantial, with a number of recommendations to take forward.

Ms Barker, reported on the vision for the Office of Local Government (Oflog). The vision had been to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government, and to support improvement. To understand local government performance, Oflog would draw on the best available data and evidence, would improve access to data increasing transparency and fostering accountability – while also highlighting excellence and showcasing success and, would play a significant role in wider work to establish a stronger accountability framework, including identifying and supporting at-risk councils. A watching brief would be undertaken on the development of Oflog's work.

Moving forward for 2023/24, quarterly monitoring would continue with quarter one due to Cabinet in August, 2023. Services would be asked to refresh their service plans and the Performance Management Audit recommendations made in 2022/23, would be incorporated into the framework.

The Committee were asked to consider how their role in reviewing the Council Plan monitoring could be developed.

The Committee discussed the report and raised a number of queries and comments,

- Data – need to ensure meaningful and accurate, to allow the Committee to drill down into what isn't working effectively. It was suggested that areas for scrutiny could be considered at the next Progress Group meeting.
- Dashboard – information at a glance. It was noted that the Team were working on options for a dashboard with the Transformation Task and Finish Group.
- Task and Finish Group – use of smaller groups to look at areas identified in more detail and engage with relevant Service Managers
- Work Plan – consider the list identified on the Committee's Work Plan and link to Council Plan where appropriate

ACTION:

What	Whom	When
Invite Rachel Barker to attend the next meeting of the Progress Group to look in more detail at areas for consideration	Adele Taylor, Committee Administrator	September, 2023
To consider items identified on the Work Plan and how they fit within the Council Plan	Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive	September, 2023

The Chairman thanked Ms Barker for her report.

10. WORK PLAN

The Committee noted the current Work Plan and an additional meeting on 7th September, 2023 to discuss the recent Notice of Motion brought to the Council Meeting in July, 2023 regarding the Armed Forces community and veteran engagement, and Gurkha Welfare.

The meeting closed at 9.18 pm.

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Report of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 25th July, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Marina Munro (Chairman)
Cllr Jessica Auton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Allen
Cllr Jib Belbase
Cllr Michael Hope
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Calum Stewart
Cllr Becky Williams
Cllr G. Williams

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

6. ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES - MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Board welcomed Martha Earley, Director - Partnerships and Communities, Frimley Integrated Care Board, who was in attendance to provide information on existing activities and help available to address mental health and wellbeing within the NHS. Karen Edwards, Executive Director and Emma Lamb, Service Manager – Community and Partnerships, were also in attendance to provide information on Council activities aimed at addressing mental health and wellbeing identified in the Supporting Communities Strategy and Action Plan. Additional information on mental health and wellbeing support and prevention from Hampshire County Council (HCC) had also been provided to the Board prior to the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting had been to understand the current situation related to mental health in the Borough including, planned provision for mental health services, current activities aimed at support for, and prevention of, mental wellbeing. Consideration would also be given to the benefits of signing the Government's Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health and any implication/proposed changes this may have on the Council's Supporting Communities Strategy.

The Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health was a shared commitment, amongst relevant stakeholders, to prevent mental health problems and promote good mental health. To become a recognised signatory of the Concordat, the Council would need to:

- agree to the consensus statement, and
- produce an action plan

The Board were apprised of the activities and commitments within the Frimley ICS Strategy and NHS Joint Forward Plan in which Mental Health had been identified as a priority for 2023/24. It was noted that there were currently a number of offers available for both adults and children to help support and prevent mental health issues.

Following a discussion, it was noted that funding had been identified as a key issue, it was important to ensure that projects/priorities and the related resources could be funded. Other areas for consideration included, sharing best practice across GP surgeries, addressing inequalities, early intervention and taking a holistic view to treating mental health matters.

The Board discussed the information provided within the Hampshire Wellbeing Strategy and Suicide Prevention Plan and requested further information on how the activities in the Plan impacted Rushmoor.

The Board were advised of the working within the Council's Supporting Communities Strategy aimed at addressing mental health and wellbeing. It was noted that the Team worked closely with health partners and other organisations to help facilitate projects and activities addressing a wide range of mental health and wellbeing needs across the Borough. Projects included, wellness walks, Balance Glide & Ride, blood pressure checks, SEEDL, Talk Mental, gardening projects and tackling obesity.

ACTION:

What	Who	When
Provide further information on how the delivery of the Hampshire Wellbeing Strategy and Suicide Prevention Plan is supported by Rushmoor, through the Council's Supporting Communities Strategy.	Karen Edwards, Executive Director Emma Lamb, Service Manager – Community and Partnerships	September, 2023
Engage with Hampshire Public Health to understand how HCC are taking forward their Concordat commitments and potentially invite them to attend a future meeting.	Karen Edwards – Executive Director	September 2023

In summary, the Board agreed that it was important to understand where the Concordat fitted into the work already progressing, within the Borough, to tackle mental health and wellbeing matters and what the benefits of signing it would be for the Council. The matter would be picked up again at the Progress Group at which the next steps would be determined.

7. **WORK PLAN**

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

ACTIONS:

What	Who	When
Include UKSPF on the Progress Group (PG) agenda, in light of forthcoming revised monitoring information	Adele Taylor – Committee Administrator	August 2023
Include the Prevention Concordat on the PG agenda to determine the next steps	Adele Taylor – Committee Administrator	August 2023

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the Special Meeting held on Thursday, 7th September, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr K. Dibble (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr S. Trussler

11. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th July, 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

12. SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY AND BRITISH GURKHA VETERANS

At its meeting in July 2023, the Council referred a Notice of Motion to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which highlighted the additional support needs of British Gurkha Veterans. The Committee had been asked to conduct a full assessment of all ongoing issues and support needs of the local Armed Forces Community, including those relating to local Gurkha Veterans.

The Committee welcomed a number of guests to the meeting, as set out below, who were in attendance to provide information and answer Members questions on matters relating to the support available locally, to the local Armed Forces Community and British Gurkha Veterans.

In attendance were:

- Dr Graham Cable – Chairman of the South-East Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee
- Councillor Dhan Sarki – Wellington Ward Member and Proposer of the Notice of Motion
- Councillor Jib Belbase – Wellington Ward Member
- Councillor Nem Thapa – Armed Forces Champion
- Councillor Nadia Martin – Shadow Armed Forces Champion
- Rachel Barker – Assistant Chief Executive

- Jill Shuttleworth – Corporate Manager – Democracy
- Jermaine Pinto – Housing Options Manager
- Madhu Gurung – Benefits Assessor

The Committee received the Corporate Manager – Democracy’s Report No. DEM2306 which presented a range of information and evidence to assist the committee’s assessment. This included the background to the Armed Forces Covenant and the council’s duties under the Armed Forces Act. The Report also presented information on census data, local organisations and partners that provide local support for Armed Forces personnel and their families, support for housing and healthcare, and the Gurkha pension scheme.

The Committee heard from Dr Graham Cable who advised on the work of the South-East Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee, the aim of which was to raise awareness of the Military Covenant, its aims and objectives and the provisions outlined within, to support all veterans and their families. In response to a question regarding the top three issues veterans experienced, Dr Cable mentioned education (for service children), housing and employment.

The Committee discussed access to help and assistance and the plethora of groups offering advice services and signposting. It was felt that a single point of access for serving military personnel and veterans would benefit those trying to access help.

Following a discussion regarding the Employer Recognition Scheme, for which the Council currently had a Silver Award, the Committee felt that striving for the Gold Award would benefit the local armed forces community even more. It was also suggested that other businesses in the Borough should be encouraged to join the scheme.

Cllrs Sarki, Belbase and Thapa addressed the Committee from the perspective of the Nepali community and on the issues of welfare and pension disparity experienced by former Gurkha Veterans, and provision for veterans. It was noted that the Indices of Multiple Deprivation had showed that a part of the Wellington Ward had the highest proportion of income deprived older people in the county, with a high percentage of those claiming Pension Credit. The 2021 Census data also identified that a high proportion of Nepali residents lived in the Wellington Ward (25.1%), 6.9% of which had served in the Armed Forces and almost 50% in that area had identified as Asian/Other in the ethnicity category (this group included Nepali residents).

Following consideration of all the information presented, the Committee agreed to the following outline recommendations:

- That the Council consider disregarding certain pension payments provided to veterans when assessing entitlement to the Disabled Facilities Grant
- That the Council works towards achieving the Gold Standard in the Employers Recognition Scheme

- That support be given to creating a single, coherent point of entry within the Borough for advice for the armed forces community – providing improved co-ordination between agencies and partners. If this could be provided as a physical place, such as locating a hub within the town centre of Aldershot (historically the home of the British Army) for example in the new Union Yard Development it would be even better. This could also provide a space for social purposes including for veterans. Linked to this, it was also suggested that arrangements be made to build a stronger network between the many organisations that support the local armed forces community to assist co-ordination. The Council could also offer to work with the Government on the development of a single gateway access point for the armed forces community.
- That the Leader of the Council write on behalf of the Council to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the local Member of Parliament to raise concerns about the disadvantage arising from pension disparity for former Gurkhas living in Rushmoor and urging the Government to address the current situation.

It was noted that Officers would draft the recommendations to Cabinet and share these with the Committee in due course.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

13. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

The meeting closed at 9.18 pm.
