

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2018 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 10.12pm

Present: Councillors David Draper (Chairman), Joe Crome (Vice-Chairman), Simon Budd, Lynne Brooks, Rosemary Dickson, Mary Huggins, Stephen Cooksey and Garry Stansfield.

Also present: Councillors Margaret Cooksey, Simon Edge, David Hawksworth, Paul Kennedy and Patricia Wiltshire.

43. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Ashton and Malcolm Ladell.

45. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Lynne Brooks declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was the representative for MVDC at Citizens Advice Mole Valley.

Councillor Joe Crome declared a non-pecuniary interest in that the organisation he works for represented the organisations that presented in item 4, item 5 and 7.

Councillor Paul Kennedy declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a paying member of Leatherhead Leisure Centre.

46. Presentation from East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (ESDAS)

Michelle Blunsom, Chief Executive of ESDAS was in attendance to provide a presentation to Members with an update.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments.

Members raised the importance of ESDAS, highlighting that last year, 283 females were victim of domestic abuse in Mole Valley and that it was important to remember this when making future grants.

Ms Blunsom advised the Committee that SCC had commissioned a survey last year. This showed that there were 22,000 current domestic abuse survivors within Surrey, but only 20% of incidents were reported to the Police. Ms Blunsom emphasised the importance of victims speaking out.

Members noted that funding for domestic abuse was a priority and a central government ___ was anticipated in the spring of 2019. In the meantime however, Ms Blunsom advised that smaller specialist organisations such as ESDAS were at risk as large contracts were being given to bigger organisations/generic organisations with commissioning teams. Brexit also posed a risk as it could limit access to specific funding streams.

The Committee noted that the current Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable were very supportive of the work undertaken by ESDAS and as a result of new processes established this year, ESDAS had been able to assist with the identification of the most dangerous perpetrators. ESDAS were able and to review and help shape the forces processes in relation to domestic abuse.

The Chairman thanked Ms Blunsom for her presentation.

47. Presentation from Voluntary Action Mid Surrey (VAMS)

Sally Dubery, Chief Officer of VAMS was in attendance to provide a presentation to Members with an update.

Prior to the presentation, Ms Dubery advised the Committee that Central Surrey Voluntary Action (CSVA) was previously known as Voluntary Action Mid Surrey. It had now merged with Voluntary Action Elmbridge.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments.

Members asked for the purpose of the merger. Ms Dubery told the Committee that most of the staff were shared across VAMS and Voluntary Action Elmbridge. Ms Dubery also advised that the merger provided an opportunity to restructure the organisation.

Members highlighted Surrey County Council's (SCC) desire to potentially recruit volunteers in areas such as children services and libraries. It was asked if the market for volunteers would then become too competitive. Ms Dubery acknowledged that the market for volunteers could become saturated and that their organisation was in place to support smaller organisations with volunteers. Ms Dubery commented further that if SCC were to recruit volunteers for roles that was previously a paid position, then this would make it more difficult for Central Surrey Voluntary Action to recruit.

It was then asked if there was any available space in the organisations premises, The Point. Ms Dubery advised that although all office space was full, this was not the case at evening or weekends. People could book when free.

Members heard how CSVA had offices in Dorking. It was asked how they would reach other areas of Mole Valley as well as Elmbridge. Ms Dubery told the Committee that they had volunteers placed across the district. They also had offices in Elmbridge and Epsom & Ewell. CSVA ensured that the opening time of each office was split evenly across the week.

Ms Dubery agreed to provide a breakdown of where each volunteer goes and who they support.

The Committee highlighted how CSVA paid annual rent of £18,500 to MVDC and received a £10,000 grant from MVDC. It was asked how CSVA managed this. Ms Dubery advised Members that CSVA leased the premises and were then able to sub-let to each organisation within The Point.

Members also asked how CSVA were able to manage to pay for DBS checks. Ms Dubery informed the Committee that they did not have to pay to have a licence but need to be registered which didn't cost anything. CSVA charged employees £10 in admin fees. This was more than the cost of a DBS check but included the cost of time and postage. The organisation was not making a loss or profit on DBS checks.

The Chairman thanked Ms Dubery for attending and for all the work undertaken by CSVA.

48. Presentation from Citizen Advice Mole Valley (CAMV)

Debbie Jones, Steve Phillips (Treasurer) and Tim Prideaux (Trustee Board Member) were in attendance to provide the Committee with a presentation.

Following the presentation, Members were invited to ask questions and provide comments.

Members Thanked CAMV for the comprehensive report.

Members highlighted that over 50% of their CAMV's work was in relation to financial matters. It was asked if the introduction of Universal Credit within Mole Valley would add to the work of CAMV and what CAMV expected by the way of additional resources needed in order to cope with its introduction.

Ms Jones told the Committee that the DWP and central government had put more funding in go support Universal Credit, and it was expected that CAMV's funding would be £25,000 - £30,000 for a year. This would help to support 500 clients get onto Universal Credit.

There were 280 local Citizens Advice centres across England and Wales and they had all worked together share their experiences and the impact Universal Credit had on clients. Other Citizens Advice centres in Surrey where Universal Credit had already been introduced had advised CAMV that it took approximately 3 months before an impact could be seen. CAMV would work closely with Redhill and Epsom centres in particular.

CAMV would receive funding from central government in January 2019 to help take on the project in April 2019.

Members queried CAMV's financial situation and Ms Jones provided detail in relation to the savings that had been made and the contracts that had been reviewed in order to reduce the deficit. The Committee also heard how CAMV had received grants and donations from local organisations. Furthermore, CAMV explained how they had been expanding their activities to provide services to commercial organisations in return for funding. This was in place of just asking for donations.

Mr Phillips highlighted how CAMV had a loss of £42,000 two years ago. This loss was reduced to £7,000 last year as a result of those savings. Mr Phillips then told the Committee that it could not stay in the commercially let premises in Leatherhead town centre once their lease expired. It would be looking for other premises in Leatherhead with the assistance from MVDC.

Mr Phillips explained that there was a lot of competition to provide services in the commercial sector and those reserves continued to diminish. At the moment CAMV was operating well but further difficult decisions would need to take place in the future.

Members asked for the value of CAMV's reserve funds and how far would this go. Mr Phillips confirmed these funds would cover four months of operating and commercial lease costs.

In response to CAMV looking for another premises in Leatherhead, Members asked if they would look to provide a private space for clients. CAMV acknowledged that people did not always want to go to a community space due to privacy concerns. CAMV had carried out research with residents and councillors which found that a Citizens Advice presence in Leatherhead was important. Although a shared space was being worked on, CAMV acknowledged the importance of providing anonymity for their clients.

It was asked what fundraising efforts were being made and Members heard from Ms Jones how various events were held which raised the profile of the organisation including cycle races. Mr Prideaux told the Committee how he wanted to set up a Friends of Citizen Advice Mole Valley to invite all businesses to contribute financially once they understood that some of their employees would benefit from CAMV's services. Members encouraged CAMV to further explore additional opportunities.

Following SCC's consultations regarding cuts to free bus services, Members asked Ms Jones how much of an impact this would have on clients visiting the centre. Ms Jones advised the Committee that she expected this to cause an impact but would wait and see what impact it would have first, using the data from client surveys. Data would be compared with other local centres in Surrey. If the findings of the survey caused concerns, CAMV would raise the matter to SCC.

Members thanked the CAMV for their work and commended the CAB for their annual general meeting.

The Chairman thanked CAMV for their presentation.

49. Presentation from Fusion Lifestyle (Leatherhead Leisure Centre)

Jason Reeves and Emma Flood were in attendance to provide the Committee with an annual update.

Following the presentation, Members were invited to ask questions and provide comments.

Members highlighted long call waiting times. Mr Reeves acknowledged this and told the committee that call percentages increasing. 71% were being answered which was a 10% increase from the previous year. Mr Reeves agreed to look at how this statistic compared to other leisure centres.

Mr Reeves also told the Committee that the longer call waiting times was a reflection of the difficulty in recruiting staff.

Members then asked what other options were available in the event that a call was not answered. Ms Flood advised that all classes and activities had a live booking system which could be booked online and via the app.

Members indicated their concern at the customer service given by staff at the centre. Mr Reeves acknowledged this and told the Committee that Fusion Lifestyle would be recruiting a customer service relations manager and providing training to staff.

The Committee asked about staff recruitment and training. Mr Reeves told Members how Fusion was experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff and that they recruited leisure professionals onto an apprenticeship scheme where staff could work their way up from reception to coaching. Furthermore, Mr Reeves advised that staff were typically younger with less work experience which would explain some of the customer service issues that had arisen. A training schedule was available to all staff. Mr Reeves agreed that Fusion needed to provide further staff training.

Mr Reeves agreed that the centre had a large staff turnover as the industry mainly consisted of younger, transient individuals.

Members then questioned the cleanliness of the centre. Mr Reeves provided detail on the specific areas affected with the centre. The wet area was of particular concern and emphasised that this was not exclusive to Leatherhead Leisure Centre but a common issue across all centres. Members were told how the centre contracted cleaners. Both staff and cleaners would maintain the centre. Mr Reeves acknowledged that there were some points during the day where no cleaning was carried out and would look into improving this service.

Fusion's attention was also brought to the hair dryer and spin dryer which had been reported as not working. Mr Reeves told Members that Fusion aimed to fix equipment as quickly as possible and that both were currently working.

Members queried Fusion's under-16 membership. Mr Reeves advised that uptake had fallen 8% year on year. The centre was continuously driving junior gym activity by arranging events throughout the year.

It was asked if there were flexible membership options available that allowed users to choose specific activities of interest to them. The Committee heard how there was a wide range of membership options, although there was not an option to choose specific activities. Mr Reeves advised that there was an annual membership option that gave a discount to do take part in those activities on an ad-hoc basis. Furthermore, Mr Reeves encouraged feedback and highlighted the forums and meet the manager sessions which were run within the centre. Fusion agreed to look at greater promotion and accessibility of the forums.

It was asked if exit surveys were carried to look at why users left the centre and if so what were the findings. The Committee heard how they were carried out but it was not always a true reflection of

the reasons why. A new survey was under development which would be used.

Fusion was then asked if it measured employee satisfaction to which Mr Reeves advised that an annual employee survey was carried out. It was also confirmed that a whistle blowing procedure was in place.

The Committee queried the relationship between MVDC and Fusion and asked how much pressure MVDC was putting on Fusion to resolve issues. Mr Reeves advised that there was pressure from Officers and that several KPIs had been agreed which Fusion was measured against. Members would like to see Stronger KPIs and more reporting on actions the taken.

The Chairman thanked Fusion for attending and invited them back to a future meeting to provide a further update.

50. Economic Development Strategy Update

The Economic Development Manager and Executive Head of Service were in attendance to provide an update on the projects comprised within the Economic Prosperity Strategy and its action plan for the year 2018/19.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

It was asked if there would be a Members’ Seminar which would provide Members with further details on the strategy. The Executive Head of Service agreed to look into this and would check for available dates in the New Year.

SCC’s decision to leave the County Hall site in Kingston was highlighted. Members asked if MVDC would work with SCC to promote sites potential sites in Dorking or Leatherhead.

The Committee noted that MVDC had put forward proposals for SCC to consider. MVDC would work with Councillors once more information become available.

Members highlighted Dorking’s status as a market town and urged officers to work closely with local markets to maintain a good relationship.

In response to a query concerning the possible need to make changes to the strategy, the Economic Development Manager advised that no changes were proposed at this time, however the strategy would be reviewed annually.

The Cabinet Member for Prosperity thanked officers for their work on the strategy to date. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the strategy contained a number of projects but there was a synergy between them. Going forwards, the strategy would help to change the way MVDC worked with local businesses. Implementation of the strategy was still in its formative stages but progress to date was good.

The Chairman thanked officers for the update and looked forward to seeing how the strategy developed.

51. Urgent Items

None

Chairman: Date: