

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14th March 2017 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 10.02pm

Present: Councillors David Draper (Chairman), David Harper (Vice-Chairman), Tim Ashton, Stephen Cooksey, Simon Edge, Mary Huggins, Malcolm Ladell, Jatin Patel, Paul Potter, Sarah Seed and Patricia Wiltshire.

Also present: Councillors Lucy Botting, Margaret Cooksey, Raj Haque, Vivienne Michael and Charles Yarwood.

68. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 24th January 2017 and 14th February 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Duncan Irvine.

70. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor David Draper declared:-

- a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as he was a member of the 'Friend of Dorking Halls' scheme.

Councillor Stephen Cooksey declared:-

- a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as he was a member of the 'Friend of Dorking Halls' scheme.

Councillor Margaret Cooksey declared:-

- a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as she was a member of the 'Friend of Dorking Halls' scheme.

Councillor Mary Huggins declared:-

- a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as she was a member of the 'Friend of Dorking Halls' scheme.

Councillor Sarah Seed declared:-

- a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as she was a member of the 'Friend of Dorking Halls' scheme.

71. Ride London

Kevin Nash, Route Director of Ride London attended the meeting to update Members on the preparation for the 2017 Cycle event which would be taking place in Mole Valley on Sunday 30th July.

During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- The maximum number of participants had been reduced to 25,000 from 27,000 in 2016. Participation had been capped at a lower level to enable the organisers to effectively manage congestion, which had been difficult with a greater number of participants in 2016.
- To date the event had raised £41m for charity which was considered a significant achievement for the event. This included £444,000 of grants awarded to organisations in Mole Valley.
- In preparation for the 2017 event, additional guidance would be provided to residents living in rural areas to enable them to plan any travel needed on the day.
- Promoting the visitor economy was an important aspect of the Ride London event. Dorking

was allocated as a key spectator zone and there were three rider welfare stops in Mole Valley. Spectator guides were distributed prior to the event and Ride London would be happy to circulate more of these to any person or organisation that wished to promote the visitor economy aspect of the event in Mole Valley.

The Committee congratulated Ride London on the improvements that had been made in the organisation of the event in recent years. A Member who worked with the out of hours Doctor's service, particularly thanked the Ride London team for working with them to ensure they could carry out their work effectively during the previous years event.

Members questioned whether the length of road closures required for the event were being minimised to prevent disruption for residents, as opening times seemed to vary across the route. It was explained that roads were closed as late as possible to allow traffic movement, where safe to do so. There was also the intention to make local residents aware of the Community Action Plans which included the possibility of local traffic movement between the closure of rural roads and the start of the race. Traffic movement was different for the high speed roads in the district such as the A24, where it was paramount that the road was clear to allow the correct signage to be installed prior to the start of the race.

A question was raised about the collection of litter during and after the event and what plans were in place for the 2017 event. The Committee were informed that a company specialising in litter picking had been employed to carry out the litter collection for the 2017 event. This would allow the majority of the litter picking to be completed after the event on Sunday, avoiding the need to undertake a large majority of the litter collection on Monday when the roads had re-opened.

Members questioned how long it took for roads to re-open after the last rider had passed through. The Route Director explained that it wasn't always possible to immediately re-open the roads due to the need to unlock the roads in other areas of the route first.

The danger of potholes to participants was raised as an issue and in response it was explained that the route was inspected well in advance of the event. The problem areas were reported to the Highways authorities along with photographs of the potholes and divots. A further inspection was scheduled prior to the event and if the highlighted issues had not been dealt with, Ride London would pay for contractors to fill the potholes to ensure the road surface was safe for the event. In this way Mole Valley benefitted from the event as improvements were made to the roads.

It was questioned to what extent Ride London worked with the National Trust to ensure that the biodiverse sites, such as Box Hill, were protected during the event. The Route Director explained that Ride London had a good working relationship with the National Trust, with their employees participated in the event by providing information to spectators and ensuring the environment was respected.

The Committee thanked Kevin Nash, the Route Director for RideLondon, for attending the meeting and responding to Members' questions.

72. Dorking Halls

Keith Garrow, General Manager of Dorking Halls attended the meeting to provide Members with an update on the developments at Dorking Halls since 2015.

During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- Catering profits at Dorking Halls had increased dramatically since the service was brought in-house during 2016. As a comparison, in 2016-17 a profit of £133K was predicted compared to £73K in 2015-16.
- Customer feedback had continued to improve since 2014, but there was still room for further development. A Customer Experience Manager had recently been recruited who would help to drive improvement.
- A new software system had been introduced at Dorking Halls called Spektrix. This was a more efficient ticketing system which delivered a variety of benefits, including the ability to

email tickets to customers to be printed at home, which would save queuing time when arriving at the Halls for their event.

- A number of Capital Projects were in planned for 2017, including improvements to the toilet facilities and improved soundproofing of the different rooms in the Halls.

A question was raised about the smell of popcorn at the venue and how this could be alleviated. It was explained that investigatory work had commenced to find out if it would be feasible to install a ventilation shaft above the popcorn station to deal with the issue.

The Committee discussed the Grand Hall, with it questioned how many days in the year the Grand Hall was not in use. The General Manager explained that the Grand Hall was extremely busy, with more and more live music events being booked to encourage visitors to the Halls. At present the autumn season for the Grand Hall was almost fully booked and during the summer months when there were fewer live events it was used for film showings. The seasonal fluctuation in event bookings was considered to be standard for the industry.

It was questioned whether it would be possible to increase the capacity for the Grand Hall. The General Manager explained that this had been investigated, but the costs of increasing capacity outweighed the potential benefits.

Concern was raised over the increased hire costs for Dorking Halls and how this would affect local community groups who may struggle to meet these fees. The General Manager explained that they were always willing to meet with community groups to discuss ways of making booking the Halls for their events more viable.

Concern was raised about the sound system in the Grand Hall following difficulties at a recent event arranged by the Stagecoach Performing Arts Group. The General Manager explained that it was always a challenge to get the sound system correct for events such as the one organised by Stagecoach due to the time constraints for preparation prior to the show. Normally only one day was allocated for the event, including set up time, which did not always allow enough preparation time to get the sound levels right.

There were a number of comments about the subsidy from the Council to Dorking Halls; with it noted that it had decreased from almost £500,000 to £112,000 over the past ten years. It was also advised that further reduction of the subsidy remained a priority in the coming year.

The Chairman thanked Keith Garrow, General Manager of Dorking Halls, for attending the meeting and for responding to Members' questions.

73. Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Enforcement Strategy

The Leader of the Council introduced the ASB Enforcement Strategy report by explaining that the Strategy would be enhancing Mole Valley District Council's (MVDC) current approach to ASB Enforcement and utilising the resources that were already in place. The strategic objectives were grouped under the Corporate Priorities for Environment, Prosperity and Community Wellbeing. MVDC was already very active at enforcing Environmental ASB with campaigns such as 'CLEAN MV'. The Strategy set out a specific action plan and a timeline for when these would be implemented. The Leader welcomed comments from the Scrutiny Committee which would help shape the Strategy prior to it going to Executive for approval. The Executive Member for Community and Wellbeing added to the introduction by explaining current and future actions set out for tackling Community ASB.

Members raised concern about the suggestion of using private firms for the enforcement of littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping, and questioned whether an in-house solution was available instead. It was explained that the option of using a private enforcement company had been included in the Strategy as it was an approach that had been successfully used by other Districts and Boroughs. Before such an approach was implemented in Mole Valley a full understanding of the costs and any other implications would need to be investigated before a decision was made.

Concern was also raised about the issue of residents using unlicensed third parties to dispose of their waste and subsequently becoming liable if the third party fly-tipped the waste rather disposing

of it responsibly. It was explained that there was a need to educate residents on their duty of care when it came to the disposal of their waste and the potential for fly-tipping.

The Committee agreed that further work was needed to tackle community ASB such as alcohol and drug abuse. The Executive Member for Community and Wellbeing advised that the Executive would look to strengthen the wording of the Strategy in this area.

The Committee highlighted that there was a need to ensure a quick response following reports of Community ASB and suggested that work in this area should be included in the Strategy, with an emphasis on the need to provide reassurance to residents that their reports would be investigated and their expectations managed.

A Member questioned how MVDC was planning on tackling fly-posting. Officers advised that it was difficult to trace the perpetrators, but they would look to do what they could to track them down when fly-posting incidents occurred.

The Leader thanked the Committee for their comments and suggestions, and advised that they would be helpful to inform the development of the ASB Enforcement Strategy.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

74. Report of the Tourist Information Panel

The Chairman of the Tourist Information Panel introduced the report by explaining to the Committee how the work of the Panel had developed since its first meeting in September 2016. It was clear that there was a demand for tourist information in Mole Valley, but the results of the survey commissioned by the Panel suggested that a Tourist Information Centre was not a suitable solution. Tourist Information Centres were also highly resource intensive and as such it was the Panel's view that this would not be an appropriate proposal in the current financial climate. The visitor economy was very important in Mole Valley and it was felt that putting resources towards the existing Visit Dorking and Visit Leatherhead websites would be more beneficial to the visitor economy than a Tourist Information Centre.

After questions were raised about timing of the Economic Prosperity Strategy, reassurance was given that the Strategy would be in place by the end of 2017. Furthermore, workshops would be held in spring and summer for Members and key stakeholders to contribute to the development of the Strategy.

A Member of the Committee mentioned that the Visit Dorking and Visit Leatherhead websites did not appear in search engines when Mole Valley was entered as search. Officers agreed that search engine optimisation would need to be looked at during the process of reviewing and updating the websites.

Members agreed that a second survey should be carried out in the summer months, as it would be beneficial to include the cyclists and other visitors who may have been missed in the winter months, when the first survey had been carried out for the Panel.

Resolved:

That:-

1. the report and the extensive work of the Tourist Information Scrutiny Panel: be noted,
2. That the recommendations of the Panel, as set out in the report, be referred to the Executive for consideration at their next meeting.

75. Report of the Planning Enforcement Panel

The Chairman of the Planning Enforcement Panel introduced the report by explaining that, during their meetings, the Panel had reviewed the caseload of the Enforcement Team and how Members and residents were kept informed of the progress of enforcement cases. It had become apparent to the Panel that the level of staff resource had had a detrimental effect on delivery of the service and that the recruitment of an additional Enforcement Officer would help develop and improve the

service area.

The Committee agreed to amend one of the Panel recommendations to ensure that the Governments Planning Practice Guidance was distributed to all Members of the Council and not just Members of the Development Control Committee, as this would help enable them to answer questions they may receive from residents. Officers agreed to circulate this to all Members after the Committee.

A Member raised concern over the 'Report It' function on the website and some barriers they had encountered when reporting on behalf of a resident. Officers agreed to discuss this with the IT department to see if these issues could be resolved. It was suggested that queries be emailed to the Planning Enforcement inbox in the meantime.

The Committee discussed anonymous reports to Planning Enforcement and whether some wording could be included on the website to reassure those reporting issues that their identity would be protected. It was advised that there would be restriction on what this wording could say as their identity may have to be revealed should the case progress to a court of law.

The Committee welcomed the suggestion of a monthly update on new cases and the progress made on existing Enforcement cases and questioned if this could be tailored for residents as well as Members. Officers advised that they would look to provide similar updates to residents in the future, but that they would begin with the monthly update on the Member's Extranet.

Resolved: That the following recommendation be referred to the Executive for their consideration at their next meeting:

1. That a copy of the National Planning Practice Guidance on Ensuring Effective Enforcement is distributed to all Members.
2. That each month an updated Schedule of Enforcement Cases is provided for all Members through MOSS to include any additions to the Public Register of Enforcement Notices.
3. That alleged breaches of planning control should be submitted through the "Report It" function on the MVDC website in the interests of ensuring the efficient management of the planning enforcement caseload.
4. That the Public Register of Enforcement Notices is published on the MVDC web site.
5. That reporting facilities for developers to notify the Council of development commencements should be made as accessible as possible with the aim of improving the current level of use