

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 13th September 2016 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 9.25pm

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

Also present: Councillor Margaret Cooksey, Claire Malcomson, Vivienne Michael, Clayton Wellman and Surrey County Councillor Tim Hall

22. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5th July 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Cooper, David Harper and David Hawksworth.

24. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Margaret Cooksey declared:-

- a non pecuniary interest in item 5 as a member of the Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Peter Stanyard declared:-

- a non pecuniary interest in item 4 as his daughter had worked professionally with the East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service.

25. East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service

The Chief Executive of East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (ESDAS), Michelle Blunsom, attended the meeting to provide the Committee with an update on its work. During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- ESDAS engaged with clients through either self or agency referral, although agency referral must be with the client's consent. The Service offered advice, information, advocacy and support and undertook risk assessments and safety planning. The Service aimed to minimise risk and maximise safety and did this by listening to a client's individual needs.
- ESDAS worked closely with other the agencies across Surrey who worked on the abuse agenda, including the Police, Probation Service and the South East Area Children's Services. ESDAS also worked with Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver the IRIS project that trained GPs to identify victims of domestic abuse.
- Services provided included outreach, children's services, a free counselling service, a volunteering project which focussed on harnessing the skills of domestic abuse survivors, group work, legal advice drop-in, a Sanctuary Scheme which provided safety measures to a victim's home to enable them to remain in their home, victim support services in the specialist DV Court at Redhill (which would be moving to Guildford) and training and awareness raising together with other agencies.

The Committee asked various questions of Ms Blunsom on a number of different subjects, including how ESDAS worked with other charities working towards similar aims. It was advised that as resources were limited, ESDAS welcomed the opportunity to work with other charities and regularly shared expertise and pursued joint working projects when a need was identified, such as with foodbanks which were an important resource for many clients.

In response to a question about the potential risks for ESDAS staff, it was advised that there were definite risks due to the nature of the work, but these were assessed on a daily basis. A lone working policy, including a system of code words and check-in's was also in place to protect staff

and additional support was provided by the police when required. Furthermore, all ESDAS staff were provided with self defence training and received monthly counselling sessions.

It was confirmed that ESDAS tended to see a spike in client numbers when domestic abuse was covered in the media, such as the recent storyline in the Archers, as they raised awareness of the issues involved.

It was also confirmed that it was anticipated that changes to the benefit system would have a significant impact on the clients of ESDAS, although the Prime Minister, Theresa May, had indicated that refugees would be exempt from housing benefit changes. Should this not be the case it was estimated that up to 80% of refugees may close and as these were often used as a last resort for domestic abuse victims, it may result in an increased murder rate, should they not be available.

It was noted that new laws relating to coercive control had been introduced, which helped to reinforce the work of ESDAS, as this type of behaviour formed a common aspect of domestic abuse. However as this was a new law the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service were still having to learn how to successfully prosecute such cases as they occurred.

The Committee thanked Ms Blunsom for attending the meeting and responding to Members' questions.

26. Surrey Fire and Rescue

The Chief Fire Officer from Surrey Fire and Rescue, Russell Pearson, attended the meeting to provide the Committee with an update on its Public Safety Plan, along with Asif Aziz and Lee Belsten from the Fire Brigade Union. During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- The consultation on Surrey Fire and Rescue's Public Safety Plan had now closed, but it had been developed in conjunction with the Fire Brigade Union, which represented 80% of the workforce.
- Each Fire and Rescue Service was required to produce a Public Safety Plan on a three yearly basis. The aim of the Plan was to outline all foreseeable incidents, set out how the Service was in a position to respond to these and then look at how the Service could be improved on this basis.
- The forthcoming Police and Crime Bill, which was due to be enacted in early 2017, would introduce a new requirement for emergency services to work together. This was seen by Surrey Fire and Rescue as a means of protecting frontline services through partnership working, which had already begun with Fire Crews working on behalf of the Ambulance Service to act as first responders in life threatening events. Other proposals included the combination of 999 call centres to provide a single centre covering the Ambulance Service, Fire Service and the Police in Surrey and Sussex. If this proposal went ahead it could save an estimated £40m over a ten year period.
- Of the local fire stations in Mole Valley, it was confirmed that the Leatherhead station was the busiest. Modelling work carried out by Surrey Fire and Rescue had shown that the fire station in Dorking was less busy, but given that it was the closest station to the rural area's in the south of the district it was anticipated that services would continue to be operated from this location, however the format of the service may change in the longer term to make it more viable.
- Education about potential fire risks still formed a large part of the work of Surrey Fire and Rescue, with work targeted towards areas deemed to be particularly at risk, such as those living in isolated rural areas and vulnerable people.

When questioned whether the Leatherhead fire station was busier due to its proximity to the M25, it was advised that it was mainly due to more of the staff at this station being trained to be co-responsive with the Ambulance Service, than those at the Dorking Station.

It was questioned whether joint working with the East and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's was the only option for Surrey Fire and Rescue. In response it was advised that the Services in Hampshire and Kent had also been considered but at present these were working at an optimum level.

In response to concerns about possible changes at the Dorking Fire Station, it was advised that although at present the Dorking station was the closest fire station for the rural south of the district, collaborative working with the Sussex Fire and Rescue Services may change this through implementing a policy of using the nearest available vehicle to a call out across Surrey and Sussex.

The Committee thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and invited them to return at a later date to provide a further update on the implementation of the Public Safety Plan.

27. Surrey County Council Bus Service

Paul Millin and Val Sexton from Surrey County Council were in attendance at the meeting to provide the Committee with an update on Bus Services in Mole Valley. During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- In addition to organising standard bus services, the team also helped to plan, procure and manage transport services for adult social care, school transport, concessionary bus passes and also working with Community Transport Groups.
- The key issue for the team was funding, with ever increasing budget restraints needing to be balanced against customer need to ensure that funds were allocated where most needed. Maintaining service reliability was also an issue for the team as it was essential for buses to turn up on time, to maintain continued use of the services provided.
- The team were currently in the middle of a Local Transport Review which had a savings target of £2m and was due to conclude in 2017. So far savings of £1.46m had been achieved through the re-tendering of routes and negotiations with route operators. There had been a good level of engagement with service users which had help to minimise the impact of these savings.
- Changes to the 516 route from Epsom to Dorking were highlighted as an improvement arising from the retendering process. This included increased connectivity across Mole Valley and the restoration of a bus link between Charlwood and Gatwick Airport.

Following the presentation, Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the bus service. There were a number of local issues raised relating to certain routes, specifically in Charlwood, Holmwood and Fetcham. The Chairman advised Members that it would be useful for Members to relate these issues to the representatives from Surrey County Council outside of the meeting on the contact details provided.

In response to a query about the cancellation of school bus services, Members were advised that there had been a rule change in 2012 which affected pupils travelling to denominational schools. Children were provided free transport to their nearest school, if they lived a certain distance from the location. However, if parents had chosen to send their children to an alternative faith school, which was not the closest to their home, transport would not be funded.

It was questioned what measures could be taken by Surrey County Council against operators who were providing a poor level of service. It was confirmed that if Surrey County Council were providing financial support to maintain a service, then financial penalties could be incurred. However, if the operator was running one of the commercial routes, then the team would talk to them to try to establish why the service was not running as expected.

The Committee thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and invited them to return at a later date to provide a further update on the implementation of the Local Transport Review.