

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted on the 13 June 2024 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Shiner (Chair), Black (Vice-Chair), Bolton, Case, Cline, Evans, Chris Farr, Mark, Patel, Sowambur, Windsor and Sue Farr (Substitute) (In place of Killick)

PRESENT (Virtually): Councillor Killick

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Lockwood, Chotai, Gray and Sayer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Killick and Sharp

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2024

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

24. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2024

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

25. COMMUNITY SAFETY REVIEW - JUNE 2024

The Committee received a presentation from the Community Safety and Partnership Specialist and the Head of Communities updating the Committee on the community safety activities in the District.

The Community Safety and Partnerships Specialist explained that the Council operated a partnership approach to reducing crime and disorder through the Tandridge Community Safety Partnership. The four priorities of the Partnership for 2024/25 were protecting the vulnerable from harm, anti-social behaviour (ASB), strengthening relationships with communities and partners and serious organised crime and prevent. 15 themes had been identified to help achieves these priorities.

In the last 12 months:

- 59 families had accessed the Family Support Programme.
- 692 referrals had been made to the East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services. There had been two domestic homicide reviews.
- 56 adults and five children had been referred to Surrey County Council for safeguarding, and 18 adults and one child had been referred to the Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting (CHaRMM).
- There had been no ASB case reviews.

Officers shared two highlights from the proactive work that had been undertaken:

- Tandridge Frauds and Scams Working Group. This Group had raised awareness of frauds and scams, particularly those who were digitally excluded.
- Tandridge Youth Provision Working Group. This Group had looked at opportunities to work with community groups to improve youth provision by bringing together specialist agencies and those who wanted to improve provision.

The Head of Communities explained the key themes from the 61 safeguarding referrals in 2023/24 included self-neglect, domestic, psychological and physical abuse, neglect and acts of omission.

The Council reviewed its safeguarding policies and procedures annually, provided training to all staff and councillors and held quarterly partnerships meetings with Surrey County Council and the other Districts & Boroughs in Surrey.

Achievements throughout 2023/24 included:

- The completion of the Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board annual quality assurance assessment.
- The progress undertaken on the Section 11 – Surrey Safeguarding Children’s board assessment, which would be submitted in July 2024.
- Raising awareness of mental health across the Council and encouraging staff to use services available to them.
- The completion of an internal re-audit.

The Tandridge Borough Commander, who oversaw the Safer Neighbourhood Team, gave a presentation outlining how the Police worked to ensure communities felt safe. This included:

- Support from division teams including the Neighbourhood Patrol Team, Domestic Abuse Team, Child Abuse Team, CID 24/7, Uniform Proactive Team and the Neighbourhood Policing Investigation Team.
- A focus on shoplifting which had resulted in 7 Community Protection Warning issues, 3 Community Protection Notices and 1 Injunction granted.
- Working closely with partners and cross boundary neighbouring forces on ASB and serious organised crime.
- A dedicated rural Police Community Support Officer to tackle rural crime.

Recent successes included the sentencing of 4 members of an organised crime group, 2 charges of attempted murder, 2 charges of conspiracy to burgle, and charges that related to vehicle crime.

The Tandridge Brough Priorities for 2024 were:

- Improve community engagement across the Borough,
- Continue to build strong cross border relationships,
- Continue to tackle serious acquisitive crime and bring offenders to justice,

- Improve Domestic Abuse performance,
- Increase arrests and charges of offenders causing harm in our community, and
- Continue to use problem solving to tackle chronic and complex issues in the Borough.

In response to Member Questions, the Borough Commander explained:

- a Joint Action Group would be set up to determine the most effective action and enforcement on unauthorised land development. In terms of a recent breach in Shipley Bridge, the Council had issued stop notices at two locations and were looking to progress further enforcement. A core professionals group would meet to discuss the legal options to tackle intimidation and Anti-Social Behaviour.
- reports of shoplifting had increased after the Police had encouraged more reporting from shops. However, solved outcomes had also increased, due to more Police investigations into shoplifting and the use of new technologies.

The Chair thanked Officers and the Borough Commander for attending.

26. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES REFURBISHMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report outlining progress to date on the refurbishment of public conveniences. There were 10 public toilets in the District, and (subject to Strategy & Resources Committee approving a £33k carry forward) the agreed capital budget was £803.1k. The annual maintenance costs were £104k per annum on average. Equipment at one site had recently been replaced, two sites had repairs underway, with contractors instructed to refurbish two further sites. The report outlined a number of challenges in delivering the refurbishment project.

The report sought approval of an asset prioritisation matrix to agree the refurbishment approach for the next two years in light of these challenges, and approval to initiate exploratory discussions with Parish Councils and local businesses to assess their willingness to discuss asset transfers and join the community toilet scheme.

During the debate, Members made the following comments:

- Public conveniences were important to all members of the community. Whilst the Council did not have a statutory duty to provide public conveniences, Members felt it was the right thing to do.
- Discussions with Parish Councils would be welcome, and these discussions should take place promptly.
- The proposed matrix may not be sufficient to give required information to make decisions on closure.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained:

- appendix A of the report was the outcome of a desktop review undertaken in 2022. Officers wanted to do a more complete review which would include consideration of comments, the budget available, and the completion of a prioritisation matrix for return

back to the Committee. This would ensure Members had all the information required to make future decisions on refurbishment or closure.

- the expense figures listed in appendix B of the report were designed to give an indication of costs over the past four years. Officers would circulate further information to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Cline, seconded by Councillor Evans, proposed an amendment to remove recommendations B and C of the report and replace with the following:

That a public consultation be carried out to assess the views of the public, Parish Councils and Ward Members on all existing public conveniences and their value to the community.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the progress to date be noted;
- B. a public consultation be carried out to assess the views of the public, Parish Councils and Ward Members on all existing public conveniences and their value to the community.

27. PLAYGROUNDS REFURBISHMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

A report was presented to the Committee which provided an update on the playground refurbishment project. A capital budget had been approved in 2020, but the project had been delayed by Covid-19 and staff resources. Subject to the unspent budget being rolled over, a decision to be taken by the Strategy & Resources Committee on 27 June 2024, the total capital budget was £981,700. A recent assessment carried out by Safe Play estimated a refurbishment budget of £3.2m.

Officers would produce a playground strategy to set out the strategic directions for the ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of the playgrounds. The report sought approval for Officers to initiate exploratory discussions with Parish Council and Community Groups to assess their willingness to contribute to the refurbishment programme.

Members raised a number of issues affecting playgrounds within their wards.

Officers explained, in response to questions from Members, that:

- The Safe Play estimate had been summarised in the report, but an in depth breakdown would be shared with the Committee. The figures were for the replacement of the playgrounds and a summary of how a playground be more DDA compliant.
- Inspections were undertaken by contractors weekly, monthly and yearly across all the sites. The monthly report included photos of the sites.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the progress to date be noted;
- B. the rollover of the 2023/24 capital budget and match funding pot for playground improvement be noted; and
- C. Officers be authorised to initiate exploratory discussions with parish councils and community groups to assess their willingness to discuss asset transfers, contribute to the refurbishment programme and the ongoing maintenance of assets.

28. REVIEW OF CESSPOOL SERVICE

The Committee received a report that contained details of a service review of the non-statutory cesspool emptying service and proposals for consideration for future service delivery. Officers drew the Committee's attention to:

- In recent years, the service had struggled to reach its budgeted income and the net service contribution had been overspent against budget. This had resulted in the general fund subsidising the service.
- A new lease vehicle would be an additional cost of £16.5k per annum, this would require more income to be generated.
- The service is non-statutory and the Council are the only authority in Surrey, Kent and Sussex to run the service.
- Officers and operatives would be redeployed to other areas within the Operational Services structure, such as street cleansing, grounds maintenance and waste.
- As an alternative to closure of the service, with additional investment it would be possible for the Council to attract more income but this was not the preferred option as it would divert attention from other more needed Council services.

In response to member questions, Officers explained that the Council are not the only provider of the service in the district and customers have had to use private companies, at a lower price, in the past when the Council has been unable to fulfil the service. Officers also noted Sevenoaks Council ceased their service in February 2024 due to similar concerns, however, it would be unclear how the commercial market would respond.

RESOLVED – that the cesspool emptying service be ceased (option 2 arising from the review of the service).

29. QUARTER 4 2023/24 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report that contained data on the key performance indicators for Quarter 4 2023-24. Officers drew the Committee's attention to:

- Services performed well overall. Street Cleansing was off target for Quarter 4 and the target had been challenging to reach due to the decrease in the number of street

cleansing officers and officer sickness. The team have been supplemented by 2 temporary officers who have improved service delivery.

- Officers have been monitoring the number of safeguarding cases and nominations to the Community Harm and Risk Management (CHaRM) meeting. Officers have continued to work on the Anti-Social Behaviour project and would be recruiting a co-ordinator post.
- Trees have remained a significant risk due to Ash die back and the lack of a Tree Officer. A new Tree and Woodland Officer was expected to start in mid-July 2024 and would focus on woodland management.

During the debate Members asked questions and Officers responded by explaining that they would look at different options to provide resilience to the street cleansing team and would bring a report to Committee in September about how the Council would use the resources from the Cesspool Service elsewhere. Officers would consider using resources on street cleansing, grounds maintenance and waste.

RESOLVED – that the most critical Quarter 4 2023-2024 performance Indicators and risks for the Committee be noted.

30. 2023/24 BUDGET OUTTURN - COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Committee received a report that contained data on the Budget Outturn for 2023-24. The budget covered a number of services, and Officers drew the Committee's attention to:

- The Committee had an annual budget of £4,568k and an outturn of £4,234k. This was a full-year underspend of £334k. Services, such as fly tipping and unauthorised encampments, are demand led and it is difficult to calculate the extent to which they are needed earlier in the year.
- The waste service which had a £19k improvement on Quarter 3.
- All items were completed on the 2023/24 savings plan with the exception of Productivity Improvements and Standard approach to websites in Environmental Health. These would be carried forward and the Council would aim to achieve these savings in 2024/25.
- The Capital Budget that had not been spent in full during 2023/24 would be carried forward into 2024/25 subject to Strategy & Resources Committee approval.

RESOLVED – that the Committee's revenue and capital budget outturn positions as at Quarter 4 / M12 (March) 2023/24 be noted.

31. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND - ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP

A report was presented to agree the membership of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Working Group for 2024/25 following consultation with Group Leaders.

RESOLVED – that the following membership of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Working Group for 2024/25 be agreed:

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Working Group		
1	RA	Peter Damesick
2	RA	Julie Duggan
3	RA	Nicola O’Riordan
4	RA	Richard Smith
5	Lib Dem	Perry Chotai
6	Lib Dem	Ben Horne
7	Con	Michael Cooper
8	Ind Group	Helena Windsor

32. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a report which proposed that responsibility for pollution control be transferred from the Community Services Committee to the Planning Policy Committee by making the necessary amendments to the both committees’ terms of reference.

COUNCIL DECISION
(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that responsibility for pollution control, including the associated budgetary provision of £132.6k for 2024/25, be transferred from the Community Services Committee to the Planning Policy Committee by amending the terms of reference of those committees as per the track changes shown at Appendix A.

Rising 9.45 pm