

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 3 September 2024 at 7:30pm.

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

PRESENT (Virtually): Councillor Killick

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Pursehouse

ALSO PRESENT (Virtually): Councillor Gaffney

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Killick and Patel

84. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2024

The minutes were signed and confirmed as a correct record.

85. ILLEGAL PARKING ON ACCESS ROAD TO SPEARS CLOSE AND WARLINGHAM GREEN SHOPPERS CAR PARK

A report was presented to the Committee following safety concerns raised by local residents and Members regarding illegal parking on the access road to Spears Close and the Warlingham Shoppers Car Park.

Officers explained the land was owned by the Diocese of Southwark and communication had been made to discuss solutions. Parking enforcement was not an option due to the land ownership. The Council had proposed to the Diocese to install bollards part-way down the access road to make it single access. This would improve pedestrian and emergency vehicle access. Next steps would be considered once a response had been received.

During the debate, Members made the following comments:

- There were large concerns from the residents of Spears Close regarding pedestrian and vehicular access on the access road and to the car park. The Council had placed signage on the road and parking lines had been installed. Bollards would help improve safety.
- Discussions with the local Parish Council and further discussion with the Diocese of Southwark would be welcome.
- The access road is a registered footpath and not adopted by Surrey Highways. Whilst it is not the Council's responsibility, a compromise should be made to improve safety and protect residents.

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

- Costs would be considered once a response from the Diocese had been received.
- The Council would also need to consider liability of the bollards in the event of an accident.

Councillor Windsor, seconded by Councillor Evans, proposed an amendment to recommendation B of the report to replace with the following:

There should be a minimum financial impact on the Council.

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

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the report be noted, and officers would continue to discuss a solution with partners; and
- B. a solution would have a minimum financial impact on the Council.

86. PAVEMENT LICENCES – IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW LICENSING FEE

A report was presented to the Committee following the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA2023) and revised guidance issued by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) to determine the fees charged for the grant and renewal of a pavement licence. Officers explained:

- This was originally a temporary scheme introduced in the Business and Planning Act 2020 designed to promote economic recovery and maximise a premises' ability to trade safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scheme was made permanent under the LURA2023. All current licences had a fixed term end date of 30 September 2024.
- Fees were set by the government under the previous act at £100 but would now be capped at £500 for a grant and £350 for a renewal. Under the new scheme, local authorities would need to determine the licence length and fees.
- Fees would need to be set at a cost recovery rate; a recognised process for charging for authorisation. Fees would also need to ensure no financial burden on the Council whilst within the constraints of the maximum amount chargeable. The overall cost of a new application to the Council was £745.36 and £592.73 for a renewal.
- Only 1 authority in Surrey would not be setting their fees at the maximum cost.
- Alongside guidance from DLHUC, Mole Valley Licensing Committee set their licence length at 2 years. This would result in a daily charge of 68p for a new application and 48p for a renewal. The length of the licence would be taken to the Licensing Committee for consideration on 18 September 2024.

- The proposed fee structure would lessen the financial burden on the Council, ensure draw down from the public purse was kept at a minimum and would achieve compliance with the Provision of Service Regulations 2009 as amended.

During the debate, Members made the following comments:

- Members were concerned businesses would not afford the rise in costs or would not deem the costs worthwhile due to only using outside seating when weather dependent. Concerns were specifically made toward businesses in Caterham and Whyteleafe, noting that businesses were struggling with the £100 fee. Members suggested possible concessions or discounts for these businesses. Members noted that whilst the costs would be affordable in Oxted, for areas such as Caterham Valley, the fees would be too high.
- The Council should be promoting a vibrant street scene as it deters crime.
- Concerns were also raised for vulnerable residents that still needed to isolate and rely on outdoor seating to go to these businesses.
- Members were conscious the Council would need to consider its finances and had concerns toward raising Council Tax.

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

- Costs were calculated based on the length of time it took to issue a licence and the cost of Officer time for each step in the process. Subject to the Licensing Committee approving a recommendation for a 2 year licence, the annual cost of a grant would be £250 and £175 for a renewal.
- All local authorities in England made a loss due to the £100 price cap. The Local Government Association issued guidance for fee setting and surpluses and losses must be carried forward. Pricing at the maximum amount chargeable is best option without increasing the rate of Council Tax. With the fee at £100, the Council would face a loss of £645.36 per new application and £492.73 for renewals.
- The Licensing department would be introducing a new software system in November which would allow businesses to apply for licences online. This would reduce officer processing time and would help to reduce the cost to the Council.
- A licence would only be required if the highway is on public land. If the business owns the curtilage a licence would not be required. In Tandridge at present, 8 premises have this licence. Mole Valley saw their licences decline from 21 to 13 as businesses no longer required the outside seating. The licence would be a set price and not determined by the number of tables and chairs outside.
- Businesses on Croydon Road would be reimbursed due to the impact of the roadworks. Fees could not be waived for individual business.

- Over the 11 authorities within Surrey, only 1 authority would not be setting the fees at the maximum amount chargeable. Licencing fees would also be reviewed annually.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the report be noted, and the Committee determine the fees to be charged for the Grant and Renewal of a Pavement Licence.

Clerk's note: The Committee did not determine a fee during the meeting. Officers made an urgent decision under Standing Order 35 on 9 October 2024 to set the fee for a grant of a two year Pavement Licence at £500 and a renewal of a Pavement Licence for two years at £350. The £350 renewal fee will be implemented from 1 January 2025, with the price held at £200 for the renewal of a two year licence until 31 December 2024.

87. APPOINTING A STAND FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES ON THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY AT STATION ROAD EAST IN OXTED

A report was presented to the Committee to appoint a taxi stand on the public highway at the side of 129 to 131 Station Road East following a request from the Taxi Trade. The current stand was placed on the centre of the road, with no pavement access, and had raised public safety issues.

Officers explained that the Council could adopt areas on the street or on private land as taxi stands for licenced Hackney Carriage vehicles. If approved at Committee, a public consultation would be carried out for 28 days. Subject to no objections, the appointment would take effect after this period. Any objections raised during the public consultation would bring the appointment back to the Committee for a decision.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. a stand for Hackney carriages on the public highway at the proposed site of Station Road East, Oxted at the side of 129 to 131 (formerly Lorimers) be approved;
- B. Officers would advertise in the local press allowing twenty eight days for comments to be submitted to the Council; and
- C. subject to no objections during the consultation period, the appointment of the stand for Hackney carriages as proposed would be constructed.

88. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND – FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

A report was presented to Committee to agree the second tranche of the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocations. The Council secured £1m of funding to invest in Tandridge's Open Space Strategy. The Strategy outlined 249 projects and programmes and totalled £4.7m in expenditure. Coast to Capital (formally Local Enterprise Partnership) were employed to undertake a funding allocation project. The Committee approved the first tranche of funding on 15 June 2023 and received funds

totalling £205k toward 22 projects. The Committee had also approved a working group which had decided where remaining funds would be allocated. The working group used a scoring matrix on a list of criteria and to reflect revenue impact. Appendix A to the report detailed the second tranche of projects and programmes which totalled £675k from the remaining budget. Officers also explained that any surplus funds would be reallocated and bought back to Committee.

Officers explained, in response to questions from Members, that there were four skateparks in the district located in Oxted, Smallfield, Felbridge and Lingfield.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the second tranche of projects for delivery under the UKSPF programme at Appendix A to the report be approved.

89. PLAYGROUNDS REFURBISHMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided a summary of exploratory discussions with Parish Councils and community groups on the playgrounds refurbishment programme, and progress to date.

The refurbishment of Felbridge playground had been completed. The refurbishment of Broadbridge Lane Junior playground, Smallfield was scheduled to start in September.

Positive discussions had taken place with Parish Councils. These had highlighted that a number of playgrounds were utilised as destination playgrounds, which attracted a wider demographic of residents, had higher football and attracted visitors to the District. A gap in provision of accessible play equipment had also been highlighted, and it was found that some play facilities were located in areas that were prone to flooding.

The report sought approval for the allocation of £473k of the capital budget to progress refurbishments at some of the destination playgrounds, as well as those adversely affected by accessibility or weather related issues. Funding would also come from Parish Councils, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and additional funding streams. The remaining capital budget would be allocated to refurbishments at the remaining sites, subject to approval at a future Committee meeting.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that:

- The Timber Hill play area was not considered a destination playground so would be considered in phase 2. A report would be presented to the November committee on the proposed Playground strategy which would help form phase 2 of the refurbishment plans.
- The White Knobs play area, which was located on a slope, may need a consultation, feasibility study and planning permission to ensure it is accessible, and therefore it wasn't included in the current tranche of refurbishments.
- The refurbishment of Queens Park play area was part of a larger development project, and so not included in the programme. Similarly, skateparks would be considered in a separate project at a later date.

- The reference to the Mill Lane play area in the report referred to the play area adjacent to the Holland Sports & Social Club.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) the initial feedback from stakeholder engagements as per recommendations in the June 2024 Committee report be noted;
- B) Officers allocate up to £473,195 of the capital budget to progress refurbishments.

90. COMMUNITY GRANT ALLOCATIONS 2024/25: VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND TANDRIDGE TOGETHER COMMUNITY LOTTERY

A report was presented in connection with the Committee's grants budget. In 2024/25, the Council had committed to spend £247k allocating grants to community and voluntary sector organisations from community grants and the Community Lottery Fund.

The report summarised the grants provided to local organisations. 7 community grants were awarded, totalling £224k, and 14 Community Lottery Fund grants were awarded, totalling £23k. The report highlighted the contributions the local organisations made in providing services to residents. It also sought approval for the process of allocating the next round of Tandridge Lottery Community grants.

The report highlighted to members that the grants were discretionary, and all discretionary services would be reviewed as part of the Future Tandridge Programme 2025/26 budget setting process. The future level of these grants would be included in this review.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) for the allocation of voluntary grants in 2024/25 the current levels of funding allocations for the grants for 2024/25 be noted.
- B) the application process for the Tandridge Lottery Community grants 2024/25 to follow the timetable set out in paragraph 19 of the report.
- C) the overall total budget for small grants to be determined in December 2024 to be based on the money in the Tandridge Together Community Fund. This would be a minimum of £20,000.
- D) the criteria for assessing grant applications for the Tandridge Lottery Community grant 2024/25 process be as per Appendix C to the report.
- E) the award of Tandridge Lottery Community grants be considered by a sub-group of the Tandridge Health & Wellbeing Board before being taken to the full Board in January 2025 to agree a formal recommendation. The recommendations will be submitted to the Deputy Chief Executive for formal agreement.
- F) Officers explore opportunities to use some income from the scheme to offset administration and promotion costs.

91. QUARTER 1 2024/25 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report that contained data on the key performance indicators (KPI) for Quarter 1 2024-25. Officers drew the Committee's attention to:

- the positive performance on waste collection. The recycling performance could only be reported the following quarter, due to the reporting requirements of DEFRA. However, in 2022/23, the Council was the 11th best collection authority in England.
- the street cleansing KPI, which was off target due to staff sickness and annual leave.
- two toilet closures during the period. These had opened again.
- fly-tipping incidents, which were similar to the previous quarter. Two new cameras and new signage were being used in fly tipping hotspots.
- the number of safeguarding cases had decreased from 22 to 16. Support was available to residents, as well as the staff who responded to the cases.
- four new cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) were being discussed at the Community Harm and Risk Management meeting. A new ASB Officer would be starting in September.

The report also provided an updated risk register. Officers explained that the most critical risk was tree management. A new Tree and Woodland Officer began work in August, and was planning the work needed to complete high-risk outstanding inspections.

Members asked a number of questions, and Officers responded as follows:

- Where the Tree and Woodland Officer identified work that needed to be undertaken, signage would be installed in advance and the relevant Parish Council would be notified.
- Each service area had gone through an analysis of critical activities within their area. These were forming the business continuity plan which would be completed by October.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) the most critical Quarter 1 2024-2025 performance indicators for this Committee be noted.
- B) the most critical risks for this Committee be noted.

92. QUARTER 1 2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING - COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report outlining the financial position of the Committee's 2024/25 Revenue budget as of Quarter 1. The budget agreed at Full Council in February was £4,574k. Subject to agreement at the Strategy & Resources Committee on 29 September 2024, this would increase to £4,639k by distributing an amount held corporately for the 2024/25 pay award.

The report set out a Month 3 forecast for a full-year balanced budget, with a number of offsetting risks and opportunities being managed within the budget. Of the £208k savings target, £79k had been completed and £129k was on track to be delivered.

The Capital budget was £2,911k following approval of carry forwards at the Strategy & Resources Committee in June and the inclusion of £47k funding from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish courts in Whyteleafe and Queens Park.

The forecast spend was £2,109k. The variance was down to a reduction in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital allowance, and rephasing on the public convenience and playgrounds refurbishment. £273k had been spent in Quarter 1.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that discussions had taken place with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council about sharing car park enforcement. Officers had also previously looked at pay by app for car parks, but this was not feasible in car parks that required a ticket to be displayed for 2 hours free parking.

RESOLVED – that the Committee’s Revenue and Capital budget forecast positions as at Quarter 1 / M3 (June) 2024/25 be noted.

Rising 9.25 pm