

# 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 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 at 7.30pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Wren (Chair), Swann (Vice-Chair), Allen, Caulcott, Crane, Hammond, Lee, Mansfield, North, O'Driscoll and Stamp

**ALSO PRESENT (via Zoom):** Councillors Bloore, Connolly\*, Farr, Flower, Gaffney, Lockwood, Mills, Moore, Pursehouse and Sayer

\* Councillor Connolly, who is a member of the Community Services Committee, was unable to be present in person but attended remotely in a non-voting capacity.

### **33. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 9TH MARCH 2021**

These minutes were confirmed as a correct record.

### **34. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 27TH MAY 2021**

These minutes were confirmed as a correct record.

### **35. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER 30**

The following question was read out by Councillor O'Driscoll:

*"I, like many residents, were shocked and saddened to hear that Whyteleafe FC were forced to withdraw from the upcoming Isthmian League season due to the owners of the Church Road ground terminating their lease. This is devastating to our area around Caterham, Whyteleafe and Warlingham as this act from the ground owners disregarded 75 years of community footballing history. What can this Council do to ensure that grassroots and non-league football has the support it needs, and will this Council condemn the actions of the leaseholder for stopping a much-loved football club from playing?"*

The Executive Head of Communities responded as follows:

*"The Council supports grassroots football in several ways.*

- The Council maintains and hires out pitches including those at Queens Park, Caterham, White Knobbs Way, Caterham and Talbot Road, Lingfield. These can be hired through our website.*
- We maintain grounds at sites which are leased to sports associations – grass cutting, weeding, aerating etc – we have had issues with adequate drainage at many of our pitches, which get regularly waterlogged – this is a priority for year 1 in the Open Spaces Strategy.*

- *The Council has subsidised sports associations who lease premises from ourselves – in the vast majority of cases they are on peppercorn rents and pay only a small contribution to the total cost of maintenance.*
- *Highlighting potential sources of funding to clubs wishing to improve facilities.*

*With regard to the particular case of Whyteleafe FC, they have had a considerable blow. They have been at the Church Road Ground for more than 60 years until the recent break clause was activated by the owners of the ground. There is a predicted demand for football pitches so this is not a facility we would wish to lose. At present, I have no further information on the owners or their intentions. We do not know the details and would not comment on issues between landlords and tenants.”*

Councillor O’Driscoll reflected further on Whyteleafe FC’s situation and commented that other clubs had been evicted from their grounds in similar circumstances. He asked (as his supplementary question) what steps Councillors could take to support local football clubs. The Executive Head of Communities responded by confirming that the freeholder had terminated Whyteleafe FC’s lease of its Church Road ground and reiterated that officers had no further information about their (the freeholder’s) intentions. She could not add anything further to her response to the original question.

## **36. COMMUNITY SERVICES FINANCE REPORT - MONTH 2 (21/22)**

A report concerning the Committee’s revenue budget and capital programme as at the end of May 2021 (month 2) was presented.

The report advised that the budget was provisional, pending the 2020/21 budget outturn to be presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee following the completion of the forensic review of the potential deficit by Grant Thornton (minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 Strategy & Resources Committee refer).

An overspend of £13,000 against the provisional revenue budget baseline of £3,993,200 was projected. This budget had been adjusted by virements totalling £894,800, a breakdown of which was included within the report. It was confirmed that these virements were of a technical, accounting nature (Resolution B below refers) and had no impact on service delivery.

During the debate, the importance of being able to track progress against the various savings targets (on which the committee’s budget relied) was acknowledged. Officers responded to other Member questions, including the way in which depreciation was accounted for within the Council’s budgets and the promotion of the garden waste service.

**RESOLVED** – that:

- A. relevant budget changes since approval of the 2021/22 budget at Full Council in February 2021 (paragraph 4 of the report) be approved, namely:

*“The most significant reason why the Community Services budget has to be reset is to remove the unconventional practice of assigning budgets to non-cash/accounting items. In usual circumstances and for budgeting purposes, only cash items would have a budget set against them as they have an element of controllability. The Council’s practice (which goes back some time it is understood) has been to apply budgets to items which are of an “accounting treatment” nature only, depreciation is an example”*

- B. the 2021/22 budget after recent budget virements be noted; and
- C. the Committee's forecast revenue and capital budget position as at month 2 (May 2021) be noted.

### **37. COMMUNITY SERVICES QUARTER 4 20/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Members were presented with an analysis of progress against the Committee's key performance indicators and risks for the fourth quarter of 2020/21. This included a table regarding the issue of parking permits throughout the District, as previously requested by Members.

The Committee was asked to consider whether the parking permit data should be included as a regular feature of future performance reports. Following a proposal from Councillor Swann, it was agreed that such data should be presented to the Committee at six monthly intervals (i.e. within the performance reports for Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 each year). It was also suggested that the parking permit data should be shared with the development management (planning) team.

In response to questions and comments about the Committee's KPIs and risks, officers advised that:

- the possibility of enabling Parish Councils to procure additional litter clearance services from the District Council's street sweeping team would be explored;
- the number of available parking permits needed to be balanced against the need to make parking spaces available for shoppers etc (it was considered that the two were effectively balanced at present);
- future references to Civil Enforcement Officers not seeing any parking contraventions would be qualified by the words, "during their visits" - officers would welcome information from Members about where and when to target such visits in rural areas with a view to witnessing contraventions and imposing fines to deter repeat offences;
- targets for the parking enforcement indicators would be set in due course (it had been premature to do so to date in light of the abnormal circumstances created by the pandemic);
- the parking enforcement service is intended to be cost-neutral, whereby the fines pay for the costs of administering the service;
- an explanation would be sought about the process for measuring performance against KPI CS4 (percentage of roads, footpaths and public open spaces ... which meet the environmental cleanliness standard); and
- a report would be presented to a future meeting regarding Freedom Leisure, including financial implications for the Council, the Village Health Club and oversight of leisure services.

**RESOLVED** – that:

- A. the Quarter 4 (2020/21) performance and risks for the Community Services Committee be noted; and
- B. a table on the number of parking permits issued throughout the District be included as a new indicator and presented to the Committee at 6 monthly intervals.

### **38. CHANGES TO TAXI LICENSING NEW AND RENEWAL SCHEME**

The Council was responsible for issuing the various types of taxi licenses, namely driver, vehicle and operator licenses for the hackney carriage and private hire trade. The different types of licence expired at the same time of year, e.g. all hackney carriage vehicle licences at the end of January, while those for private hire vehicles ran to the end of March. However, such fees were not charged pro-rata and were non-refundable.

A report was submitted which highlighted unfairness of this system for new applicants. This was also the case for those who, due to the pandemic, had let their licences lapse and wished to renew later. The resource challenges of processing new licences and renewals at the same time of year were also acknowledged. A more business friendly approach was proposed whereby a licence could be granted at any time of year and could be renewed annually thereafter. The report explained that new software would assist officers to manage the process. The various taxi licensing fees for 2021/22 were also presented for Members' information.

In response to the debate, Officers confirmed that there was no cap on the number of taxi licences issued in Tandridge. The imbalance in the number of taxis servicing different locations was discussed, notwithstanding the fact that licenses enabled drivers / operators to seek trade anywhere in the District. Officers agreed to provide advice to Members in due course regarding the powers available to Councils to restrict the number of licences in their areas.

**RESOLVED** – that the current procedure be changed so that all new hackney carriage and private hire licences will expire at the end of the full licence term on the anniversary of grant in line with the majority of other councils in Surrey.

### **39. TANDRIDGE TOGETHER COMMUNITY FUND GRANT ALLOCATIONS**

The Council's lottery scheme generated funds for the Tandridge Together Community Fund (i.e. 60p per ticket sold unless the purchaser nominated a good cause, in which case the amount was reduced to 10p). The Tandridge Health & Wellbeing (THWB) Board was engaged to assess and recommend grant allocations from the fund. In June 2019, the Committee agreed that the minimum annual budget for the fund should be £20,000, with any shortfalls being made up by the Council.

The Committee was informed about the allocation of grants from the 2020/21 fund, which totalled £24,500, including a £1,500 donation from Ridge Radio. 47 applications had been received, resulting in full or partial grants to 17 local organisations. Several recipients had been unable to spend their grants due to the pandemic and had been given an additional 12 months to proceed with their projects.

The Committee was asked to consider the community fund grants process for 2021/22. The THWB board had recommended that the existing criteria should continue to be applied, subject to an extra clause to requiring national charities to demonstrate that grants would be used to support the health and wellbeing of Tandridge residents. Organisations which had received funding in previous rounds would continue to be ineligible and a maximum cap of £2,000 per application would remain.

The report also provided an update on the Council's (Tandridge Together) lottery scheme. This confirmed that 168 good causes had signed up, many of which had been receiving £100 per month from ticket sales (50p per ticket). There had been a significant decline in sales at the beginning of the first lockdown in 2020, although purchases had recovered slightly in 2021 and officers were confident that at least £20,000 would be available for the community fund in 2021/22.

During the debate, the geographical spread of community fund grant recipients was discussed. Officers explained that, while several organisations were based in a particular location, many of their services were District wide.

**RESOLVED** – that:

- A. the application process follows the timetable set out below:
  - application forms to be made available from the beginning of September 2021
  - end of November 2021 deadline for the submission of applications
  - a sub-committee of the Health & Wellbeing Board to review applications in November / December 2021
  - the sub-committee's recommendations to be referred to the Health & Wellbeing Board in January 2022
  - applications determined by Executive Head of Communities in February 2022 and reported to Members thereafter;
- B. the overall total small grants budget be determined in December 2021, based on the money in the Tandridge Together Community Fund (this will be a minimum of £20,000, with any shortfall being met from the Council's future budgets);
- C. the criteria for assessing grant applications for the 2021/22 process be as per Appendix B of the report; and
- D. the award of any grants to be considered by a sub-committee group of the Tandridge Health & Wellbeing Board before being taken to the full Board in January 2022 to agree a formal recommendation – the recommendations to be submitted to the Executive Head of Communities for formal agreement.

## 40. UPDATE ON NEW RECYCLING AND REFUSE CONTRACT

Members discussed the proposed resolution to move into Part 2 for this item (exclusion of the press and public via the termination of the webcast). The resolution cited Paragraph 3 (information relating to financial or business affairs) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the basis for this.

Some Members argued that the officer report in connection with the item should be published as there was no apparent justification for making it confidential. It was accepted that the report would be reviewed by officers after the meeting to assess whether a redacted version could be published without compromising the Council's legal position. In the meantime, the Committee agreed to move into Part 2 and the webcast was terminated.

The report regarding the operation of the new recycling and refuse collection contract, since its commencement on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021, was then presented. This referred to operational changes, including the collection of food waste by separate vehicles and the 'Whitespace' customer relationship management system in all vehicles. The report:

- presented statistics for the first 9 weeks of the contract, including the rounds which had not been completed and the number of households affected;
- explained that rounds had been reorganised due to the new logistics of the contract and that some staff had been allocated to unfamiliar routes;
- acknowledged that technical difficulties had arisen with the new vehicles which had contributed to delays;
- clarified the testing process for the Whitespace system but reflected upon data upload issues which had resulted in service failures and communication problems;
- referred to challenges presented by the increased collection tonnages since the procurement documentation was produced and the prospect of potential changes to the structure of the rounds and collection days;
- outlined staffing capacity challenges faced by the Council in attempting to deal with issues arising from the implementation of the contract;
- reflected upon the impact of cameras on the new collection vehicles to enable the Council and Biffa to verify whether bins had been correctly presented (this was in the context of missed bin complaints);
- identified lessons learned, i.e. the future need for:
  - a dedicated mobilisation team
  - the availability of temporary additional support at key times to respond to enquiries
  - more careful consideration given to the timing of new contracts
  - the project team to be located with the supplier if possible
  - more time for officers to receive training on systems.

During the debate, Members highlighted the severity of the previous service disruptions and the negative impact upon residents. Officers responded to questions and acknowledged the extent of the difficulties faced by residents and Members alike. The circumstances behind some of the operational and communication issues were explained. While reference was made to the Biffa

Award community grants scheme (for organisations situated in the vicinity of landfill sites) it was clarified that Biffa would not be in a position to make compensatory donations to residents.

It was anticipated that, as part of the new performance reporting regime, data would be made available regarding missed bins collections, i.e. how many were rectified within 24 hours of a missed bin being reported.

***RESOLVED*** – that the report and lessons learnt from issues associated with the new contract roll-out be noted.

Rising 10.00 pm