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COMMUNITY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

13 February 2020

- * Councillor John Redpath (Chairman)
- * Councillor Steven Lee (Vice-Chairman)

- Councillor Paul Abbey
- * Councillor Andrew Gomm
- * Councillor Gillian Harwood
- * Councillor Diana Jones
- * Councillor Ted Mayne

- Councillor Ann McShee
- Councillor Ramsey Nagaty
- * Councillor George Potter
- Councillor Jo Randall
- * Councillor Deborah Seabrook

* Present

Councillor Pauline Searle was also in attendance.

C24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Abbey, Ann McShee and Jo Randall. Councillor Maddy Redpath was present as a substitute for Councillor Ann McShee.

C25 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Pauline Searle declared non-pecuniary interests in agenda item number 4 as a trustee of Reskilled and a patron of Homestart.

C26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Advisory Board held on 17 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from the minutes, a councillor expressed a wish for the EAB to review the Procurement Service Strategy when it had been prepared.

C27 COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GRANTS 2020-21

The Board considered an Executive report which set out the proposed allocation of grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2020-21 following their review by the Council's Grants Panel. In order to protect and maintain services to some of the Borough's most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents, the Council was proposing to transfer £50,495 from the community grants budget, where there was a surplus, to support the voluntary grants scheme, which was oversubscribed, in 2020-21.

The following points arose from related questions and discussion:

- All grant applications were scored against a criteria previously agreed by the Council.
- The grant recommended for allocation to the Stoke and District Horticultural Society in respect of Aggie Hall was for essential maintenance works and was anticipated that the refurbished Hall would remain open for some years to come.
- Some grants funded the employment of staff and it was important for applicants to be aware of their likely allocation at an early stage to facilitate forward planning and provide certainty. In the future it was likely that some annual voluntary grants would be replaced by three year rolling service level agreements (SLAs) for this reason and community grants may be provided through a crowdfunding model going forward.

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SLAs would enhance monitoring of grant delivery and outcomes as they required formal monitoring review meetings with grant recipients.

- Although South West Surrey Association for Mental Health had applied for a voluntary grant of £22,500 in respect of its Canterbury Care Centre project, the recommended allocation was a reduced amount of £20,000.
- The total allocation of community grants in 2020-21 was £81,865 and the remaining £50,495 had been transferred to support the voluntary grants scheme.

In conclusion, the Board indicated its support for the recommended community and voluntary grant allocations and transfer of £50,495 from the community grants budget to support the voluntary grants scheme in 2020-21, with the exception of the proposed grant to South West Surrey Association for Mental Health. The Board recommended that the Executive should reconsider the latter grant to establish the Association's need for the full amount of £22,500 applied for and consider increasing the grant to match that sum.

C28 FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF CHANTRY WOOD CAMPSITE

The Parks and Landscape Manager introduced this agenda item by giving an explanatory presentation in respect of forest schools and 'learning outside the classroom' (LOtC).

Forest schools were described as an inspirational process that offered children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve and to develop confidence and self esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland environment. The presentation explained the principles of forest schools; their regulation, monitoring and delivery; their funding; and the forest school proposal for the Chantry Wood campsite together with its strategic alignment to policies and strategies.

There were six principles of forest schools covering the nature of their learning processes, locations, aims, offerings, practitioners, and range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing were integral elements of forest schools, which were overseen by the Forest School Association.

LOtC featured the use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning. It focused on facilitating children and young people to embrace the outdoors environment whilst providing them with challenging, exciting and different experiences to assist with their learning. LOtC was overseen by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.

In terms of regulation, monitoring and delivery, forest schools aligned with and supported the Early Years Framework and National Curriculum whilst contributing to child development and learning. Forest schools were inspected and assessed by Ofsted along with all other schools and nurseries and there were many models of delivery. Delivery consisted of ad hoc and consistent planned sessions for Early Years, Key Stage 1 onwards and Play schemes together with dedicated full time learning provision for Early Years.

Funding for forest schools consisted of the schools budget, Parent and Teacher Associations, parent funding, childcare vouchers, tax free savings or funding provided by others such as Fun in the School Holidays and Playrangers.

The Surrey Hills Forest School, which was well established and provided valuable outputs, provided an example of how a similar provision at the Chantry Wood Campsite may appear.

The forest school proposal for Chantry Wood campsite was likely to consist of two sessions per day (9 - 11:30 and 13:00 - 15:00) with eight children during term time in addition to all day sessions with an average of 20 children during holiday time subject to the child to adult

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ratio. Any arrangement would limit operators to 3 groups of 8 children between 7:30 and 18:00 for 5 days a week and transport to the site would be by minibus. The woods were not being privatised and the forest school activity would be undertaken in common with the ongoing and required public use.

Strategic alignment consisted of the Council's Countryside Vision and Play Strategy, the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty management plan, the National Curriculum, Early Years provision, local businesses and national policies.

The Countryside Manager's report advised that when the Executive considered the options available to the Council in relation to the future management and operation of Chantry Wood campsite in March 2019, it decided that public consultation should be undertaken and the results reported back to the Executive to inform its decision on the future of the campsite. Therefore, consultation exercises were undertaken during 2019 via a range of methods. The report set out the responses from the public consultation carried out in November 2019, site users feedback collected during the summer season 2019 and the local consultation undertaken in February 2019.

The key messages resulting from the consultation were that there was strong public support for the continuation of public camping at Chantry Wood, the existing basic facilities had appeal and that people would be willing to pay a higher fee to utilise the facility. Respondents were also supportive of the idea of using this area for a forest school but were concerned about the loss of private camping. Finally, some residents indicated that the Council should consider enabling volunteers to run the site and this has been added to the original options appraisal. The information gathered had been added to the original options appraisal and sought a decision on the way forward.

The EAB was invited to express views in respect of the recommendations to the Executive to agree Option B2 that the campsite continued in its current form with increased fees as shown in shown in paragraph 5.7 of the report and that the Council continued to engage with forest school operators to explore options to increase outdoor education whilst maintaining a camping facility. The reasons for the recommendations were to implement arrangements at the campsite that responded to the views expressed during the consultation whilst protecting the natural environment and reducing the operational cost to the Council.

The following points and comments arose from related questions and discussion:

- The continued use of the site as a private campsite enhanced by the addition of a forest school was welcomed.
- Funding predictions set out in the report were scenarios based on assumptions regarding the numbers of child and adult users and that all users paid the same rate.
- Whilst the minimum price per booking for use of the whole site had increased and a further charge was made per additional adult per night, many consultees had indicated that they were content to pay a higher charge and were in favour of the single use option.
- Although a capital investment of £22,000 to rebuild both toilet blocks to increase their accessibility to disabled people and make them more pleasant received some support from councillors, consultation responses had not indicated strong support for this improvement which would lead to price increases.

The Chairman summarised the EAB's views that the Executive should explore the possibility of making some limited disabled adaptations to improve the campsite's facilities, that Option B2, to continue to provide basic facilities operated by the Council with increased charges, be

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supported, and that the Council continued to engage with forest school operators to explore options to increase outdoor education whilst maintaining a camping facility.

C29 FORWARD PLAN

Having reviewed the Executive Forward Plan, the EAB indicated that it would be interested in reviewing various corporate governance related matters, pest control services and councillor working groups.

C30 EAB WORK PROGRAMME

The EAB's work programme was noted.

The meeting finished at 8.10 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman