

Article thanks to
www.getsurrey.co.uk

Hard-up Surrey Police paid for 'leadership' training

By [Richard Pain](#)

May 07, 2010

SURREY Police has been revealed as the latest public body to pay thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money to a third-party training provider.



Chief Constable Mark Rowley selected Comm Purpose candidates

It comes as the force's financial deficit has led to plans to sell off police stations and relocate staff to council offices.

Around the time the radical proposals were made public last autumn, two senior officers and a staff member were sent on a training course run by Common Purpose at a total cost of £8,049.99.

Documents and e-mails showed Chief Constable Mark Rowley selected Detective Superintendent John Boshier, Supt Chris Moon and project manager Michelle Grondona to attend the Surrey InsideOUT programme.

Surrey County Council ceased sending representatives on the courses last year.

An internal audit found the council could not justify how it ignored its own procurement process when agreeing a £48,000 deal with the company in November 2008.

Common Purpose is a not-for-profit organisation that organises training and networking events for selected "leaders". Critics of the organisation claim it has a hidden political agenda.

Mr Rowley is one of 12 members of Common Purpose's Surrey advisory group, which plays a role in selecting future candidates.

Others include Martyn Brake, head of corporate development at Guildford Borough Council, Russell Pearson, chief fire officer of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, and Fran Rutter, chief executive of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

Graham Roberts, a member of the public, uncovered details of Common Purpose's activity through a series of Freedom of Information requests.

He said: "How do the ratepayers of Surrey benefit from any of this? There are hospices with no money and councils are paying thousands to send chief executives on these courses."

Common Purpose's selection criteria states that the target age for group members is between 35 and 55.

"Beware too many older participants," an internal document reads. "Sometimes people have seniority but are past the peak of their influence."

It also stated: "Beware having too many younger participants. Experience shows they are less likely to be good at looking outside their sector."

Elsewhere, the document said: "About 70% of the applicants will be pretty straightforward and come from major decision-making bodies in the area."

"It will be the unexpected 30% that will take time and digging out in order to 'get to the parts others cannot reach'."

Common Purpose meetings are held behind closed doors and under Chatham House rules, which means nothing said is attributable to a particular speaker.

A spokesman for the company said its aim was to help people become better leaders.

She said: "What that means for society is if people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures work together and more effectively within their organisations and communities, everyone benefits."

"Most people work within one sector or environment and become tied to one particular way of doing things."

"We aim to help people work with a diverse group across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors."

She said meetings were held under Chatham House rules to enable a "free and open discussion forum for participants".

"What that means is what is said by participants or speakers and visit hosts during our courses can be repeated but cannot be attributed," the spokesman continued.

"So the content of the discussion is not a secret or outside the public domain."

"There are various ridiculous conspiracy theories about Common Purpose. These libellous accusations are untrue, with no basis or evidence to support them."

A Surrey Police spokesman said: "Surrey's status as one of the safest counties in the country is largely due to the commitment of Surrey Police to bringing out the best in our staff to develop top quality leaders."

"Surrey Police has in the past sent senior managers on training courses outside the police environment to broaden their skills to work more effectively with partners."

The spokesman added that the delegates found it "extremely useful" to be part of a diverse group of people taking part in the course and had maintained contact with representatives from other sectors.

The force is no longer sending officers on Common Purpose programmes due to budget pressures, he added.

[Print Article](#) | [Share this article](#) | [Submit Comments](#) | [View Comments \(3\)](#)
2

« [Previous Story](#) | [Next Story](#) »

Most recent user comments 3 of 3

Show 15 | [25](#) | [50](#) per page

Very funny Mike. First you tell us leadership training is all "smoke and mirrors" then you go on to explain how to be a good leader.

The scandal here isn't that people are being sent of training courses during budget cuts: its that SCC purchased services from a company to which they have ties and by passed their standard procurement process to get this through.

Our public bodies should have nothing to do with Common Purpose.

Matt Helliwell

11/05/2010 at 08:24 [Offensive or Inappropriate?](#)

Leadership training is all smoke and mirrors. The truth is most middle management is talentless and no amount of training will make people effective who only got where they are by towing the line.

Real leaders are those who are prepared to recognise organisational issues and then address them, not those who tag along saying all is wonderful only reporting good things up the line.

Councils, the Police, NHS and many private companies would do well to sack all their middle management and eliminate stupid management fads such as targets and balanced score card which only encourage people to fiddle figures rather than doing their job properly.

MikeLivingstone, Reigate

8/05/2010 at 23:34 [Offensive or Inappropriate?](#)

You can find out more about Common Purpose here:

<http://www.cpexposed.com>

<http://www.stopcp.com>

John Anon

8/05/2010 at 09:20 [Offensive or Inappropriate?](#)