

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 1st December 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors D Brown, M Francis, R Fuller, T Hayward, Mrs P A Jordan and P Kadewere.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs R E Mathews, D J Mead, M C Oliver and Mrs D C Reynolds.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D B Dew.

50. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. MEMBER'S INTERESTS

Councillor S J Criswell declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute Number 53 by virtue of his Membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

52. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st December 2015 to 31st March 2016.

53. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY (CHIA) SHARED SERVICE REVIEW AND DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT BUDGET

With the aid of a report by the Housing Strategy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) Shared Service Review and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) report was presented to the Panel. Members were advised that the CHIA shared service had been in operation since 1st April 2012 and required Cabinet approval to be extended for a further two years.

The Panel had been informed that CHIA had dealt with 437 enquiries within the District during 2014/15. Customer satisfaction for the District was 89% which was lower than Cambridge City (97%) and South Cambridgeshire (100%). The average time taken to complete works following a referral within the District was 26.3 weeks on cases costing below £10k and 69.6 weeks on cases costing above £10k.

Both were above their respective key performance targets of 26 weeks (below £10k) and 45 weeks (above £10k). It was noted that works costing above £10k are complex involving multi agencies and often require planning permission which accounts for some of the time.

Members noted that CHIA delivered a surplus of £18k at the end of year 3 which had been reinvested in a procurement programme. The Panel was advised that East Cambridgeshire District Council had decided not to join CHIA.

Following a query regarding the timescales Members were informed that the timescales include the entire process from assessment to sourcing quotes to carrying out the work. For low level work such as the installation of a rail, people can access a handyman service so that the work can be carried out swiftly. The Panel requested further statistics on how the time is broken down between lead in time and improvement works.

The Panel discussed the £18k surplus and was advised that it was as a result of the operational budget generating a surplus.

Members were advised that there was more DFGs in the District compared to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire because the District's population is larger and older. In addition Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire had council housing and the District does not meaning that the District had to use DFGs to make improvements for those residents living in social housing who are entitled to it whereas the Partner Districts are able to use a different budget to pay for improvements.

Following a question regarding the CHIA agreement the Panel was informed that the original agreement was for three years with an option to extend by a year. At the current time the partner organisations were looking to extend the shared service by two years. Members noted the benefits of the shared service including: saving costs on accommodation, staff and equipment; operational resilience and economies of scale with regards to procurement.

The Panel was concerned with the decrease in Occupational Therapy referrals however Members were informed that this could be a result of a shortage of Occupational Therapists. The service had a problem with regards to recruitment and retention of staff however the problem was out of the Council's controls as Occupational Therapists were employed by the County Council.

In response to a question regarding accessing DFGs the Panel was advised that the Council provided the DFG and the County Council provided equipment. The Occupational Therapists assess people's needs and refer them to the CHIA if the claim is a DFG.

With regards to the customer satisfaction survey Members were informed that the main reason why the 11% was not satisfied was because of the workmanship. The Panel was assured that customer feedback would be used to drive service improvements.

Members were advised, in response to a query regarding future

builds, that policies reflecting the needs of the ageing population had been included within the Local Plan. The Panel was informed that meant in new developments there would be safer walking routes, elderly people's housing would be appropriately located and good public transport links. At Alconbury there would potentially be 400 homes for elderly people built.

54. HUNTINGDONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL UPDATE 2014/15

With the aid of a report by the Head of Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) Annual Update 2014/15 was presented to the Panel. The Head of Community Services apologised for the delay in presenting the report however assured Members that the following year's report would be presented in a timely manner.

The Panel was informed that the Council had reduced its financial input into HCSP from £33,613 to £21,074 and this was as a result of the Chairmanship transferring over to the Police Constabulary. The HCSP had received £24,225 in funding from the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner for the year 2014/15 which the HCSP had spent on projects linked to its priority 'Victims and Vulnerabilities'.

In regards to the crime statistics Members noted that crime in the District had fallen which was in line with the fall in the national trends however violent crime in the District increased. In addition the Panel had been advised that the ward of Huntingdon North had seen the highest repeat victimisation.

Following a question regarding an increase in weapons and sexual offences and the perpetrators countries of origin the Panel were advised that there was no data which confirmed that there was a link between the an increase in those offences and an increase in immigration.

Members noted that Pub Watch in St Ives was having anti-social behavioural problems and they felt that the Police was not supporting them. The Head of Community Services informed the Panel that he had not received any reports of Pub Watch's problems but assured Members that Chief Inspector Laura Hunt had a good working relationship with the Pub Watch schemes.

The Panel discussed the use of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in Huntingdon and whether it would be useful to introduce a PSPO in St Ives and St Neots. However Members noted that what was needed is the enforcement of current legislation and not the introduction of new legislation.

The Breakfast Club for EU residents living in Huntingdon North Ward had ceased running as a result of a lack of volunteers. The Panel expressed concern that the Breakfast Club put off attendance of residents from non-EU countries. Members recognised that the project did help reduce the crime rate in Huntingdon North.

Members were advised that the Executive Councillor for Strategic

Economic Development and Legal and the Head of Community Services meet with Chief Inspector Laura Hunt bimonthly for regular updates. The Panel expressed their desire to invite Chief Inspector Laura Hunt to a future meeting of the Panel to discuss the crime statistics contained within the report.

55. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Economic Well-Being and Environment Well-Being.

56. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Team (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting. In addition Members had the opportunity to discuss issues arising from the Decision Digest (circulated separately).

The Panel noted that the Chairman had met the new Chief Executive Officer of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Lance McCarthy and that Members would be meeting him when Hinchingsbrooke Hospital attend a future meeting of the Panel.

Members had been informed that the Cabinet have accepted all the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Working Group and that a formal report would be presented to the Panel at the meeting in January 2016.

Chairman