

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7th March 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Alban – Chairman.
Councillors S Bywater, S J Criswell,
J W Davies, Ms A Diaz, K I Prentice,
Mrs S Smith and Mrs J Tavener.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B S Banks and D R Underwood.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Fuller.

61. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 7th February 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

62. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

63. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st March 2019 to 30th June 2019.

64. CLINICAL WASTE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Operations to which was attached a report by the Recycling and Waste Operations Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on alternative options for the collection and disposal of clinical waste and the potential likely financial impact.

Members were acquainted with details of the current arrangements for the collection of household clinical waste with a low volume of weekly collections currently at only 13 and proposals for changes being implemented by NHS England impacting on local authorities to be responsible for the collection of sharps from all self-medicating home patients from 1st April 2019 as the Waste Collection Authorities.

The Head of Operations explained to Members the difficulty of identifying the potential financial impact of these changes on the Council due to the lack of availability of information from NHS England on the frequency of collections. As a result, it was reported

that it may be necessary to submit an unavoidable growth bid once the actual likely impact had been identified, with potential costs to the authority identified at an estimated £50k. It was therefore proposed to replicate the current NHS England Model, with local pharmacies being paid to act as a disposal point for clinical waste.

Arising from a question from Councillor K I Prentice on confirmation that the pharmacies were ready for implementation from 1st April 2019 and whether the authority could meet the requirements of the proposed changes, the Head of Operations explained that the Council had been working with the Local Pharmacy Commission (LPC) and confirmed that a contractor was in place for collection of the materials and was confident that the Council could meet the timescales identified. It was further noted that the pharmacies had been frustrated by the lack of communications on the timescales, with further possibility that the implementation date may be moved to 1st September 2019.

In response to a question from Councillor S J Criswell on the financial risk to the authority, it was explained that the service would continue to be operated free to the customer, with the potential to offer a hybrid solution to offer at cost to the customer for a household collection or free due to the nature of the medical condition.

Councillor S Bywater raised a question in relation to communication for the existing customers, whereby Members were informed that the Council had been working closely with NHS England to deliver a communications strategy and was likely to have minimal impact on the customer as there would be effectively little change to the current arrangements of a pharmacy collection model. It was also noted that there would continue to be provision for those customers who required a household collection service of clinical waste.

Arising from a question posed by Councillor Prentice on progress with the timetable for implementation as identified in the report, Members were informed that a draft agreement had been reached with the pharmacies and the contract for collection was in place, thereby ensuring that when NHS England confirmed the definite date of handover the Council could continue to offer a service with minimal impact to the customer.

Discussion ensued and further questions from Members on the risks associated with leaving sharps boxes on the doorstep and methods available to mitigate these risks. In light of the inability to identify the likely frequency of household collections, Members discussed the likely modelling options for recommendation, whereupon it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Cabinet be requested to consider the implementation of a pharmacy based solution based on the current NHS England Model and further review implementing the charged household collection at a later date when required to do so by legislation; and
- (b) that a report be presented to the Panel in September 2019 on progress with implementation of the clinical waste

collection service and any further financial implications for the service.

65. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18 AND SHARED SERVICE CONTRACT EXTENSION

(Councillor R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development was in attendance for this Item).

The Panel were presented with a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on an update of the performance of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) and details of a proposed extension to the shared service agreement for the service.

Members were presented with background to the establishment of the CHIA with Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council and were informed by Councillor R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development, that the Agency had been successfully delivering Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and performance had improved since Autumn 2017 since the appointment of a new manager. It was noted that the service had become more efficient and there had been increased expenditure on improvements rather than on management costs of the service and was self-financing as the Agency was funded by fee income.

Members were appraised with details of the resource implications if the contract was not extended, specifically a potential decrease in the number of DFG applications. Members also noted a correction in the report that 930 residents were assisted in 2017/18 by the CHIA, rather than 9301, to enable them to stay in their homes.

The Chairman reminded members that the Panel had previously expressed concerns regarding the communications for residents of the service and requested that a reminder be issued to Members as to details of the Manager for the service and where residents should be directed to should they require assistance.

Arising from a question from Councillor S Bywater on changes to the physical dynamics at Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire since the agreement was last signed and any objections to signing, whereby Councillor Fuller explained that a good working relationship existed with the other authorities and the Head of Development represented the Council on the Joint Home Improvement Agency Board and confirmed that he had confidence that there were no issues with the new agreement with the other authorities.

Members indicated their support for extension of the shared service agreement and were pleased to see the improvements that had been identified in terms of performance of the CHIA, as well as welcoming a continued reduction in time taken to complete a DFG. In so doing, the Panel

RESOLVED

(a) that extension of the Shared Service Agreement for the

Home Improvement Agency be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet; and

- (b) that the Panel note the continued improvements in performance of the Agency and significant reduction in the time taken in the completion of a Disabled Facilities Grant.

66. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AND REPAIRS POLICY

(Councillor R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development was in attendance for this Item).

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy for Cambridgeshire. Members were advised of the Council's statutory duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and the discretionary options that were available as an alternative or in addition to a DFG.

Members were apprised of further details of the additional discretionary options of circumstances where the approved works may exceed the maximum DFG grant amount and the availability of a loan as a Top Up, as well as Relocation Assistance to move to a more appropriate home.

Arising from concerns raised by Councillor Mrs A Diaz regarding pressure for individuals to move from their long term homes, Councillor Fuller explained that, wherever possible, the Council was committed to ensuring that residents remained in their homes where it was best for the individual.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Alban, the Head of Development reported that that the largest assistance was focussed upon the provision of DFGs and the number of residents requiring Relocation Assistance was very limited. Whereupon, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

67. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

In relation to the layout and content of the report, Members requested further clarity in the drafting of future reports to be presented to the Panel.

Chairman