

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, 10 June 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors R C Carter, R Fuller, A J Hardy,
Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere,
S M Van De Kerkhove and Mrs R E Mathews.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K M Baker, R S Farrer, M Francis and Mrs D C Reynolds.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor J D Ablewhite.

6. THE LATE COUNCILLOR J W G PETHARD

The Chairman paid tribute to the late Councillor J W G Pethard who sadly had passed away on 26th April 2014. Members stood for a few moments in memory of Councillor Pethard.

7. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 1st April and 4th June 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S J Criswell declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of Minute No. 14/10 as Cambridgeshire County Council's representative on the Hunts Forum Board.

9. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel considered and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader of the Council for the period 1st June to 31st December 2014. With regard to the item entitled Community Chest Allocation 2014/15, the Chairman encouraged Members to submit any comments on the proposals to Councillors J A Gray and T D Sanderson prior to a decision being made by the Portfolio Holders on 30th June 2014. Members were also advised that the item entitled Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency – 2 Year Review would be submitted to the Panel at its July 2014 meeting.

10. 2013/14 REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT OF THREE YEAR FUNDING AWARDS

With the aid of a report by the Healthy Communities Manager (a copy

of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to the performance of voluntary organisations in three year funding arrangements with the Council. In introducing the report, the Healthy Communities Manager explained that, with the exception of Rural Cambs CAB, all organisations had achieved their agreed performance targets. He explained that Rural Cambs CAB's failure to achieve its target was attributed to the delay with the opening of St Neots office, which was originally expected in June 2013 but it had in fact opened at the end of November 2013. The prolonged delay was a result of failures by a number of facilities providers to connect their services to the office. These matters were beyond the control of the organisation. Reference was then made to the uncertainty associated with ongoing funding from Cambridgeshire County Council and the potential impact of this on the future sustainability of the organisations, in particular Shopmobility. In addition, the Healthy Communities Manager reported that work was currently underway to review the monitoring that would take place in relation to awards of funding from April 2015 onwards. It was intended to concentrate on the outcomes organisations in receipt of funding achieved rather than their outputs. This work was expected to be completed by July 2014.

The Panel discussed the impact of Rural Cambs CAB's reported loss of income, the location of Disability Information Services Huntingdonshire's offices, whether Rural Cambs CAB had engaged with Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations with a view to establishing a presence at The Maple Centre and the opportunity which presented itself to amalgamate some of the voluntary organisations as a means of generating efficiencies. In terms of the latter, Members of the Voluntary Sector Working Group confirmed that preliminary investigations had been undertaken in this respect and urged the Healthy Communities Manager to continue to pursue this matter. Having noted that further updates would be provided to the Panel in due course, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report now submitted be noted; and
- (b) that it be noted that from April 2015 onwards, a new monitoring process will be introduced.

11. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USER GROUPS

(Ms S Hughes, Chief Executive of Mind in Cambridgeshire, and Ms L Sidney, Engagement Worker for Mental Health Service User Network, were in attendance for consideration of this item).

(At 7.30pm, during discussions on this item, Councillor R Fuller took his seat at the meeting).

The Chairman briefly outlined the background to the Panel's interest in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust's (CPFT) mental health service redesign and its implications for Huntingdonshire, which had resulted in the permanent closure of Acer Ward at Hinchingbrooke Hospital. In introducing herself to the Panel, Ms S Hughes, Chief Executive of Mind in Cambridgeshire, reported

that the Foundation Trust had launched a further consultation entitled "Personality Disorder Community Service/Complex Cases Service, including Lifeworks" which was welcomed by both Mind in Cambridgeshire and the Mental Health Service User Network. The consultation sought service users' views on the future of community personality disorder services across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.

During the discussions, the Chief Executive of Mind in Cambridgeshire expressed the view that since the redesign of mental health services came into effect, demand for acute beds continued to exist in Huntingdonshire. There had, however, been a noticeable shift in the availability of community services offered by the Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team and plans were underway to introduce further changes to improve service delivery. She then drew attention to the pressures the voluntary sector would be facing as a result of budget cuts, which were likely to take effect from 2015/16.

Ms L Sidney, Engagement Worker for the Mental Health Service User Network, stated that service users were aware of the financial pressures on voluntary organisations and drew attention to the challenges associated with achieving equity of service across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. There was a perception that some were disadvantaged in Huntingdonshire in some respects but this applied to a more significant extent in Fenland. It was, however, explained that Huntingdonshire had a fairly good range of service provision and, in terms of location, was very accessible for service users.

In response to questions about the Advice and Referral Centre, Ms Hughes and Ms Sidney confirmed that the Centre did not provide patients with direct access to services. Instead, it acted as a referral system for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Primary Care Trust. There was concern that the level of demand for mental health services was increasing, with patients waiting as long as six months in some cases. Other comments, which were noted by the Panel, related to the absence of an established process for patients being transferred from adult people's services to older people's services, the lack of awareness of the CPFT's Transportation Fund, the potential amalgamation of voluntary services and the need to bridge gaps in accessibility and referral routes to services. In terms of the latter, the Panel's attention was drawn to a national campaign entitled "Combat Stress", which sought to train staff on assisting members of the Armed Forces who had returned to the community who had been diagnosed as having mental health problems.

Having questioned whether both of their organisations had responded to the current consultation being undertaken by the Clinical Commissioning Group on proposals to improve older peoples healthcare and adult community services, Ms L Sidney advised that the views of service users had been collated and she undertook to share with Members the comments which had been received. The Service User Network was confident that it would establish good working relationships with the successful provider.

Discussion then ensued on the range of methods utilised by both organisations to publicise their services and the reasons for the

increased level of demand. At the conclusion of the discussions, the Chairman thanked Ms Hughes and Ms Sidney for their attendance at the meeting and requested Officers to circulate details of the current consultation being undertaken by the CPFT on Personality Disorder Community Service/Complex Cases Service, including Lifeworks to the Panel.

12. CORPORATE CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

(Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic and Delivery Partnerships, was in attendance for this item).

Consideration was given to a report prepared by the Corporate Project Officer (Policy & Performance) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the Panel's endorsement of an updated Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy, action plan and supporting appendices. Having introduced the report, Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic and Delivery Partnerships, expressed his appreciation of the Panel's Consultation Processes Working Group's invaluable contribution to the development of the Strategy.

Members were advised that the Strategy had been designed to increase the role that Members would have in the process and noted that an annual consultation evaluation report summarising the Council's consultation and engagement activities would be submitted to the Panel. Having had their attention drawn to the introduction of pre and post consultation checklists, subject to the inclusion of reference to consultation with public sector partners on matters which could potentially have an impact upon their services, the Panel expressed support for the Strategy. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that subject to the comments outlined above, the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy and note the action plan and guidance appendices.

13. HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT CHANGES AND THE IMPACT ON HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the effects of the Government's Welfare Reform programme and how it had affected households in Huntingdonshire in relation to Housing Benefits, Council Tax Support and homelessness. In introducing the report, the Housing Needs and Resources Manager outlined a number of changes which had taken place during 2014 in respect of the local housing allowance, social sector size criteria rules, Council Tax Support, the benefit cap and discretionary housing payments.

Members discussed the steps taken by Registered Providers when dealing with households in rent arrears and the interventions undertaken by the District Council to prevent these households from becoming homeless, the effective utilisation of the discretionary

housing payments fund and the need to encourage households that were struggling financially as a result of reduced benefits to seek advice from the Council.

Having indicated a wish to continue receiving reports on a six monthly basis, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

14. PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE OLDER PEOPLES HEALTHCARE AND ADULT COMMUNITY SERVICES - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Pursuant to Minute No. 13/109 and with the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Members gave consideration to a draft response to the consultation currently being undertaken by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group on proposals to improve older people's healthcare and adult community services. Having expressed their satisfaction with the contents of the draft response, and in requesting Officers to emphasise their previous concerns over the lack of elected Member involvement in the procurement exercise, it was

RESOLVED

that the views outlined in section 3 of the report now submitted be endorsed as the basis for the Panel's response to the consultation being undertaken by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group on proposals to improve older people's healthcare and adult community services.

15. HEALTH SCRUTINY

(a) Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Panel received and noted the Minutes of the meetings of the Cambridgeshire Adults, Well-Being and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13th March and 1st April 2014 (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book).

(b) Cambridgeshire Health Committee

In the absence of a Panel representative having been formally co-opted onto the new Cambridgeshire Health Committee, Councillor S M Van De Kerkhove delivered a brief update on the meeting of the Health Committee held on 29th May 2014.

16. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and

Democratic Services (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 Environmental Well-Being).

17. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of actions taken in response to recent discussions and decisions. Given that it was the first meeting of the Municipal Year and that the composition of the Panel had changed, the Membership of each of the Panel's Working Groups was reviewed and changes were made as necessary.

In reviewing the Panel's progress report, requests were made for scoping information to be circulated to the Registered Social Landlords Working Group and for an invitation to be extended to the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office for a representative to attend a future meeting. Having regard to the latter, it was also agreed to circulate the latest Minutes of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel meeting to Members.

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillors P Kadewere and Ms R E Mathews be appointed to the Voluntary Sector Working Group;
- (b) that Councillor A J Hardy be appointed to the Equality Working Group;
- (c) that Councillor Ms R E Mathews be appointed to the Elderly Patient Care Working Group;
- (d) that scoping information be prepared to enable the Registered Social Landlords Working Group to commence its work; and
- (e) that an invitation be extended to the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office for a representative to attend a future Panel meeting.

18. SCRUTINY

In receiving and noting the 145th Edition of the Decision Digest (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) a request was made for an update on Members' IT to be provided by the IMD Service. A number of Members were encountering problems sending and receiving emails. There also appeared to be some confusion over the terms for purchasing electronic devices that would enable them to access electronic copies of Agendas and the minimum requirements for participating in the Council's loan scheme which had been established for this purpose.

Councillor Mrs P A Jordan reported that the date of the next Employment Panel meeting had now changed to 1st July 2014.

Chairman