
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

**Report of the meetings held on 10th June and 8th July
2014**

Matters for Information

**1. 2013/14 REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT
OF THREE YEAR FUNDING AWARDS**

The Panel has reviewed the performance of voluntary organisations that have three year funding arrangements with the Council. With the exception of Rural Cambs CAB, all organisations have achieved their agreed performance targets. Rural Cambs CAB's performance has been affected by delays with the opening of its St Neots office. This had been expected in June 2013 but owing to service failures with a number of facility providers it opened at the end of November 2013.

Uncertainties exist over ongoing funding from Cambridgeshire County Council, which will have an impact on the sustainability of the organisations, in particular, Shopmobility. Work is underway to produce the new monitoring requirements for awards of funding from April 2015 onwards. This is expected to be completed by July 2014.

The Panel has 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 has engaged with Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations with a view to establishing some form of presence at The Maple Centre and the opportunity which exists to amalgamate some of the voluntary organisations to generate efficiencies. Preliminary investigations have already been undertaken on the latter and updates will continue to be provided to the Panel in the future.

2. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USER GROUPS

Representatives of Mind in Cambridgeshire and of the Mental Health Service User Network have addressed the Panel on the implications of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust's (CPFT) decision to redesign mental health services on Huntingdonshire service users. A further consultation has been launched seeking views on the future of community personality disorder services across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.

Since the redesign of mental health services came into effect, pressures for acute beds continue to exist in Huntingdonshire. There

has been a noticeable shift in the availability of community services offered by the Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team and plans are underway to introduce further changes to improve service delivery. The voluntary sector will be facing budget cuts which are likely to take effect from 2015/16 and service users have been made aware of the financial constraints.

Whilst one of the principles of the redesign is to deliver equity of service across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, there is a perception that Huntingdonshire in some respects is disadvantaged but this view is more valid in relation to Fenland where there is less service provision. Huntingdonshire generally has a good range of services and their location means they are readily accessible to service users.

The Advice and Referral Centre does not provide patients with direct access to services but acts as a referral system for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Primary Care Trust. There are some concerns over the increasing levels of demand for mental health services, with some patients waiting as long as six months in some cases. Further areas of concern are the absence of a transition process for patients transferring from adult and young people's services to older people's services, the lack of awareness of the CPFT's Transportation Fund and the potential amalgamation of voluntary services. There also is a need to bridge any identified gaps in accessibility and in referral routes to services. The Panel's attention has been drawn to a national campaign entitled "Combat Stress", which trains staff on assisting members of Armed Forces returning to the community who have been diagnosed with mental health problems.

The Mental Health Service User Network has agreed to share with Members comments made by service users on the current Clinical Commissioning Group consultation on proposals to improve older peoples healthcare and adult community services. The organisation is confident it will establish good working relationships with the successful provider in the future.

Other matters discussed include the range of methods utilised by both organisations to publicise their services and the reasons for the increased level of demand. A copy of the current consultation being undertaken by the CPFT on personality disorder services has been circulated to Members and has been considered at the July 2014 meeting (Item No. 8 of the Panel's Report below refers).

3. CORPORATE CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Panel has endorsed the content of an updated Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy, action plan and supporting appendices subject to the inclusion of a statement that the Council will consult with public sector partners on matters which can potentially have an impact on their services. The Strategy has been subject to prior review by the Panel's Consultation Processes

Working Group which has expressed its satisfaction with the document.

The Strategy enhances the role Members will have in the consultation process and introduces pre and post consultation checklists. An annual consultation evaluation report, which summarises the Council's consultation and engagement activities, will be submitted to the Panel in the future.

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

The Panel has been acquainted with the effects of the Government's Welfare Reform programme and how it impacts upon households in Huntingdonshire in relation to Housing Benefits, Council Tax Support and homelessness. Members have examined the changes that are taking place in respect of local housing allowance, social sector size criteria rules, Council Tax Support, benefit cap and discretionary housing payments.

The Panel has paid close attention to the steps taken by Registered Providers when dealing with households in rent arrears and the interventions undertaken by the District Council as a means of preventing them from becoming homeless. Members have asked questions and received answers on the effective utilisation of the discretionary housing payments fund and on how the Council encourages households that are financially struggling to seek advice from the Council.

A further update will be provided to the Panel in six months' time.

5. PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE OLDER PEOPLES HEALTHCARE AND ADULT COMMUNITY SERVICES – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Panel has endorsed the content of a response to the current consultation being undertaken by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group on proposals to improve older people's healthcare and adult community services. Emphasis will be placed on the Panel's previous concerns over the lack of elected Member involvement in the procurement exercise.

6. HUNTINGDONSHIRE SPORT AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES TEAM ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Panel has been informed of the performance, work programmes and highlights of the Sport and Active Lifestyles Team (SALT) during 2013/14. Members' attention has been drawn to the latest position with regard to public health funding and Lottery grant. These are likely to end in March 2015 and November 2016 respectively.

The cost of physical inactivity in Huntingdonshire has been reported as being £2.5 million in 2011/12. Attempts are being made to impress this message on various professional health bodies, in particular the

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, with a view to securing future funding. It is, however, proving difficult to attract external funding owing to the financial pressures on these organisations.

The Panel has acknowledged the benefits the Team's work programmes bring to local communities, the extent of publicity work undertaken and the increasing levels of demand from service users. A discussion has taken place on the Healthy Walks programme and whether the Council should transfer this service to local communities. There is a concern that the service will not be sustained by communities as there are a number of obligations, such as health and safety considerations, which will deter volunteers from managing the scheme. The point has been made that given the service's uncertain funding position, a strategy should be developed for the continuation of the activities that take place through the programme via alternative ways.

7. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY SHARED SERVICE REVIEW AND DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT BUDGET

The Panel has considered the outcome of a review of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (HIA) shared service following two years of operation together with an assessment of the impact of the Better Care Fund and of the ongoing demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

The Panel has been reminded of the reasons for the establishment of the Cambridgeshire HIA, which was the first shared service to be introduced by the Council. Whilst some problems were experienced in the first year of operation, the service is now operating as intended and has achieved each of its three key objectives; namely to deliver cost savings for both District and County Commissioners, to improve operational resilience and create opportunities for cross boundary working and to provide a platform for improved performance and efficiency over time.

Details of the Government's Better Care Fund (BCF) have been received. The Government's contribution to Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) capital funding will be transferred into the BCF and ring fenced for DFG expenditure.

An opportunity exists to broaden the shared service. There is a risk that not all Cambridgeshire authorities will sign up to the proposals. This could have an impact upon Huntingdonshire as the County Council might withdraw revenue funding from the HIA if a County-wide service is not achieved.

The Panel has noted the reductions in waiting times for Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments for Priority 1 and Priority 2 cases. Priority 3 cases can sometimes have to wait for up to 25 weeks, but interim aids can be provided to help applicants to cope during this period. The introduction of a "fast track" grant system for smaller works is being investigated. It will reduce waiting times as smaller adaptations

will be undertaken outside of the DFG process thereby eliminating the need for an OT assessment.

The Panel has welcomed the report currently being produced by the Housing Strategy Manager on the lessons learnt from the establishment of the Cambridgeshire HIA shared service. This will inform the Council of matters to take into account as future shared service proposals emerge.

Finally, the Panel has discussed the tender process for contractors undertaking works on behalf of the HIA. It has been suggested that market testing should be undertaken to determine whether smaller local firms are able to compete for works with a view to reducing costs and enabling the DFG budget to achieve more benefits.

8. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST: PERSONALITY DISORDER COMMUNITY SERVICE / COMPLEX CASES SERVICE, INCLUDING LIFEWORKS CONSULTATION

The Panel has agreed to submit a response to the consultation by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust on Personality Disorder Community Service/Complex Cases Service, including Lifeworks. Members have welcomed the proposals to strengthen the personality disorder service across the County and, in particular, specific improvements in Huntingdonshire. However, comment has been made that if community support within discharge planning is to be recovery focused as stated and also to facilitate social inclusion, there will be a need for service providers to be fully integrated with local partners and networks. This will enable and encourage referrals to community groups and activities based on the knowledge of what is available and appropriate.

Clarification has also been sought on where services currently exist together with specific details of what is being proposed within Huntingdonshire.

9. HEALTH SCRUTINY

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

The Panel has been advised of matters considered at the last two meetings of the Cambridgeshire Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(b) Cambridgeshire Health Committee

A brief update has been received on meetings of the Cambridgeshire Health Committee held on 29th May and 19th June 2014.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its work programme at each of its meetings and made changes to the Memberships of its various Working Groups. The Registered Social Landlords Working Group will meet on 22nd July 2014 to plan its work. An invitation has been extended to the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office for a representative to attend a future meeting but this has been declined. The Panel has requested that Councillor J D Ablewhite, as the Council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel, ensures a robust approach is adopted to the concerns previously raised by Members.

Representatives of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) will attend the Panel's September 2014 meeting. The performance of the CCG as a whole will be considered at this meeting. Members' attention has been drawn to issues surrounding GP funding and the impact this will have on the financial viability of GP surgeries. This matter will be discussed further in September.

The Chairman has requested Officers to obtain evidence from Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Hinchingsbrooke Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) to enable a decision to be taken on whether there are grounds to continue with the study into elderly patient care at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

11. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

12. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the Notice of Key Executive Decisions at each of its meetings.

13. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. Owing to problems with accessing and receiving emails and confusion over the arrangements for purchasing electronic devices and the Council's associated loan scheme, an update on Members' IT has been received.

S J Criswell
Chairman