
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

**Report of the meetings held on 7th October, 4th
November and 2nd December 2014**

Matters for Information

22. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP – ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel has been acquainted with the activities of and outcomes achieved by the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership in 2013/14. The Partnership had been established in accordance with Sections 5–7 and 11 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, which requires responsible authorities to work together to protect their local communities from crime, to help people feel safe and to do all that is reasonable to prevent crime and disorder in the area. The Partnership comprises representatives from the District and County Councils, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CCG and the Probation Service. Other organisations participate as appropriate.

Members have been advised of the costs associated with supporting and chairing the Partnership and of the challenges presented by the new Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Funding for the Partnership is now allocated from the Safer, Stronger Community Fund by the Police and Crime Commissioner and in 2013/14 this amounted to £28,000. Members have noted details of the projects towards which funding was allocated in 2013/14. The Chairmanship has now transferred from the District Council to the Chief Inspector thus reducing the costs previously incurred by the Council. Members have been advised of the estimated cost of the District Council's future support for the Partnership.

Having been acquainted with the composition of the Community Safety Team and the priorities of the service over the period 2014-17, the delivery and cost effectiveness of the service have been scrutinised. Community Service Grant of £24,000 has been allocated by the Police and Crime Commissioner for 2014/15 and the Panel has questioned whether any cost analysis of the service has been undertaken to demonstrate the value and cost effectiveness of the Partnership. The Executive Councillor and Communities Manager have agreed to undertake this exercise in the future.

It is understood that the priorities of the Partnership over the period 2014-17 reflect those set by the police. Prevention of crime generally

is the overriding and continuing priority for the Partnership although it is not listed specifically as a priority.

The Panel has recognised the valuable contribution made by the CCTV service as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour. As the service has transferred to the Community Division, the impact of CCTV will be reflected in future reports.

Having been briefed on the implications for the Partnership of the new Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and noted that the Partnership was currently seeking to secure efficiencies and savings, the Panel has agreed to consider whether it wishes to have the opportunity to engage in the outcome of this review at a future meeting.

23. CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING

The Panel has received information on the performance and activities of the Customer Services Team over the period January to June 2014. Although the report has previously been submitted to the Economic Panel, the view has been taken that it is more appropriate if performance monitoring of customer services is undertaken by the Social Well-Being Panel. The timeliness of the management information presented will be adjusted to reflect the work programme of the Panel in future. A review of progress on the Customer Services Strategy shortly will be submitted to the Panel.

Looking at the detailed performance information, it has been recognized that speed of response and quality of service (based on feedback received) arising from day to day operation of the service are the key measures.

With regard to the rationale for the potential transfer of the Call Centre to Pathfinder House which appears to be contrary to the shared service approach currently favoured by the District Council, it has been confirmed that there are still opportunities to establish the Call Centre as part of the Strategic Partnership with South Cambridgeshire/Cambridge City but in the short term, the likelihood is that the service will be relocated to Pathfinder House. On the suggestion that joint services might be established with the Town Councils, the Panel has noted that there is little advantage in a partnership of this nature.

The Panel understands that it is the Council's intention to encourage the public to make greater use of online services rather than rely on the telephone or face to face contact. A smartphone app is already used extensively by visitors to One Leisure and it is hoped to extend this type of facility to other parts of the organisation.

Regarding speed of response to enquiries at the Call Centre, it has been accepted that resilience to sickness absence requires improvement and that there might be an opportunity to call on Customer Services staff in these circumstances should the team be located on the same site. It has, however, been made clear that any

temporary staff exchange would not be to the detriment of customer services. There would also be an opportunity to call in additional staff as cover. Further on the transfer of the team to Pathfinder House, the Panel has been informed that staff have welcomed the opportunity to have closer contact with their colleagues and other services.

The Panel will receive future reports on the opportunities there might be to encourage increased visitors to the Council's website

24. AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY

The Panel has been updated on progress of the study on affordable housing. The Working Group has had the opportunity to discuss that part of the new Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 relating to affordable housing provision at a meeting when the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy also was present.

The Working Group is keen to examine opportunities to deliver additional affordable housing, reduce the number of families waiting for affordable housing and question why individuals appear to remain on the waiting list without any potential to secure a housing offer.

The Working Group's proposed study programme and its conclusions on relevant policies in the draft new Local Plan have been endorsed by the Panel.

25. CORPORATE PLAN (PERFORMANCE REPORT)

In conjunction with the Panels for Economic and Environmental Well-Being, the Panel has received an update on progress achieved against key activities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan in the period 1st July to 30th September 2014. Members have reviewed the key actions under each strategic theme and asked questions about the use of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) and fly tipping. Eight FPNs have been issued by the District Council in the year to date by a small team of two who also are required to respond to other issues. For comparison, Fenland District Council maintains a team of five Officers for this purpose who have issued 14 FPNs over the same period. Prosecutions for fly tipping have been undertaken and further information has been provided on any cases currently under investigation.

The Head of Operations has been asked to look at options to prevent litter arising from a supermarket and fast food outlets at Brampton Hut. Having been advised of the opportunity to establish litter control zones under the Environmental Protection Act to prevent this nuisance and whilst accepting that these zones might require enforcement, an undertaking has been received that this opportunity will be investigated. It also has been proposed that the Operations Division might engage local schools in litter prevention programmes.

Referring to diversionary activities for young people, it is accepted that the current measure is crude but that this is outweighed by the health benefit and diversionary activities provided to young people at

minimal cost to the District Council. It has then been confirmed that an analysis of partnership arrangements is currently underway to establish those to whom further commitment should be made having regard to value for money and corporate priorities.

Regarding arrangements for temporary accommodation and given concern that accommodation should be maintained as temporary, the Panel has received assurances that use of short term accommodation and bed and breakfast is resisted with greater reliance placed on Registered Providers to locate suitable properties for those occupying temporary accommodation to move into. Whilst the Housing Team enjoys a good working relationship with Registered Providers, turnaround times for lettings could be improved. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that the District Council will seek, by design, to provide a mix of new properties to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled. In addition, subject to consideration of amended plans, the proposed extra care scheme at Langley Court, St Ives is on target for opening in late 2016.

It is acknowledged that strategic targeting using a variety of communication methods is required to ensure the target of 400 assessments for take up of the grant funded 'Action on Energy' is met. As a first step to increase take up and to improve understanding, a briefing note will be produced for Members and Parish Councils on the 'Action on Energy' scheme.

Whilst noting the performance indicators for refuse collection that have been selected, a suggestion has been made that the District Council should be seeking to comply with best practice by minimizing waste and setting targets to reduce the amount of refuse collected going to landfill. It has been further suggested that a review should be carried out of the performance of the street cleansing service to establish whether the service is better in towns compared to rural areas. The cost of refuse collection per household compares favourably with other Cambridgeshire authorities. The performance indicator can be varied in future but contamination is an issue which will need to be investigated before the Council commits to any alternative approach. Street cleansing and the potential for service level agreements will be discussed by the Cabinet.

The next quarter's report will include details of how food establishments are being measured and the parameters used to conclude that establishments are 'broadly compliant'. Lastly, the Panel has drawn attention to the fact that the annual target for disabled facilities grants (DFGs) has reduced from 238 to 200. The target reflects the terms of the shared service agreement, and whilst it will remain the aspiration of the Council to deliver DFGs, there is a limited budget with which to do so.

26. PETITION

The Panel has received a petition relating to the Octagon, Station Road, St Ives containing 266 signatures. The organiser has presented the petition to the Panel. Officers have been asked to

prepare a report for a future meeting on the issues raised by the petition and the organiser of the petition has been invited to make a submission to the same meeting on suitable uses for the Octagon.

27. WELFARE REFORM 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 social sector size criteria rules, Council Tax Support, the benefit cap, Universal Credit, Migrants and discretionary housing payments.

The Panel has paid close attention to the position of tenants of Registered Providers who have rent arrears and the interventions undertaken by the District Council as a means of preventing them from becoming homeless. Members have discussed the approach adopted to making discretionary housing payments and the affordability of private sector rented accommodation.

A further update will be provided when circumstances require it.

28. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/16

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to approve a change to the local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1st April 2015. The change means the Council will disregard all child maintenance in its calculations, which will result in greater levels of Council Tax Support entitlement to those customers in receipt of this type of income.

29. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

The Panel has recommended the Cabinet to delegate new powers to Officers to tackle anti-social behaviour. As previous legislation has been repealed, the Council currently has no powers in this area.

The Panel has commented that the introduction of the new Act is likely to create interest amongst the public in using the new powers, thereby placing greater demands on the Council. This could be exacerbated by the fact that the "test" of anti-social behaviour has been lowered, meaning that a larger range of activities can be classed as such. Furthermore, the Crown Prosecution Service will be able to refer cases directly to Councils to carry out enforcement. While the level of demand placed on the Council is not yet known, the Scrutiny Panel has highlighted that, for these reasons, the service may need more resources.

30. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) the Panel has appointed its Chairman together with

Councillors R Fuller and S M Van De Kerkhove to the Select Committee on Project Management.

31. ELDERLY PATIENT WORKING GROUP

The Chairman has updated the Panel on matters raised at a meeting of the Elderly Patient Working Group which took place on 21st October 2014

32. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEALTH COMMITTEE

Councillor R Carter, the Panel's appointed representative on the Cambridgeshire Health Committee, has reported to the Panel that Uniting Care Partnership has been selected as the Preferred Bidder to improve older people's healthcare and adult community services across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and parts of Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire. The services will provide urgent care for adults aged over 65 including inpatients as well as A&E services, Mental Health Services for people aged over 65, community health services for adults over 18 and other health services which support the care of people aged over 65. It is understood that the Partnership will spend the next six months preparing and putting everything in place to be able to start delivering services on 1st April 2015.

Members are hopeful that Uniting Care Partnership will be able to give a presentation to the Panel on how the new services will be delivered in Huntingdonshire.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its work programme at each of its meetings. As the responsible Housing Authority, the District Council will investigate a recent report by Radio Cambridgeshire on complaints made by tenants about Luminus Homes and has appointed an independent investigator to establish whether there is evidence to substantiate the allegations that have been made. Subject to the outcome of the review, the Panel could become involved if it is apparent that Luminus needs to be held to account.

In terms of the annual update to the Panel on the management of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, it has been acknowledged that Circle perhaps provides a more positive picture than might in practice be the case. Members have discussed whether they could begin to use select committee practices to undertake a more meaningful review of hospital operations. It is envisaged that this could involve inviting representations and evidence from former patients, employees and members of the public to enable the Panel to challenge Circle on issues raised more vigorously. Having accepted that this type of work

could improve the role of the Panel, the Chairman has agreed to liaise with Officers to produce a methodology for undertaking a more comprehensive review. The Panel will also look at whether use can be made of the report on the recent Care Quality Commission inspection of the Hospital.

34. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The Cabinet is looking at how to manage the 'Facing the Future' programme going forward and has been asked to consider how to make the monitoring/review process as inclusive as possible.

35. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the contents of the Notices of Key Executive Decisions.

36. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

S J Criswell
Chairman