

**COMMUNITY, HOUSING AND HEALTH
(OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

24th SEPTEMBER 2012

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs Arnold (Chairman), Warfield (Vice Chairman), Mrs Allsopp, Mrs. Bacon, Isaacs, Leytham, Pearce, Ms. Perkins and Salter.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received from Councillors Awty, Mrs Evans and Mrs Woodward (Vice-Chairman)

An apology was also received from Councillor Mrs Constable.

(In accordance with Council Procedure No. 17 Councillors Greatorex and Pritchard also attended the meeting.)

County Councillor Mrs Bayliss also attended the meeting.

Mr R. Davies of Marches Energy Agency and Mr W. Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council, Commissioning Lead for Lichfield District were also present at the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th June 2012 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings held on 13th June 2012 be approved as a correct record

HEALTH SCRUTINY – FUEL POVERTY AND AFFORDABLE WARMTH

Mr R. Davies of Marches Energy Agency was in attendance for this item and made a presentation to the Committee.

The Committee received a report on fuel poverty and affordable warmth and noted that sufficient warmth is an important factor affecting health and well-being, particularly among the elderly.

It was reported that 22% of households in the District were in fuel poverty which was higher than the national average of 18.4%. Many of the households affected were on low incomes and living in older and larger dwellings. There was an average of 52 excess winter deaths in the District each year (ie. more deaths than would be expected).

The District Council's Warmer Homes, Greener District initiative has helped residents to access grants to install energy efficient products and equipment. In partnership with Marches Energy Agency, a freephone advice line is in operation. However, it was noted that the Government's grant scheme for loft and cavity wall insulation would soon be ending and therefore additional efforts were being made to

encourage residents to take advantage of the subsidised products on offer, including insulation for solid walls which would be advantageous to many local residents.

It was reported that the Government would soon be launching The Green Deal which will offer loans for energy saving home improvements repayable through the resulting financial savings from lower energy usage. Members considered it was important that local suppliers and installers be used to carry out works under the Green Deal.

Members discussed the potential of extend gas piping to properties in rural areas; although there was an obligation to do this to qualifying properties, renewable fuel solutions may be a more viable alternative. It was agreed that the Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Task Group investigate this issue as part of their work programme.

Members noted the draft terms of reference of the Task Group; Councillor Isaacs requested certain amendments to the title and asked that the outcomes to be achieved, particularly in terms of health, be included for the Task Group's consideration.

It was agreed that Councillor Mrs Allsopp be Chairman of the Task Group and that Councillor Marshall be invited to attend meetings as his knowledge and experience from his work as Chairman of the Carbon Reduction Task Group would be invaluable.

Mr Davies was thanked for his presentation.

RESOLVED: That the terms of reference for the Member Task Group be approved and membership of the Task Group confirmed as Councillors Mrs Allsopp, Mrs Bacon and Mrs Evans.

TROUBLED FAMILIES

Mr W. Mortiboys was in attendance for this item.

The Committee received a report on the national programme to support troubled families and the opportunities it may present to Lichfield District Council and its residents. It was reported that Staffordshire County Council was providing the strategic lead for this work and Mr Mortiboys was managing the project within Lichfield District on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership.

It was felt that the Government term 'troubled families' had negative connotations and the Committee agreed that 'supporting families' would be a better title for the project.

It was reported that three national criteria have been applied to identify relevant households including being in receipt of out of work benefits, children not in school and involvement in crime and anti social behaviour. In addition, two local criteria have been used including families where there is an adult on probation and families known to the Local Support Teams and it was noted that 44 families had been identified within Lichfield District. Members commented that there would be other families in the community who may not have been identified through the criteria but are equally in need of support to prevent emerging problems from becoming crises.

Members asked how all relevant agencies would be brought together and it was reported that a lead agency would be assigned according to who was having the most contact with the supported family and they would co-ordinate activities with

partners. A new social networking tool called Patchwork would also facilitate the sharing of information between agencies.

Members asked how families in need of support would be brought into the scheme and it was reported that communication between the various agencies and the families concerned would be key.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH THROUGH BETTER REGULATION – A LOCAL VIEW

The Committee received a report outlining the work undertaken to date in promoting business growth in Lichfield District.

It was reported that the District Council's Environmental Health team was involved in a national Pathfinder Initiative that focused on developing relationships with businesses to encourage economic growth. It was reported that the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) of which the District Council was a member, created the Regulator and Business Partnership Charter. A key element of the Charter was to make it easier for businesses to access support and advice. As a result, the District Council's Environmental Health and Communications teams have developed a website called Talk to Reg.

Demonstrations of the Talk to Reg website and the revamped Rate My Place website informing the public of food inspection ratings and reports were given to Members.

Members asked how the information on the Rate my Place website would be obtained if businesses were not online; Mr Hakes advised that Rate My Place scores were usually displayed in food premises and that most businesses now had access to the internet.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SERVICE PLANNING 2013/14

The Committee received a report on the process for the scrutiny of Service Plans and budget proposals for the Community, Housing and Health directorate.

It was reported that there would be two Member Panels to consider a) Housing and Environmental Health and b) Community and Partnerships Plans and budget proposals. The Panels would meet in December 2012 and a summary of the meetings would be reported to the meeting of this Committee scheduled to be held on Monday 21 January 2013. Members were invited to make known their preference regarding which panel they would like to join.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME, FORWARD PLAN AND 2012/13 ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Work Programme and Forward Plan were considered. It was suggested that as the Housing Strategy (which the District Council is under a statutory duty to produce) would be an important and detailed document, the majority of the meeting scheduled

to be held on Monday 21 January 2013 should focus on this item. Members agreed with this proposal.

Members were reminded that the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner will be elected in November and may have published their Policing Plan for consultation before the next meeting of the Committee. It was therefore suggested that if available, this Plan be considered at the next meeting within the context of the Strategic Assessment for Lichfield District (ie a single report covering both items).

It was agreed that these two items along with feedback from the Panel meetings set up to scrutinise the Service Plans would be the only items for consideration at the next meeting with all other items scheduled for this meeting being moved to the meeting scheduled for Monday 18 March 2013.

It was agreed that if it appeared that there was excessive business scheduled for the meeting due to take place on Monday 18 March 2013, a special meeting should be arranged for April 2013.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be amended as agreed and Forward Plan be noted.

(The Meeting Closed at 7.55pm)

CHAIRMAN