

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

31st JANUARY 2012

PRESENT:

Councillors Smedley (Chairman), Warfield (Vice Chairman), Mrs Woodward (Vice-Chairman) Mrs Arnold, Mrs Constable, Mrs. Evans, Isaacs, Leytham, Pearce, Ms. Perkins and Salter.

County Councillor Finn was also in attendance for items regarding health matters.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors Mrs Allsopp and Mrs Bacon.

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Evans and Isaacs declared personal interests in respect of any reference to the South East Staffordshire Citizens Advice Bureau.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th September 2011 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings held on 27th September 2011 be approved as a correct record.

THE LICHFIELD DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT (2011)

The Committee received a presentation about the Lichfield District Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2011 from Daniel Maddock (Staffordshire Observatory) and Jenni Coleman, (Community Safety Manager). The Assessment was centred around three priorities which were noted as being (a) neighbourhood management, (b) reducing offending and (c) protecting the vulnerable.

The Committee was pleased to note that all recorded crime was down by 4% on 2010/11 and antisocial behaviour had reduced by almost a third from the previous year. The prevalence of reporting of hate crime via social networking was discussed and it was noted that occurrences of domestic violence had increased, probably owing to an improvement in reporting.

Some clarification was sought regarding the geographical areas referred to in the document, especially where police localities do not coincide with District Council Wards. Further details were also requested regarding the definition of 'hot spots'. It was agreed that these issues would be taken into account and appropriate amendments duly made.

RESOLVED: That the information received be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: “That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972”

IN PRIVATE

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF GP BRANCH SURGERY

Councillor Lewin was invited to participate in the discussion of this item in his capacity as local ward Member.

The Committee received a report advising them of the proposed closure of a general practice branch surgery in Fazeley. Jim Barlow from the South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust Cluster attended the meeting and advised that the practice in question had two surgeries both run by Drs Yarra and John with their main surgery premise in Wilnecote, Tamworth and the branch surgery at Lichfield Street, Fazeley. It was noted that the patient list totalled 2525 of which 800 patients lived in or around the Fazeley area. It was also noted that the branch surgery was open for five hours a week with an average of 34 appointments.

Following a recent assessment, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) had decided the branch surgery was no longer ‘fit for purpose’ and various options, set out in the report, had been considered for the future. Patients who currently used the branch surgery had a choice between either relocating to the main surgery for their health care or registering with another practice which had a branch surgery at Laurel House. Mr Barlow confirmed that there was capacity for new patients at this practice.

An enquiry was raised regarding the uptake of services at the branch surgery intended for closure in order to determine the impact on elderly and disabled patients who may find it more difficult to access other services. Mr Barlow advised that the PCT would write to all the patients affected and discuss alternatives with them. The Committee requested that direct personal contact should be made to the most vulnerable likely to be affected by the closure, especially in view of the distance to some of the alternative provision. It was noted that the County Council operated a transport scheme that went directly to Watling Street and may be able to provide some support to patients in this respect.

RESOLVED: That the Committee raised no objection to the proposed closure of Dr Yarra’s branch surgery subject to the care needs of vulnerable patients being a priority.

IN PUBLIC

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO INPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

The Committee received a consultation document from the South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust and South Staffordshire and Shropshire Health Care NHS Foundation Trust regarding the future of local inpatient mental health services. It was noted that owing to the strength of feeling on this issue, the consultation period had been extended by a month to 13th February 2012.

It was reported that there were five options put forward in the document, the preferred being the removal of all beds from the Margaret Stanhope Unit in Burton upon Trent as this would deliver several quality improvements including single bedrooms on all wards, improved safety and privacy and better staff back up.

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Constable, as the lead on health scrutiny matters, had attended a public consultation event which was held at Tamworth in December 2011 and a subsequent meeting about the extent to which community services were sufficiently well developed to facilitate a reduction in inpatient beds. It was reported that teams had already been trained in crisis intervention at the George Bryan Centre and St George's hospital and therefore a reduced number of beds could be accommodated.

Councillor Isaacs expressed concern regarding the message of the consultation and felt more evidence was required to support the closure of beds, especially as the growing elderly population would result in a higher incidence of age related mental health problems. The geographical size of the District was also noted which meant that fewer inpatient services would increase travelling time and distances for patients and their visitors.

Councillor Mrs Margaret Stanhope was invited to address the Committee and she began by explaining the history of the units in Burton upon Trent and Tamworth which were built after the closure of St Matthew's Hospital in Burntwood. She noted that the closure of the Burton upon Trent unit would affect people in East Staffordshire, South Derbyshire and Lichfield Districts and consequently there was considerable local opposition against the proposal including a lengthy petition. She explained that there was high occupancy at the unit and Audit Commission figures suggested that the local availability of beds was less than average for the population. As the population increased, both through the ageing population and housing growth, the need for inpatient services would increase.

The Committee also discussed the impact of any closure on the Police who already hold sectioned patients in custody until an inpatient bed is available and would require more time and Officer support to transport patients from the cells to either Stafford or Tamworth.

Overall, the Committee were unconvinced that there was sufficient evidence to support any reduction in mental health inpatient beds and expressed concern at the likelihood that a reduction in beds would result in inadequate care and poor outcomes for people with mental ill health.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommends to the Cabinet Member that none of the options are acceptable or appropriate as there is no evidence to back up the closure of any unit or reduction in beds. Having assessed the options, 'do nothing' would appear to be the 'best fit'

STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE

The Committee received Summaries of the main items of business from the monthly Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committees, September 2011 - January 2012.

With reference to the 5th September meeting, clarification was sought regarding the Action Plan arising from the Ofsted Inspection of Staffordshire Children's Services and whether Ofsted had made recommendations to require this. It was reported that

there had only been one comment by Ofsted so it was not believed that this was the case.

With reference to the 13th December meeting, it was noted that a request for further information on mental health inpatient beds had been made. Reflecting on the previous item, Members suggested that more time was required to enable Members to consider the future of local mental health services in the round. Following discussion, it was agreed that there would be an item on mental health on the Agenda for the next meeting subject to securing a suitably qualified Officer to attend.

Also with reference to the December Health Scrutiny meeting, Councillor Mrs Woodward sought clarification regarding the correspondence with the Cabinet Member for Adults Wellbeing in relation to the Partnership Arrangements with Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS Trust. She requested feedback on the concerns raised by the County Committee (governance, patient feedback, complaints and savings) and also requested some feedback on the impact on jobs.

The Committee commented on the amount of detailed information received in relation to the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny meetings and felt unable to make informed input to such a wide range of issues. It was noted that there was a particularly large number of updates owing to the lengthy period since the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had last met.

RESOLVED: That the updates be noted.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY – AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

The Committee received a report on the latest evidence available to inform the housing policies to be contained in the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

It was noted that a Member Task Group would be created to review and scrutinise this evidence and consider any key issues arising from the studies. It was agreed that the Members of this Task Group would be Councillors Leytham (Chairman) Isaacs, Mrs Arnold and Ms Perkins.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted and that a short life Member Task Group be established to scrutinise and review the latest evidence and outcomes of the studies, consider the implications for the housing policies within the Core Strategy in particular the draft affordable housing policy and make recommendations on the draft policies to the Cabinet Member.

REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT OF A TENANCY STRATEGY

The Committee received a report on the changes in legislation in relation to the allocation of social rented housing and the types and length of tenancies that would be available in the future.

It was noted that a Member Task Group would be created to review and scrutinise the housing allocation policy, having regard to the changes in legislation and consider the key issues and priorities of a draft Tenancy Strategy. It was agreed that the Members of this Task Group would be Councillors Mrs Woodward (Chairman), Mrs Bacon, Pearce and Mrs Constable.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted and that a short life Task Group be established to review the housing allocation policy, consider the draft Tenancy Strategy and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Community Transport Member Task Group, Councillor Warfield, presented the final recommendations to the Committee.

It was reported that the Task Group had focused on three key areas of reducing costs, increasing income and working in partnership.

It was noted that community transport was a valued and, for some, an essential service; it was anticipated that need and demand would grow as a result of the increase in the elderly population. It was reported that the biggest issue was voluntary drivers and ensuring there were enough to sustain a comprehensive and reliable service.

Councillor Isaacs suggested that the relevance of the service within the context of the Council's Strategic Plan should be drawn out, particularly in relation to promoting health and well being, improving independence and promoting carbon reduction.

RESOLVED: The Task Group recommend that the Cabinet Member Organisational Development and Community take account of the following conclusions in relation to any future review of the economic viability of the community transport service:

- The community transport service should continue to be supported and delivered by the District Council
- That the service is much needed and valued by local people, many of whom rely on the availability of accessible transport to enable them to access basic amenities and take part in the local community
- That the need for the service will increase commensurate with the growing number of elderly people, many of whom will be living on their own, some with limited family support
- That the delivery of the service makes a major contribution to the strategic aims of the District Council; it promotes health and well being, improves independence and social inclusion and promotes carbon reduction

WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Work Programme and Forward Plan were considered. It was noted that the next meeting would be held at the Old Mining College. It was requested that an impact assessment of the funding to the voluntary sector be included on the Work Programme and it was agreed for this to be part of the September 2012 meeting.

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

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: "That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely

disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972”

IN PRIVATE

FUNDING THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR – FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Funding the Community and Voluntary Sector Task Group, Councillor Mrs Woodward, updated the Committee on the work of the group. It was noted that the Task Group scrutinised the new process and procedures for introducing a commissioning model to investment in the community and voluntary sector and had been content that the approach used had been robust, transparent and fair.

It was noted that the recommendations regarding the allocation of funding had been approved by Cabinet in January 2012 and all organizations had been notified of the outcome of their submission. Councillor Isaacs raised a query regarding the process for selecting and prioritizing the areas against which tenders were invited. In response, Councillor Mrs Woodward advised that the role of the Task Group had been to oversee the process rather than develop it from scratch and ultimately it was the Cabinet Member's decision upon which recommendations were made.

A discussion took place in respect of the timing of publicity regarding the final allocations of funding. Members were advised this was being held back for a short time to enable successful applicants to confirm they wished to proceed with their bid (having regard to levels of allocation which were in most cases below the amount applied for). A discussion then took place regarding the impact of this on the call in process; it was noted that the deadline for call in had passed and all Members had received the decision notice the day after the Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Task Group be reconvened in twelve months to assess progress against the intended outcomes.

MINUTES

The confidential Minutes of the Special Meeting held on the 24th November 2011 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the missing item of the merger of the Westgate and Minster GP practices being included.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the inclusion of the merger of the Westgate and Minster GP practices, the Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 24th November 2011 be approved as a correct record.

(The Meeting Closed at 9.10pm)

CHAIRMAN