

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

19th MARCH 2012

PRESENT:

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillor Mrs Bacon. Apologies were also received from County Councillor Finn and the Strategic Director Community, Housing and Health.

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Evans declared a personal interest for any reference of the South Staffordshire and Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 31st January 2012 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings held 31st January 2012 be approved as a correct record.

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY AND TENANCY STRATEGY FEEDBACK OF MEMBER TASK GROUP

The Chairman of the Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy Member Task Group, Councillor Mrs Woodward, provided the Committee with an update on progress of the Task Group after its establishment at the January meeting. It was noted that there had been two meetings so far and the terms of reference for the group were approved in principle although it is recognised that until more work had been done the direction of the Task Group could change.

The Committee noted that currently the District Council operated an open housing list that anybody could request to be on however changes in legislation meant that there could be exclusions if desired.

It was reported that housing allocation was very complex and there was much to consider when developing a new policy. It was noted that this included such considerations as giving extra priority to those who put into their local community, excluding unacceptable behaviour and other circumstances that may result in additional priority.

It was asked if preference would be given to members of the armed forces and it was noted that it would be mandatory.

It was noted that the role of the Member Task Group was to make recommendations to the Committee and not directly to the Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED: That the information received be noted.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Committee received a presentation from Dawn Williams, County Commissioner for Mental Health. She gave a brief outline of how care was given in the past and it was noted that care in the community had not been fully successful as the infrastructure was not present causing many patients to be readmitted to specialist hospitals. It was reported that due to a number of high profile crimes that had been committed by mental health sufferers, the strategy for treatment was revisited.

It was noted that changes included day care provision and ensuring users did not just remain in the system without an outcome. It was noted that people who just wanted to have some social interaction with fellow sufferers was being encouraged to do this away from the day care arrangement as this saved resources and helped them feel part of the community. It was reported that more people were now accessing day care than before albeit provided in a different manner.

An update was asked for regarding Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and it was noted that the higher tiers for treatment was working well however it was recognised that more needed to be done for the lower level tiers. The Committee noted that more resources needed to be inputted into child mental healthcare to educate families and teachers in recognising and supporting youngsters with an illness. It was also noted that there was large shortage of child inpatient beds.

It was asked how the District Council was ranked compared to neighbouring local authorities for what it did to help residents with mental health problems and how it could become the lead. It was reported that it was felt the District Council was doing a lot to help and as the County Council concentrate on the more acute sufferers, the District Council could help support the less critical people with providing places to meet.

It was noted that there would be a consultation on the priorities of mental health care opening soon and it was agreed that this could be considered at the June Committee meeting and be open to all Members of the Council to attend.

Dawn Williams was thanked for attending and for her presentation to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the information received be noted and the Committee consider the forthcoming consultation on Mental Health Priorities.

COMMUNITY HUBS

The Committee received a report on the three community hubs managed by the District Council and how they are utilised. It was reported that these centres were in areas where residents are amongst those most likely to be in need of services to improve health and employability but less likely to access these. It was reported that services such Citizens Advice Bureau and Credit Union use these hubs as they are a central point.

It was noted that the Old Mining College Centre in Burntwood had around 22,000 visits a year and office occupancy was at full capacity. It was noted that it was an important facility to the community and a focal point for volunteers and community groups. The Cabinet Member was asked to clarify the employment costs of the Regeneration Projects Manager (fully included in the budget for the Old Mining College Centre) and undertook to provide Members with this information.

It was reported that it was being explored if the Jigsaw Hub could transfer to the North Lichfield Initiative (NLI) as they had now become fully independent and self constituted. It was noted that the current expenditure of the facility was £8,870 per annum. It was asked if this would mean withdrawing from the North Lichfield Project and it was noted that the District Council had made a three year commitment of funding along with the other project partners and this would remain. It was also noted that if the hub did transfer to the NLI, it would have greater opportunity to bid for outside funding.

It was reported that the Fazeley Mill Lane Link Hub helped bring a spread out community together and although a small site, was very well used by community groups. It was also reported that Staffordshire Police paid £1000 to have an outpost facility at the site which has helped barriers between the Police and the Community come down.

The Committee felt the Hubs were vital to the communities they served and the District Council should remain committed to them as they helped deliver many aspects of the Strategic Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report and the District Council continue to support these invaluable Community Hubs, and the service provided in Armitage with Handsacre as they support the Strategic Plan.

PERFORMANCE OF THE PEST CONTROL CONTRACT 2011-2016

The Committee received a report on the performance to date of the domestic pest Control contract that was let last year. It was reported that there had not been much negative feedback from residents and the transition to the external company had gone well. The Committee was reminded that there was now no longer a cost to the District Council for providing a pest control service resulting in a saving. It was reported that there had been a drop in treatments for rats but an increase in treatments for wasps.

It was reported that the contractor had requested to increase the charge for the treatment of fleas and bedbugs as the contractor could not currently cover cost at the current rate. It was noted that recently there had only been one case of bedbugs and three for fleas. It was noted that there were three options which were to allow the increased charge, keep the current charge or partially increase the charge for treatments. It was asked what other Local Authorities or companies charge for these services and it was noted that it was not consistent.

The Committee felt that demand for these treatments was low but the proposed increase could prevent vulnerable people from using the service. It was proposed and seconded and the Committee voted in favour of an £80 increase for flea and bedbug treatments.

The Committee requested a future report giving details of historic number of treatments for all pests, and the history of fees charged.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the charge for fleas and bedbugs be increased to £80.

STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE

The Committee noted that there had not been a meeting of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee recently and so no update could be given.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Work Programme and Forward Plan were considered. It was noted that there would be a new Work Programme for the next municipal year.

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

VOTE OF THANKS

It was proposed, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That the sincere thanks of the Committee be recorded to Councillor Smedley, as Chairman and Councillors Warfield and Mrs Woodward as Vice-Chairmen for their work during the past year.

(The Meeting Closed at 8.40pm)

CHAIRMAN