

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

29th JANUARY 2013

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs Tittley (Chairman), Warfield (Vice Chairman), Mrs Woodward (Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Bacon, Mrs Evans, Leytham, Ms. Perkins and Salter.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received from Councillors Isaacs

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

County Councillor Mrs Bayliss also attended the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Tittley (Chairman) and Mrs Evans declared personal and prejudicial interests in item 6 – Funding the Community and Voluntary Sector - Evaluation and Monitoring as they are board Members of the Citizen Advice Bureau and left the room during its consideration. Councillor Warfield (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair for this item.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th September 2012 were taken as read, and subject to the addition of Councillor Mrs Tranter as present, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That subject to the addition of Councillor Mrs Tranter as present, the Minutes of the Meetings held on 24th September 2012 be approved as a correct record

DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2017

The Committee received a report on the Lichfield District Housing Strategy 2013–17 along with a presentation by the Housing Allocations Manager. Key achievements since the last Housing Strategy was reported including 235 affordable homes with 87 more confirmed, support for vulnerable people, improved access to advice and housing options and increased focus on homelessness prevention. The four priorities for the new Housing Strategy was then presented with examples of evidence gathered to produce them.

Members asked how the reduction in the Supporting People Grant would affect the District Council's priority of supporting vulnerable people and it was reported that the continuation of the partnership with the County Council was vital to meet needs.

Members asked what could be done to encourage more private sector renting and it was reported that there many schemes and a Private Landlord Forum however many private landlords did not want to rent to people on the housing register as it potentially effected insurance premiums and mortgages.

Members asked how many empty homes were in the District and if they could be

used. It was reported that there was a low number of empty homes compared to neighbouring areas and that Officers from many departments worked together to help and prevent homes becoming empty however owners could not be forced to reside in the property.

Members felt there needed to be a balanced demographic in the District and some focus should be on the needs of younger people especially in the urban areas. Members also felt that there should be continued help to prevent fuel poverty including more appropriate housing like one storey property. It was noted that under the Warmer Homes Greener District scheme, if the circumstances required it, a full grant for efficient heating improvements could be given.

RESOLVED: That the four priorities of the strategy and delivery plan be endorsed and subject to the comments received by Members and public consultation, recommend to Cabinet approval of the Housing Strategy 2013-17.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

The Committee received a report on the highlights of the 2012 Community Safety Strategic Assessment and progress since the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in November 2012 where Mr Ellis was appointed to the post. It was reported that overall there had been a reduction in crime in the District however residents perception of crime had risen and it was important for Members to help relieve any fears.

It was reported that there had been two Police Crime Panel (PCP) meetings since the election of the PCC. The first meeting was to approve the appointment of Mrs Arnold as the Deputy PCC and the second meeting was a general question and answer with the PCC. It was also reported that due to tight timescales between the PCC election and the expected date for his Crime Plan, an interim Plan had been produced and currently subject to a consultation. It was reported that the Plan included the creation of a cadet scheme along with greater use of technology by Police Officers. It was also reported that the PCC had abolished the requirement for Officers to retire at the age of 50 and had sanctioned the recruitment of 28 new Police Officers. It was reported that the PCC had a budget to give grants to Local Authorities for community safety matters.

Regarding the Community Safety Strategic Assessment, Members asked what definition of Chasetown was used and it was reported that the political ward boundaries had been used. Members felt more creative ideas to give residents reassurance on the low level of crime was needed and it was reported that the PCC would consider any suggestions and had a budget to help deliver them.

Members asked if the reduction in starting salary for Police Officers would affect recruitment and it was reported that the PCC had the power to increase the starting salary if required. Members also asked if it could be relayed back to the PCC that the Probation Service and Youth Offending Service were different departments. Members were concerned that fixed penalties were being issued for serious crimes instead of being heard in court and it was asked if the PCC and Crime Panel's thoughts on that could be sought. Members asked if community consultative panels with the Police would continue and it was reported that it would be considered by the PCC.

RESOLVED: That the Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2012 and draft interim Crime Plan be noted and comments from

the Committee be passed on to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

FUNDING THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR – EVALUATION AND MONITORING

The Committee received a report on the results of implementation of the new commissioning process for community and voluntary sector funding. The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor Mrs Woodward, reported that the Members met after all agreements had been made as it was the first year the new process had been used, it was only right to evaluate. It was reported that the new process was robust but had been contentious with some organisations but despite this, Officers had maintained a good relationship with the organisations. It was also reported that the Task Group had made some recommendations after evaluating the process and current performance of the Service Level Agreements with funded organisations and these included setting future funding priorities with all Members and not just those of the Community, Housing and Health (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee.

Members asked how the performance of the organisations was measured and it was reported that it was measured against required information including business plans and governance documents. It was also reported that organisations did not get all the funding at once to allow for performance monitoring.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the recommendations of the Task Group be endorsed.

COUNCILLORS MRS EVANS AND TITTLE LEFT THE ROOM

FEEDBACK FROM THE SERVICE PLAN MEMBER PANELS

Councillor Leytham, on behalf of the Housing and Environmental Health Service Plan Member Panel, reported to the Committee the key issues discussed at their meeting. It was reported that Members were reassured that there was one empty property used to house homeless households as this was cheaper than hotels. It was also reported that the cost of dealing with stray dogs was more than the amount received from the statutory fixed penalty given to owners partly due to the animals being temporarily housed at a centre in Stoke on Trent.

Councillor Warfield, on behalf of the Community and Partnerships Service Plan Member Panel, reported to the Committee the key issues discussed at that meeting. It was reported that the Member Panel concluded that the services provided were value for money. It was also reported that the Panel wished to invite the new Chief Executive to a future Community, Housing and Health (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee to discuss relevant matters affecting the District.

RESOLVED: That the information provided be noted.

FEEDBACK FROM STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It was noted that in future, Staffordshire County Council Health Committee updates would now be provided as briefing papers.

WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Work Programme and Forward Plan were considered. It was suggested that as well as a report on services for older people, there should be a report on services for younger people as it was felt a positive step should be taken in keeping younger people in the District. It was also agreed to remove items on the Localism Act from the work programme as it was covered in other reports. It was also agreed to roll forward to the next year's work programme, the item on Changes to the NHS as it would be too early to consider at present.

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

(The Meeting Closed at 8.30pm)

CHAIRMAN