

COMMUNITY HOUSING AND HEALTH (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

10 MARCH 2021

PRESENT:

Councillors Eagland (Chairman), Evans (Vice-Chair), S Wilcox (Vice-Chair), Baker, Ball, Binney, Birch, Humphreys, Leytham, Silvester-Hall, Tapper and M Wilcox.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors Lax and A. Yeates attended the meeting).

43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Parton-Hughes

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Birch declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 7, Community Safety Delivery Plan as he is employed by Staffordshire Police. He did not take part in the consideration of this item.

45 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and subject to typographical amendments, they were agreed as a correct record.

46 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the work programme and it was reported that following the previous full Council meeting, it had been noted that the Leader of the Opposition had discussed the possibility of the Chairman of the South Staffordshire and Seisdon CCG meeting with the Committee to discuss performance matters and Officer were looking into this further. It was also noted that the CCG Chairman had visited neighbouring authorities however that was to discuss their work around Covid-19. It was reported that performance matters were for the Staffordshire County Council Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. It was then reported that our Committee Chairman and SCC Health representative had met with the SCC Healthy Select Committee Chairman and Officers to request the concerns regarding both performance of the CCG, update on George Bryan centre and queries of the use of the maternity unit at Samuel Johnson Hospital be investigated further. It was also requested that the Together We're Better team be invited back to give an update. It was then requested that there be regular updates on DFG's as well the process map used from application to completion.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted and items be added where agreed.

47 STANDING ITEMS

Items to be raised via the District Council's representative at the Staffordshire Healthy Select Committee were requested.

It was asked what progress had been made in discussions regarding the George Bryan Centre as well as the CCG performance and the need for a permanent health Centre at

Burntwood along with the future of the Community Hospitals in the District. It was reported by Councillor Leytham that Marcus Warnes, Chairman of the CCG would be writing to the Chairman of the Staffordshire Healthy Select Committee regarding performance and that it was not linked to the level of care given but level of expenditure instead. It was also reported that issues around the George Bryan Centre was being dealt with at the SCC level as it served residents further than just the district. It was also a similar case with the Community Hospitals however it was confirmed that the matter of the Burntwood Health Centre had been devolved to District level. It was noted that Wayne Mortiboys from SCC had agreed to provide regular updates. It was reported that the NHS was considering an alternative building that could be converted. It was requested that due to the number of new homes being built in Burntwood, this should be prioritised.

RESOLVED: That the information given be noted and items raised at the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee.

48 REVISED HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Committee received a report on the revised Housing Assistance Policy after receiving the Committee's views on various options at its previous meeting. It was reported that as well as setting out the mandatory grants provided for disabled adaptations, the policy now included wider discretionary assistance with an increased amount of Disabled Facilities Top-up Grant and a new Discretionary Contributions Grant that would be funded from the ring fenced DFG budget underspends. It was noted that options considered at the last meeting for a palliative care and hospital discharge grant still required further discussions with Millbrook (the contractor that delivered DFGs on the Council's behalf) and Staffordshire County Council so they could not be included at this stage.

The Committee wish to thank the Cabinet member and officers for taking their views into consideration when drafting the final version of the policy. It was hoped that this policy would be more effective and helpful for residents to access the help needed and in a more timely manner.

It was felt that it was imperative for the council to work with partners in monitoring the delivery of DFGs. It was requested that the committee be kept informed of performance of the DFG contract and this was agreed.

It was noted that there would not be a short-term grant for hospital discharge at this stage as the council had not received the information that had been requested from Staffordshire County Council, but this would be investigated further once more information was received.

Assurances were given that the application process would not be a barrier in itself for people accessing the funding as people needing the service could have their own diverse needs and may struggle for example to access online forms. It was also asked if resources were available to deal with this. It was reported that support was available for those that need it and applicants are supported throughout the whole process Case workers from Millbrook.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be recommended to approve the Revised Housing Assistance Policy.

49 COMMUNITY SAFETY DELIVERY PLAN

The Committee received a report on the statutory requirement for Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) to produce a three year community safety plan, which would be reviewed

annually. It was reported that the plan must show how the CSP would tackle community safety issues and challenges.

It was reported that to provide the evidence base for the Community Safety Delivery Plan the Staffordshire Observatory produced a strategic assessment which looked at crime figures, trends and prevalent issues and suggests priorities for the District. The latest update was published in February 2021 and informed the development of the 21/22 delivery plan.

It was noted that whilst there had been little change in the Community Safety priorities, it highlighted the impact of Covid 19 on communities and in particular those at increased risk and the vulnerable including antisocial behaviour, county lines and fraud. It was also noted that mental health issues had increased and it was noted that one of the biggest rises seen was domestic abuse. Members welcome to the changes in priorities especially fraud which more and more vulnerable people are falling victim to.

It was felt that swift and positive action to crime was important and that there was a greater need for a visual presence from the police and their assistance. It was suggested that more contact be made through other settings including educational clubs and care homes as well as other partners including magistrates and youth workers. It was suggested that a return of youth clubs could be beneficial as they helped channel boredom and XS energy in a positive way.

The committee found the report helpful including the localised aspects to the information given.

RESOLVED: That the views given by the Committee on the Community Safety Priorities and format of the Community Safety Delivery Plan be noted.

50 COUNCILLOR LOCAL COMMUNITY FUND

The Committee received a report requesting views on the creation of 'A Councillor Community Grant Scheme to enable Councillors to directly award funding to grassroots organisations in their ward. It was reported that small amounts of funding could make a big difference to communities at a local level and elected members were well placed to identify local needs.

It was reported that the scheme was at its early stages of development and the Committee's views at this point was invaluable. It was reported that there were a number of large funding schemes including, the Council's large grant funding pot, We Love Lichfield fund and the new community lottery it was reported that it was intended for this scheme to focus on those local grass roots groups/people that may have ordinarily fallen through the cracks.

It was reported that the local knowledge of all members placed them best to award the small grants. It was reported that it would run as a two-year pilot to help assess its benefits.

Councillors asked how the scheme would be monitored and value for money assessed and it was reported that there would be a set of rules/guidelines for members to follow. Training would be provided which would also include training on other funding channels that are available so Members could direct their communities to the most appropriate source. Ultimately the Members Code of Conduct would be used if grants were given inappropriately. Monitoring would be carried out with each Member submitting a return at the end of the year on how the grant had been distributed and this reported. Some Committee members felt more work was needed on the checks and balances as in its current form, it was on a retrospective basis and could open Members up to accusations which would sully the whole meaning of the scheme. There was also concern that although ward Members had that local knowledge, there could be issues of their own subconscious biases being a factor. There was also views that as the amounts were small it did not present a significant risk and should be grasped by Members to support their communities.

When asked, it was reported that there is no intention for members to allocate funding in a consistent manner to each other as each area and need would be different. Further to this however Members felt that the demographics of wards did vary with some being more densely urban or have more groups to reach so it was asked whether cross ward awarding could be considered. Similarly, the Committee also felt that more deprived wards may require more grant allocation and again this was asked to be considered.

It was asked how the grant would be communicated and it was noted that the communications team would announce it using all the channels available and the Parish Council would be utilised considerably.

There were also views that the scheme would be beneficial at the current time as it would help when the sense of community was at its greatest due to the pandemic. It was also felt that similarly large financial pressures were being felt so even the small amount available from the scheme would be appreciated.

RESOLVED: That the views given by the Committee be considered by the Cabinet Member and Officer.

(The Meeting closed at 8.01 pm)

CHAIRMAN