

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 16 March 2015.

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs R J Drinkwater (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs D B Gurney (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs R D Berry  
Mrs G Clarke  
P A Duckett  
C C Gomm

Cllrs Mrs S A Goodchild  
N J Sheppard  
M A Smith

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs P N Aldis C Hegley  A M Turner	Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing Deputy Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing
Officers in Attendance:	Mr N Costin Mrs P Everitt Mr N Murley Mrs J Ogle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Head of Housing Service</li><li>– Scrutiny Policy Adviser</li><li>– Assistant Director Resources</li><li>– Director of Social Care, Health and Housing</li></ul>
Others in Attendance	Mr C Hartley Mr S King  Mr R Smith	East of England Ambulance Service Senior Locality Manager, East of England Ambulance Trust Chairman Central Bedfordshire Healthwatch

### SCHH/14/101. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Social Care Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 January 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### SCHH/14/102. Members' Interests

Cllr G Clarke declared an interest as a Member of her family worked for the Clinical Commissioning Group.

### SCHH/14/103. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the Committee that the Quality Accounts would be circulated to Members for comments. These comments would be collated and

emailed to Health Care providers, for inclusion in the Quality Accounts submissions. This alternative arrangement was in place because there was no meeting in May due to the elections.

The Chairman thanked the Committee and officers for their contributions at meetings over the past four years and wished the new Committee well in the future.

#### **SCHH/14/104.Petitions**

None

#### **SCHH/14/105.Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None

#### **SCHH/14/106.Call-In**

None

#### **SCHH/14/107.Requested Items**

None

#### **SCHH/14/108.Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Social Care Health and Housing advised the Committee the proposed development for older people in Houghton Regis had been approved and welcomed by The Executive. The Committee was also briefed on allegations that taxi drivers in the Leighton Linslade area had charged premium rates for disabled passengers. The Committee were urged to report concerns and provide evidence regarding this practice to the Licensing Officer.

The Committee were briefed on the following activities that were not included on the Agenda, these included:-

- Visits to various meetings, including the Old Warden Parish Forum.
- Attendance at an East of England networking meeting.
- Shadowing a Social Worker for the day.
- Attendance at the launch of the Oscar vehicle that helped young drivers develop their skills.

The Committee were reminded of a Cheering Volunteering event on 2 June 2015 at The Grove Theatre in Dunstable. Members would receive details on how to nominate a volunteer for an award.

#### **SCHH/14/109.East of England Ambulance Trust Performance Report**

The Chairman welcomed Chris Hartley, Communications Director, East of England Ambulance Trust (EEAST) who introduced the performance report for

the Ambulance Service that covered the East of England and Central Bedfordshire. The Committee were advised that the six priorities had been agreed to improve performance and had lead to significant improvement that included:-

- An increase in staffing levels and ambulance cover
- An upskilled workforce and improved career pathways for frontline staff
- A new vision and set of values being developed with the views of staff

Simon King, Senior Locality Manager EEAST briefed Members on the performance in the locality which included a fully staffed team. Staff's views to improve the rota system had been acted upon, which had helped to increase staff morale and placed Bedfordshire at the top of the performance table in the East of England.

In light of the report and update and further clarification provided by the Communications Director and Senior Locality Manager, Members of the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:

- Whether Voluntary Groups could be provided with a list of Community First Responders (CFR). The Senior Local Manager advised that the Ambulance Trust provided the training to CFR and would provide contact details of the Trainer to the Committee
- Concern that negative newspaper reports continue to hamper the EEAST in their work to improve the service. The Communications Director advised that the Board of Directors had been replaced and the new Board have planned a workshop with Unison to review the findings of the NHS staff survey and the Unison survey. Meetings had been arranged with BBC Look East and will be arranged with Beds on Sunday to reflect on the good work being done by the Trust.
- What steps had been taken to retain staff at the Trust. The Communications Director advised staff were able to progress to more senior positions within the Trust and develop their skills.
- Why the Trust had decided to reduce the number of first response cars. The Communications Director advised it had been a policy decision to rebalance the number of cars to ambulances as there was a shortage of ambulances in the area.
- Whether the Trust was confident it would achieve a balanced budget at the end of the financial year. The Communications Director advised the Trust had made a £10m saving and had received significant transitional funding from the 19 Clinical Commissioning Groups in the East of England. As a result the Trust would come in on budget this financial year.
- What support paramedics received when dealing with patients suffering from a mental illness. The Senior Locality Manager advised this was a big challenge for the Trust, however, a crisis concordat had been signed which enabled Mental Health workers to support paramedics.

The Communications Director invited the Committee to the Bedford Control room and meet front line crews.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1. The East of England Ambulance Trust be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to update the Committee on its performance.**
- 2. That a visit to the Bedford Control room be arranged for Members of the Committee.**

## **SCHH/14/110.Park Homes Strategy**

The Head of Housing Solutions presented a report that introduced the Committee to the 'draft Park Homes in Central Bedfordshire – a unique environment and place to live 2015-2020' and delivered a presentation on the vision and priorities for park home residents. This piece of work had been prepared based on the results of a residents' needs assessment survey held in October 2014, a residents' engagement event and a consultation.

The Director of Social Care Health and Housing advised that Members of the Executive would be considering the draft Park Homes document at their next meeting with a proposed action plan.

In light of the report and further clarification, Members raised the following:-

- That Housing Officers continue to provide residents with technical support and signposting to funds to keep Park Homes warm. In response the Head of Housing Solutions advised that a Government Standard had been agreed before Christmas and energy companies should receive funding through the Green Deal scheme to potentially fund energy efficiency improvements in Park Homes.
- Concern that the cost of improvements made by Park Home owners were passed on to vulnerable residents. The Head of Housing Solutions advised that concerns of this nature were best raised through the forum; it was recognised as an issue.
- Why there had been a low number of respondents to the Park Homes Offer consultation? The Head of Housing Solutions advised that many residents had responded to the Needs Assessment survey and consequently might have thought that they had already responded to the consultation. This was mentioned at the Residents' Forum in January 2015.
- Members requested paper details on the Park Homes Offer that could be distributed through the Village Care Schemes.
- Whether the Executive Member could bring pressure to bear to improve the efficiency and building standards of Park Homes. In response the Head of Housing Solutions advised that the homes must be mobile and movable to remain on the Parks and the idea of solar panels in the roof of park homes might cause a problem.
- Whether site owners enjoyed a happy relationship with its residents in general. The Head of Housing Solutions advised there had been concerns, however, the residents' forum had been helpful to raise concerns and agree a solution.

In conclusion the Head of Housing Solutions advised that residents do like living in Park Homes, however, there were no plans to build a new site.

**RECOMMENDED that the Executive adopt the draft Park Homes in Central Bedfordshire document.**

### **SCHH/14/111.Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020**

The Head of Housing Solutions introduced the draft Homelessness Strategy and delivered a presentation that outlined the purpose of the review. Demand for housing options advice and homelessness applications had increased to over 2,000 applications in 2013-14. The Strategy identified five key priorities to drive the refreshed strategy and the Head of Housing Solutions outlined work already underway to improve services and prevent or reduce homelessness.

In light of the report and presentation, Members of the Committee raised the following:-

- Concern at the low number of respondents to the Consultation. In response the Head of Housing Solutions advised it was difficult to capture the experiences of applicants because it was a difficult time for them.
- That reference to the work of Abacus Trust and their work on the 'houses for heroes' initiative and the Armed Forces Covenant be included in the Strategy.
- Clarification on who was liable to pay court costs if a tenant was to be evicted by a landlord. The Head of Housing Solutions advised that a tenant would not pay court costs.
- How Housing Officers were able to support tenants with no address. The Head of Housing Solutions advised there was a strand of work with Omega Homes to tackle this issue as well as work with Aragon Housing Association. The Executive Member advised she had campaigned for a higher number of rented units to be made available in any new developments in place of shared ownership units which were more expensive.
- Why the Council continued to use the Holiday Inn in Sandy for homeless families. The Head of Housing Solutions advised there were no other available options in the Sandy area.
- The Head of Housing Solutions gave details of the Night Owl initiative that supported rough sleepers and offered them a drink, hot meal and if required took them to a church hall to sleep at night.
- In response to a comment about insufficient housing especially in the north of Central Bedfordshire, the Director of Social Care Health and Housing advised of a number of initiatives to provide housing including the Empty Homes scheme and redevelopment of garage sites.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That reference be made in the Homelessness report to the Armed Forces Covenant and the work undertaken to help homeless ex-military personnel.**
- 2. That Planning colleagues be urged to use Section 106 monies to increase the number of properties available to rent, and to move away from shared ownership schemes which are more expensive.**

## SCHH/14/112. Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee was provided with a presentation that highlighted the key points in relation to the Q3 2014-15. The attention of the Committee was drawn to a forecast outturn of £64.6m resulting in a forecast £1.7m overspend. The Assistant Director Resources also advised that the capital forecast showed a gross spend of £6.2m against a budget of £8.2m and outlined the reasons for the underspend. The Housing Revenue Account capital expenditure forecast of £14.2m, also showed an underspend of £3.9m against the budget of £18.1m.

With regards to the Housing Revenue Account a Member raised a question regarding rental debt. The Head of Housing Solutions advised that Housing Officers would offer a resident the opportunity to downsize and they would be entitled to receive an incentive payment to do this.

The Public Health forecast position for 2014/15 showed a balanced budget at the end of the Q3. The Public Health Finance Officer outlined the services finances that were broken down into four main areas:-

- Drugs and alcohol
- 5-19 Healthy Child Programme
- Sexual Health
- Payroll

A Member raised a question on the Drugs and Alcohol work stream and what this entailed. The Finance Officer advised that Public Health worked on prevention and access to services. There was also a concern regarding the vacant Emergency Planning post. Members were advised the Public Health Resilience Officer advised colleagues on emergency planning matters.

### **NOTED the update**

## SCHH/14/113. Work Programme 2014/15 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered the current work programme. The Director of Social Care Health and Housing advised the four contract reports would not be considered by Executive in March.

**RECOMMENDED that the work programme be approved subject to the additional items detailed in the Minutes above.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.45 p.m.)