

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 29 January 2013.

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs R J Drinkwater (Chairman)  
Cllr N J Sheppard (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs P A Duckett  
Mrs R B Gammons

Cllrs Mrs S A Goodchild  
M A Smith

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D Bowater  
Mrs D B Gurney  
P Hollick

Substitutes: Cllrs R D Berry (In place of D Bowater)  
R W Johnstone (In place of P Hollick)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis  
C Hegley  
M A G Versallion  
Executive Member for  
Social Care, Health &  
Housing  
Executive Member for  
Children's Services

Officers in Attendance: Mr T Keaveney – Assistant Director Housing  
Services  
Mr N Murley – Assistant Director Business &  
Performance  
Mrs J Ogley – Director of Social Care, Health and  
Housing  
Mr J Partridge – Scrutiny Policy Adviser  
Mr J Robinson-  
Morley – Lead Commissioner (Carers &  
Service User Engagement)  
Ms C Rooker – Head of Housing Management  
Ms E Saunders – Assistant Director Commissioning

Others in Attendance Ms P Fletcher NHS Bedfordshire  
Mr B Smith Chairman, Bedfordshire LINK

SCHH/12/85 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**SCHH/12/86 Members' Interests**

The following Councillors declared interests in the business to be transacted:-

- Cllr Mr M Smith (Item 13) as he worked for one of the community and voluntary organisations referred to in the report.
- Cllr Mrs S Goodchild as a member of her family was a service user

**SCHH/12/87 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no Chairman's announcements or communications.

**SCHH/12/88 Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

**SCHH/12/89 Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

**SCHH/12/90 Call-In**

The Committee was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Committee under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

**SCHH/12/91 Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

**SCHH/12/92 Executive Member update**

Cllr Mrs C Hegley, the Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing updated the Committee on issues that were not included in the agenda, these included:-

- The Council had been accepted onto a pilot scheme for an innovative IT solution to minimise loneliness.
- The recent successful staff awards event.
- Elizabeth Saunders had been appointed to the position of Assistant Director for Commissioning.
- A recent meeting of the Lead Members network.
- A meeting that was taking place with Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England.
- The recent meeting of the (Shadow) Health and Wellbeing Board on 31 January 2013. The next meeting would take place on 21 March 2013.
- Progress in relation to the Domiciliary Care Retendering process.

- A future meeting relating to the Keep It Real Programme that the Executive Member had been invited to attend.
- The importance of developing a Tenancy Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and the positive nature of recent consultation events.
- The Public Health financial settlement, which had been more favourable to Central Bedfordshire than had been expected.

In response to this update a Member raised a concern relating to referrals for Children's Social Care. The Director of Social Care, Health and Housing recommended that the Councillor raise the issue with the Director for Children's Services. Another Member also commented on a recent positive experience regarding domiciliary care provided by the Rapid Intervention Team.

#### SCHH/12/93 **LINK update**

The Committee received an update from Mr B Smith, Chairman of Bedfordshire LINK, on the key work and issues the LINK was presently engaged with. In addition to the update the Committee were informed that a final report was presently being prepared by the LINK to be published by 31 March and that an enter and view visit at Swiss Cottage Care Home, Leighton Buzzard had been completed.

In response to the update a Member raised concerns regarding the infrastructure of meetings for service users/stakeholders across Bedford that was being instigated by SEPT. It was commented however that the situation had improved recently.

#### **NOTED the update**

#### SCHH/12/94 **Proposals to develop affordable Extra Care housing in Dunstable**

The Executive Member and the Assistant Director for Housing Services introduced a report and provided a presentation that set out proposals for approximately 80 Extra Care housing apartments to be constructed on the redundant Dukeminster site in Dunstable. In light of the report and points contained in the presentation the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The type of retail space that would be provided as part of the development, which was still to be determined and challenges relating to encouraging people to use it.
- Whether the provision of 1 parking space for 2 residents was appropriate, which was still to be determined. It was commented that local transport infrastructure enhanced accessibility locally.
- Whether other large villages in Central Bedfordshire (for example Caddington) could also sustain developments of this nature. The Assistant Director for Housing Services commented the Development Strategy required the Council to deliver 'ordinary' and 'special' provision. In deciding where to locate Extra Care schemes the Council would need to sustain a balance between these types of provision. It was agreed that appropriate schemes were also necessary in rural areas.

- The management of tenancies , which would be undertaken by an Allocations Panel that would agree allocations based on need and the Council's agreed policy.
- Charges for the use of facilities in the development, which would be included in the rental cost for residents.
- The ways in which the design of the development would effectively support those with dementia. Health and safety risk assessments would be undertaken for residents to ensure that appropriate services were provided to meet need.
- The manner in which properties would be offered to housing associations when a resident dies and the need to ensure that properties were always accessed by those persons with a need.
- Support for the scheme, which included that from the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- The importance of providing 2-bed accommodation to provide additional space for equipment and a carer (for example).
- The importance of integrating schemes with the local community.
- The proposals were supported by the Sheltered Tenants Action Group.

The Committee requested that their thanks to the Social Care, Health and Housing Directorate for their hard work on this scheme be recorded.

**RECOMMENDED TO EXECUTIVE That the development of the Extra Care scheme at the Dukeminster site in Dunstable be approved.**

#### SCHH/12/95 Local welfare provision

The Head of Housing Need presented a report that introduced a scheme to provide Local Welfare Provision to provide support for residents, which would replace the discretionary element of the Social Fund that was presently administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that would be abolished after 31 March 2013. In addition to the report it was highlighted that this was a discretionary service and that neighbouring authorities were working on similar schemes. The Council had developed schemes using "allpay" cards and "paypoint" to provide support to the most vulnerable residents.

In addition the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing drew the attention of the Committee to the financial implications and the current funding shortfall. It was suggested that in light of this shortfall the Committee might consider recommending the delegation of powers to the Director and Executive Member to amend the scheme if problems arose. There was a financial risk to this scheme that needed to be taken into account.

In light of the report and further clarification provided by officers the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The interviews that would be undertaken with those persons who applied for an additional community care grant after a period of 28 days following their previous application.
- The risks that a person who had resided in more than one local authority area could apply for emergency provision from two authorities during the same 12 month period.

- Consultation that the Council had undertaken with a wide range of partners that included Credit Unions.
- The criteria that the Council could apply to residents applying for emergency provision. Concerns were raised regards making cash payments to residents who suffer from domestic abuse, it was important that the Council provided adequate support to residents who were in receipt of cash payments, particularly in relation to finance management.
- The importance of effective communication with residents to ensure they were aware of changes to the local welfare provision scheme.
- The use of churches to deliver food banks and food voucher schemes.
- Whether it was appropriate for a resident to have continually resided in Central Bedfordshire for a period of six out of the last 12 months.

In addition to these issues Cllr Johnstone proposed that the eligibility criteria for emergency provision should be amended such that a person would need to have resided in Central Bedfordshire continuously for the previous six months to be eligible. The Committee discussed this and agreed that the criteria as set out in the report were appropriate. It was agreed that a review should be undertaken at the end of a transitional period to determine the extent of emergency provision and the financial implications to the Council.

#### **RECOMMENDED to Executive**

- 1. That the Local Welfare Provision Scheme as set out in the report be supported to deliver the two key aims:-**
  - (i) to alleviate financial distress following an emergency, crisis or disaster; and**
  - (ii) to enable vulnerable residents to set up home or remain at home and so gain or maintain their independence.**
- 2. That the Eligibility Criteria as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.**
- 3. That proposals to introduce the scheme in two phases as follows be supported:-**
  - (i) Phase one, to replicate the current DWP scheme with a minor change to eligibility and the range of support offered as outlined in the report to the Committee;**
  - (ii) Phase two, the scheme will be reviewed after six months of operation once the level and type of demand is known.**
- 4. That the Local Welfare Provision Scheme be adopted by Central Bedfordshire as set out in the body of the report and as outlined in Appendices A and B.**
- 5. That responsibility be delegated to the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Social Care, Health and Housing to make any amendments to the Local Welfare Provision Scheme.**
- 6. That a report be presented to the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee following a six month implementation period detailing the financial impact that had occurred as a result of implementing the local welfare provision scheme.**

Note:

Councillor Johnstone requested it be recorded that he could not support the agreed recommendations as he felt that the eligibility criteria for emergency provision should be amended as set out in the body of the Minutes.

Cllr N Sheppard left the meeting During consideration of this item and was not present at the time of agreeing the recommendations.

**(Meeting adjourned at 12 noon and reconvened at 1212hrs)**

#### SCHH/12/96 **Approach to establishing Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire**

The Assistant Director for Commissioning introduced a report that presented proposals for the approach to establishing Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. The attention of the Committee was drawn to the differences between the LINK and the local Healthwatch (LH), the finances that were available and issues relating to staffing. In addition the Commissioning Manager for Long-Term Conditions and Planned Care informed the Committee of the vision and values of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.

In light of the report and further clarification the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The importance of involving the Lymphoedema society as a Member of Healthwatch and seeking to provide more funding for this condition. In response Mr J Gelder, Chairman of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, stated that he would invite the Lymphoedema society to take part in the Healthwatch. Mr B Smith also stated that he would include the issue of funding for Lymphoedema in the LINK issue log with a view to taking this further.
- The important of involving palliative care as part of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- The importance of a communications strategy to inform residents of the existence of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire.
- The continuation of enter and view visits, which had previously been undertaken by the LINK.

#### **RECOMMENDED to Executive**

- 1. That the approach to establishing Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire as set out in the report be adopted.**
- 2. That the Committee invite a representative Healthwatch Central Befordshire to attend meetings of the Committee as an observer.**

#### SCHH/12/97 **Tenant's Scrutiny Panel and Designated Persons and Tenant's Complaints Panel**

The Head of Housing Management presented proposals for setting up and adopting a Tenant's Scrutiny Panel and Designated Persons and Tenants Complaints Panel for the Council's Landlord Service. In addition to the report it was commented that the Tenant Scrutiny Panel wanted to wok with the Council and not against it and that a meeting between the Chairman of the Panel and

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be beneficial once it had been established.

In light of the report the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- The need to clarify the quorum of the Tenant's Scrutiny Panel.
- The importance of ensuring that restricted information was not disclosed through the Complaints Procedure.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee could not approve reports of the Panel but it could consider them.

The Committee also requested that their thanks be recorded to Mr H Khan, Head of Housing Needs, who was leaving the Council.

#### **RECOMMENDED to Executive**

- 1. That the Terms of reference be agreed subject to amendments to clarify the quorum of meetings of the Tenants Scrutiny Panel and the removal of the words "for approval" at paragraph 10 in relation to the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to read "for consideration".**
- 2. That the Tenant's Scrutiny Panel and a Designated Persons and Tenant's Complaints Panel be established and Housing Complaints procedure be revised to include the role of Designated Persons, in respect of housing complaints.**
- 3. That both Panels become operational in April 2013.**
- 4. That the Chairman of the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meet with the Chairman of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in order to discuss the relationship between the two and how information could be shared in an effective and timely manner.**

#### **SCHH/12/98 Draft Budget 2013/14, Medium Term Financial Plan 2013-17 and Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2016/17**

The Assistant Director for Business and Performance introduced the item, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment upon the draft budget 2013/14, Medium Term Financial Plan 2013 to 2017 and Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2016/17, which had been presented and approved for consultation at a meeting of the Executive on 8 January 2013.

In response to the report and the further clarification provided by the Assistant Director the Committee discussed the content of the report in further detail and raised the following issues:-

- The Council's performance in relation to the transition from Children to Adults with Disabilities (ASC2). It was agreed that a Member seminar would be arranged in relation to this.
- Ensuring that the Council's housing offer was appropriate for disabled older persons.
- The Committee recognised that the efficiency programme was generally a continuation of the themes from the last three years.

**RECCOMENDED TO EXECUTIVE that the Committee notes the pressures and efficiencies detailed in the report and endorses the Draft Budget 2013/14, Medium Term Financial Plan 2013-17 and the Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2016/17 as set out.**

**SCHH/12/99 Fees and Charges 2013/14**

The Assistant Director for Business and Performance introduced the item, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment upon the Social Care, Health and Housing directorate Fees and Charges for 2013/14, which had been presented and approved for consultation at a meeting of the Executive on 8 January 2013. Members noted that the charges included in the report had been increased by 2% in line with the Council's budget strategy although in some cases the Council had used the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) statutory increase in benefits and pensions.

**RECCOMENDED TO EXECUTIVE that the schedule of Fees and Charges for 2013/14 for Social Care, Health and Housing be endorsed as set out.**

**SCHH/12/100 Draft budget report for the Housing Revenue Account (Landlord Service) Business Plan**

The Assistant Director for Business and Performance introduced the item, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment upon the draft budget report for the Housing Revenue Account (Landlord Service) Business Plan, which had been presented and approved for consultation at a meeting of the Executive on 8 January 2013. The Committee's attention was specifically drawn to the proposal not to make principal debt repayments in the current financial year or during the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan (2012/13 - 2016/17).

Members raised a specific query in relation to the average rent increase of 4.67% and queried whether this was too high. Following a response from the Director the Committee were satisfied that in comparison to previous increases to the average rent and the average market rent a rise of 4.67% was acceptable.

**RECCOMENDED TO EXECUTIVE that the Committee endorses the recommendations relating to the draft budget report for the Housing Revenue account (Landlord Service) Business Plan.**

**SCHH/12/101 Work Programme 2012/13 and Executive Forward Plan**

**RESOLVED that the Committee work programme for 2012/13 be agreed.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.23 p.m.)