

MINUTES of the meeting of the Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 November 2011 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors Wendy Herd, Mike Stone (substituting for Martin Healy), Amanda Prevost, Angie Gaywood (substituting for Sue Gray), Victoria Holloway and Tunde Ojetola.

Mike Riley

Apologies: Councillors Martin Healy and Sue Gray

In attendance: Councillor Tony Fish – Portfolio Holder for Adult Services
R. Harris – Head of Strategic Commissioning, Adult Services
L. Billingham – Head of Adult Services
J. Olsson – Director of People Services
A. Pike – Chief Executive of the PCT
A. Patel – National Health Service
F. Swanson – South Essex Partnership Trust
C. Fourie - South Essex Partnership Trust
J. White – Service Manager - Housing
M Boulter – Principal Democratic Services Officer

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Health and well-being meeting held on 6 September 2011 were approved as a correct record.

13. BLACK MOULD

The Chair raised the issue of Black Mould as an urgent item and invited a member of the public, Deidre Lodge to speak. Mrs Lodge outlined the variety of illnesses, namely Aspergillus, caused by black mould in houses. Young children, babies and vulnerable adults were particularly susceptible to harm and she was keen to raise awareness of the dangers in the wider public.

Dr. Arun Patel was also invited to speak and he detailed that black mould was caused by wetness and was identifiable as a thick, immovable black substance. He clarified that black mould was very rare and featured, on average, in less than 1% of those houses suffering from damp conditions. He felt the report submitted to the committee took the right steps to tackle the issue. He added that a

survey of council housing stock would be the only way to know how prevalent or not black mould was in Thurrock.

Mrs. Lodge disagreed in part with Dr Patel's statement that health problems relating to mould was rare and said that mould was most harmful to health when it was dry.

The Committee held a brief discussion on how the Council dealt with cases of black mould and it was explained that all council owned housing was checked for black mould. In private accommodation the Council relied on tenants coming to the council to inform them. In all cases the Council would move families into other accommodation if black mould was discovered and had to be dealt with. It was clarified that there were no specific council campaigns around this issue.

Councillor Gaywood felt that a cheap way of assessing housing stock would be to send out a questionnaire to tenants asking if they were able to identify black mould in their properties. Officers stated that they may already have systems in place to assess the presence of mould in housing stock and would provide an answer outside the meeting.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) Officers ensure there is a policy to detect black mould and put in place effective plans to remove it from properties.**
- ii) An update report be brought back in January.**

14. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

The policy on housing allocations needed to be refreshed and officers requested that a task and finish group be established to enable the council to re-assess who it wanted to provide housing for in the local community. This review would be especially important considering changes to the system through the Localism Bill and welfare reform.

Councillor Ojetola stated that there were empty sheltered properties in some areas of the borough whereas in others there was an over demand for general needs properties. He felt the task and finish group could go some way in joining up services to ensure housing stock was used effectively.

Councillor Gaywood requested that during the review data would be provided on homelessness figures.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) A task and finish group comprising of four members be established to review the housing allocations scheme.**

- ii) **The Committee note that officers will carry out a public consultation on the allocation scheme.**

15. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

The Chair raised a final urgent item in that she had been requested by the Chair of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee to establish a task and finish group to agree the implementation of the recommendations made by Reg Bailey's national report on the sexual exploitation of children.

RESOLVED: That:

A task and finish group be established to investigate the implementation of the Reg Bailey report and to comprise of the chair and vice chair of the Health and Well-being; Children's Services and the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gaywood declared a personal interest in relation to Item 5 by virtue that she had a son in receipt of services from the South Essex Partnership Trust.

Councillor Fish declared a personal interest in relation to Item 5 by virtue that he sat on the Board of Governors of the South Essex Partnership Trust.

17. SOUTH ESSEX PARTNERSHIP TRUST (SEPT) ANNUAL REPORT

Representatives from SEPT talked through the main features of their annual report highlighting the following key points:

- SEPT had expanded into Bedfordshire and Luton, among other areas, which had led to a drive in efficiency savings and a review of management.
- There was a new director of social care and partnerships.
- The service relating to Carers' assessments was very good and SEPT had won awards in relation to this.
- SEPT had invested work into improving the Personalisation agenda in Thurrock.
- An audit of adult safeguarding had been completed and recommendations from that were being implemented.
- New community services had been added and were aimed around individual needs.

The Committee recognised that proposed welfare reforms would impact on the work of SEPT and also queried how the organisation was preparing for the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Green paper,

which would add more responsibility on the organisation to provide services for adults up to the age of 25. SEPT responded by stating that they were working on plans to integrate social, health and educational services in relation to this.

Councillor Holloway congratulated SEPT on the successes they had had and questioned how prepared they were for providing front line mental health services in line with the major changes expected. It was stated in reply that there was no additional money to provide this service so capacity was being created through revising service structures as well as remodelling the service so that there is early and quick intervention with quicker turnaround times but also making it easier for users to return to the service if they need to. It was added that the Council's joint mental health strategy with Southend and Essex Councils would help pull these services together to ensure a good quality service for users.

There was debate around the stigma of mental health and how SEPT was tackling this. There had been an awareness day in Basildon town centre, which had attracted Thurrock residents. There was also an expectation that governors represented the organisation within their communities. SEPT reported that Thurrock was well represented by governors and awareness activities were regularly available at Lakeside and SEPT agreed to take a request for a Thurrock event, similar to Basildon, back to their directors. SEPT ensured the committee there would still be a local focus in Thurrock.

Responding to a question, SEPT stated that there were no plans in the area, at present, to target armed services personnel due to the fact there were no barracks in Thurrock. However, it was an issue they were aware of and looking in to for the future.

RESOLVED: That

- i) The Committee's concerns over the transition of children to adult care be noted by SEPT.**
- ii) These minutes be provided to SEPT as a record of the Committee's comments and views on the annual report.**

18. STAR CHAMBER GROWTH PROPOSALS – ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Officers highlighted that the budget for adult social care had increased by £5 million over the last three year, which reflected the success the council had achieved in keeping people within their own homes but also providing them with ever more complex care. It was also predicted that the over 85 population would grow significantly in the near future.

Officers' professional and informed estimate for growth was £1 million but there were also plans to make savings through re-enablement, reducing prices of provider services, revising two to one care packages to see if equipment could be used to enable only one carer to look after a user rather than two.

There was a brief discussion on whether people were moving into the area because of Thurrock's good service and thus putting pressure on the service. It was stated that all users went through a rigorous process to ensure they had the right care package and were living in the borough. There was little evidence to show migration into the borough for social or health care needs.

Councillor Ojetola queried the 100% increase in mental health direct payments which was explained by officers as people switching to direct payments from other forms of care packages rather than a general increase in users.

The Committee recognised there were expensive residential placements both inside and outside the borough. Officers stated that this was being tackled through looking at provider costs but also building capacity in provision for mental health services by working with partners and also promoting independent living.

The committee debated the sustainability of continually reducing costs of provider services and officers added that this was not a problem as yet. The portfolio holder and officers assured the committee that they ensured the standard of care did not suffer when provider costs were reduced.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) Officers continue to ensure the standard of care does not suffer when managing the costs of external service providers.**
- ii) Officers ensure rigorous processes remain in place when assessing the residency of users.**
- iii) The Committee note that the growth proposal outlined is to ensure statutory requirements in relation to care are fulfilled.**

19. UPDATE REPORT ON THE SOUTH ESSEX COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY AND TWO MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR CHANGE

The report outlined two work streams that the council wished to undertake to merge housing, social and health care into one sustainable programme for residents. The Council was confident it could fund the projects through money received from the PCT.

It was highlighted that all the reports at tonight's meeting fed into these projects by showing that new ways of caring for people was needed so that all services were provided in one to increase efficiency, save money and ensure people received the best care in homes that suited their ever changing needs.

The projects represented a key way in which the council could tackle service needs, as well as tackle the issue of providing sheltered accommodation for people that was attractive and desirable.

The Committee welcomed the report and recognised that Housing Revenue Account funding for next year would provide the Council with funds to pursue such projects. Andrew Pike, representing the PCT, added that a directory of services would be needed for professionals to ensure that all options for residents was provided at the crucial times. Mr Pike also gave assurances that GPs, as first point of contact in most cases, would be aware of these options and lead on them.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) **The report be noted and endorsed.**
- ii) **An update on the housing related issues return to the committee in one year while the health related issues return in six months.**

20. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the work programme and a number of new items were suggested by both officers and Members. The Democratic Services Officer noted these and promised to circulate a revised work programme in the near future that was representative of the discussions.

The meeting finished at 9.19pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk**

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