

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 OCTOBER 2015

REPORT BY SCRUTINY OFFICER (ON BEHALF OF CHAIRMAN OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENDA INTO DELIVERY OF HOUSING BENEFITS AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To give Members the opportunity to gain evidence on this topic at a strategic level and to be assured that the service, as a main contact point for many vulnerable customers, is appropriately integrating the wider public health agenda and has a clear direction of travel.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

That:

(A)	An initiative to distribute healthy lifestyle information to vulnerable customers from Shared Services be supported and promoted as a contribution to the wider public health agenda and any resulting actions be tracked within the context of the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan; and
(B)	the Members' Development Group be asked to approve the inclusion of the NHS Online Training Programme for inclusion in the Members' Training Programme and made available to key Officers.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The role of the Council in the protection and promotion of public health has always been important but it has been further enhanced due to the introduction of the Health and Social Care Act 2012

which came into force April 2013.

- 1.2 The Council adopted a new East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018) in October 2013. This was endorsed by Jim McManus, Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire, who circulated it nationwide as an example of good practice. A list of the Council's core services that contribute to the public's health can be found on pages 5 and 6 <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/wellbeing>
- 1.3 In April 2014, Health and Wellbeing Panel (HWP) Members agreed they wanted evidence on how the Council was integrating its new public health responsibilities into core services. Presentations on planning, contract services, licensing/environment, and housing were received at a HWP meeting on 14 October 2014. As the benefits service is administered by the Council on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), a decision was taken to consider this service at a later date.
- 1.5 Members are asked to note that, in terms of annual service planning, all Heads of Service are requested to describe key service responsibilities and how these link to the Council's priorities and any partnership agenda, including health and wellbeing. The Council has introduced an Impact Assessment of Health and Wellbeing Issues into its report checklist.
- 1.6 Information on benefits and council tax support can be found on the link here: www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=9376

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services has been invited, on this occasion, to present on the degree to which it has been able to integrate, if at all, the public health agenda into its work with vulnerable residents. Members are asked to note that the Council is not under any statutory obligation to integrate the public health agenda into this service.
- 2.2 Members are asked that tonight's discussion focus on identifying the starting point and what the direction-of-travel is for the shared service to contribute to the council's agreed health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 2.3 The HWS Chairman invites Members to discuss the following themes to ensure that what is being delivered is linked to the East

Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy and that the priorities of this strategy are being given due consideration.

- a) What is your direction-of-travel in terms of integrating the public health agenda into your service, if any?
- b) What support measures, if any, has the Council put in place (or are planned) for vulnerable residents with long-term health conditions to more easily access your service?
- c) What opportunities do you see, if any, to provide healthy lifestyle advice to your customers?
- d) What links, if any, does your service have with health and wellbeing partners and local agencies?
- e) What barriers to ideas/plans have been identified and how might these be addressed?

2.4 Following the presentation and discussion with the Head of Shared Services, Members are asked to consider the responses and whether there are any public health actions they would like Officers to explore in the future, linked to housing benefits and Council tax support customers.

2.5 It has been suggested that, when other East Herts services wish to target healthy lifestyle information to these vulnerable customers, they explore with the Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services specific opportunities to use this route whilst recognising the limitations of using shared resources.

2.6 Members are asked to note that the NHS has a campaign called "Making Every Contact Count" (<http://www.makeeverycontactcount.com/>) that is appropriate for anyone who comes into contact with members of the public and has the opportunity to have a conversation to promote a healthy lifestyle.

2.7 The NHS offers a free online training programme about how to provide this advice and this can be accessed on <http://www.makeeverycontactcount.com/Training%20and%20Resources/eLearning.html>. Members are asked whether there is any interest within the committee to undertake this programme themselves, or as an informal study group, or possibly recommend it to key officers across the Council.

2.8 Any developments to the shared service are normally discussed at the East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee. To view minutes go to:
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=419&Year=0>

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

- East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2018
<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/wellbeing>

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