

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor N Symonds (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, A Alder, S Cousins,
H Drake, J Kaye, M McMullen, P Moore and
R Standley

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, E Buckmaster,
L Haysey and P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Barfoot	- Environmental Health Promotion Officer
Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Acting Chief Executive/Director of Neighbourhood Services
Will O'Neill	- Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services
Claire Pullen	- Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants)
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager
Su Tarran	- Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service
Paul Thomas-Jones	- Environmental

309 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs D Hollebon.

310 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

311 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.

The Chairman referred to the Task and Finish Group which had been established to visit the Year One District Offer funded projects. The aim was for Councillors to take a “light touch” approach to projects which had benefitted from the match funded grant of £100,000 from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). Further information would be circulated to the group and plans made for the visits over the next few weeks.

The Chairman referred to an invitation to attend the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17 November 2015 to hear plans to review the council’s leisure strategy.

312 THE INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENDA INTO THE DELIVERY OF HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services to the meeting. The Scrutiny Officer explained that last year, core services had been asked to ensure that they were integrating public health into the Council’s services. The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services had been invited to the meeting to provide assurances that the service, as a main contact point for

vulnerable customers, was integrating the wider public health agenda and providing clear information to its customers.

The Chairman reminded Members that whilst the Council administered the service, the Council only acted as agent for the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services provided statistical background information in terms of the number of non-domestic rates and council tax determinations processed and benefit claims made and processed. She explained how much grant the Council received from the DWP to support the service. It was noted that last year, the service had sent out 300,000 letters.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits acknowledged the importance the service had in ensuring its customers received timely help and advice and how this could impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and families who might have to make decisions on whether to heat their homes or feed their families. She explained that staff were trained to ensure that they did not act judgementally but considered claims objectively and to signpost its customers to agencies where further help could be given, especially those who were vulnerable and people with mental health issues.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits summarised alternative methods of service delivery in terms of moving forward, including reviewing how customers contacted the service by the use of technology (e.g. “Nudge Technology” where customers would be provided with reminder texts on a Council Tax bill falling due)

The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained the importance of making personal visits to individuals, especially vulnerable customers, as a means of speeding up the administrative process and in ensuring timely referrals to other support agencies such as the Citizens’ Advice Service (CAB). She referred to the need to use information it had on its customers to ensure they received the right service.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits referred to the impact the welfare reforms would have on individuals in terms of their requirements and the training needed to support staff and those staff working from home. She referred to the need to continue to work closely with other colleagues within the Council, such as Housing Services, to ensure support mechanisms were in place.

In response to a query regarding staff who could be affected by stress, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained the processes in place to ensure managers stayed in daily contact with their teams and telephone rotation arrangements.

In response to a query from Councillor M McMullen regarding links to other services, the Head of Revenues and explained the tools in place to ensure Officers made appropriate connections and referrals.

In response to a question from Councillor J Kaye, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained the legislative role of the DWP and the role of the Council as its agent in delivering the service. In response to a further query regarding information provided to the elderly, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that, when needed, Officers would carry home visits to ensure that they were provided with relevant information and were signposted on where to get further help.

Councillor J Kaye queried the use of “Mosaic Data” and how this could help customers. The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained how data the Council held could be layered over other information to provide a more detailed view of potential need subject to the restrictions in terms of the Data Protection Act and use of individuals’ data.

In response to a query from Councillor A Alder regarding working with other volunteer organisations and mentoring, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the Council worked with agencies appropriate to the client’s needs. She referred to the long term relationship with the CAB and its links with support agencies. She confirmed that the Council did not have the resources to facilitate mentoring, but referred

to the importance of directing customers to the right agency.

In response to a query from Councillor R Standley regarding “going the extra mile”, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that for a person who might be identified as vulnerable, an officer would make arrangements for a home visit, where all the information could be obtained in one visit and an assessment of other need from other support agencies could be identified.

In response to a query regarding assisting those with learning difficulties, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the service was always willing to try to work with groups to ensure that communication channels were open.

The Committee Chairman, on behalf of Members thanked the Head of Revenue and Benefits Shared Services for her thorough and informative presentation. She suggested that the recommendation should include a reference to Hertfordshire Year of Mental Health and that the Council should be supporting appropriate national campaigns. This was supported.

The Committee approved the report, as amended.

RESOLVED – that (A) initiatives to distribute healthy lifestyle information to vulnerable customers from Shared Services be supported and promoted, including Hertfordshire’s Year of Mental Health and other appropriate national campaigns, as a contribution to the wider public health agenda;

(B) any resulting actions arising from (A) be tracked within the context of the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan; and

(C) the Members’ Development Group be asked to approve the inclusion of the NHS Online Training Programme in the Members’ Training Programme and be made available to key Officers.

313 UPDATE ON ACTIONS UNDER THE AGEING WELL
AGENDA

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing submitted a report providing an update on East Herts Strategic Partnership's initiative on the District-wide Ageing Well Programme. The Engagement and Partnerships Team Leader provided a summary of the initiative and the embargo placed on the publicity in relation to the success of the bid.

In response to a query regarding Dementia Friends and training, the Scrutiny Officer explained what training was offered by the Council, how this was advertised and that those interested could attend.

In response to a query from Councillor D Abbott regarding encouraging the use of volunteers, the Engagement and Partnerships Team Leader explained the principles behind "Time Banking" aimed at using individuals' skills to assist others in the community and building up "credits" as a result. The Chairman provided a statistical breakdown of volunteers provided by Hertfordshire County Council.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing referred to the important role of volunteers and the ideas generated by the Ageing Well Steering Group.

The Committee agreed the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress made by the multi-agency Ageing Well Steering Group be noted; and

(B) Members actively promote and support projects in their wards and identify residents to become physical activity champions, dementia friends or "Time Bankers".

314 HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY - WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee submitted a report on the Committee's future work programme for 2015/16.

Councillor P Moore suggested that the Head of Community Safety and Health Services be invited to a future meeting to discuss progress on the new Licensing Policy. This was supported.

The Leader suggested that the Committee might want to consider a presentation/report on planning and place, including housing, for older people in the health and wellbeing agenda. She further suggested that Officers review the implications of town and rural isolation. These suggestions were supported.

Councillor A Alder suggested that Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) be reviewed and that "Cross Roads" and the officer responsible for DFGs be asked to attend a meeting to address this. The Chairman explained that Members needed to support and scrutinise more in depth projects and explained who, within the Council, administered DFGs.

Members asked that an Officer provide an update on the District Plan and how this supported the health and wellbeing agenda.

The Committee approved the report, as now amended.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as now amended, be agreed.

315 MINUTES: HCC HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND UPDATES

The Minutes of Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee on 18 June 2015 were submitted for information.

Councillor S Cousins explained that, at the request of the Chairman, he had attended the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing conference which had included the launch of the Hertfordshire Year of Mental Health at HCC on 9 July 2015. He provided a summary of the event.

The Committee noted the Minutes.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes be noted.

316 MINUTES: LSP HEALTH AND WELLBEING OFFICERS' GROUP

The Minutes of LJP Health and Wellbeing Officers' Group held on 15 July 2015 were submitted for information.

The Committee noted the Minutes.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes be noted.

317 MINUTES: LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - AGEING WELL STEERING GROUP

The Minutes of Local Strategic Partnership Ageing Well Steering Group held on 21 July 2015 and 8 September 2015 were submitted for information.

The Committee noted the Minutes.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Chairman
Date