

## Briefing Summary

### Overview and Scrutiny committee 17 October 2017 by Eric Buckmaster, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing

In all cases the role is to support members in performing their ward duties by cascading relevant information and highlighting their concerns internally and externally to the appropriate officers and other bodies.

A brief summary of the Health and Wellbeing portfolio.

- **Affordable Housing.** Together with the Head of Housing and Health and the Housing Team to introduce policies related to delivering an appropriate number of affordable homes for the District. Policies have been added to the District Plan based on consultants' work and the housing needs survey. There is also delegated authority in ensuring that commuted sums of money from section 106 agreements are spent within the district on affordable homes.
- The team work hard to ensure that presentations of homelessness are dealt with quickly and according to regulations. New duties will be coming in relating to the Homelessness Reduction Act. The council owns a hostel which may house a number of families pending them finding suitable accommodation via the Choice Based Lettings system.
- Partnership meetings are held regularly with our two main Housing Associations, Network Homes and Circle/Clarion. Members are encouraged to attend where they can receive updates on the Associations operations and may ask questions. Each quarter a Housing Forum is held in Wallfields where stakeholders are invited to receive and give presentations and discuss topical issues. Invitees include a number of Housing Association, CAB, County Public Health Officers, and East Herts Housing and Environmental officers.
- I have asked the Housing Team to review ways in which the Council can work proactively and with partners to publicise the benefits of downsizing so as to encourage this. Research is under way and options will come forward for discussion with Members in the coming few months.
- **Private Empty Homes.** The process of bringing empty homes back into use can be a very long process. The reasons for a home to remain empty are various but remaining so may lead to dilapidation and present a nuisance or health risk to neighbours. Officers spend time seeking and contacting owners and encouraging them to let them or sell them on. In the final resort we have introduced powers of compulsory purchase.
- **Community Grants and other funding.** Earlier this year members and officers reviewed grants policies and the recommendations were agreed at council in July. The purpose was to more closely align grant giving to

supporting the pockets of greatest deprivation in the District. Raising the maximum level of revenue grants also allows them to enable longer projects that can support the council's priorities such as reducing social isolation or tackling inactivity. Earlier in October a district wide grants workshop was held to which community organisations were invited. A presentation on levels of deprivation was given. The grants process was explained and the attendees were asked to consider ideas for tackling deprivation and social inequalities.

- The Forever Active Programme of Activities for the over 50s has been successful and is undertaken in community halls across the district. It will be in its last year of funding in 2018. Work will be undertaken to ensure, as far as possible, that the community organisations hosting them will be able to continue.
- In terms of prevention of ill health the Council will soon commence a social prescribing programme which will be described in more detail at the scrutiny meeting. Funding for this is provided for the sums committed through match funding the District Offer.
- This year the council joined a number of other districts plus county to form a Home Improvement Agency in order to share resources to facilitate the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants. The council has also continued to support the Dementia Friendly Homes project designed to assist those living at home with Dementia by suggesting relatively low cost alterations and modifications. It is hoped that this may be integrated in time with the Home Improvements Agency.
- **Arts, Leisure, Culture.** This is a very broad portfolio area and includes Hertford Theatre and the Leisure Contract. Officers will be looking at possibilities for Hertford Theatre to be more commercially focussed possibly through increasing the capacity for first time cinema screenings. Details are still to be developed.
- The ambitions for the Leisure Contract and development of our own use pools and gyms are well documented and have been approved at full council in July. In terms of sport activation and engagement we partner and fund Active East Herts. It has supported sports organisations and clubs that don't have a national association to guide them. Advice can be given regarding coaching and sourcing funding. Active East Herts in common with other community organisations has had some difficulty in attracting volunteers so a new organisation 'Active In' has been employed to support this vital piece of work.
- The importance of culture is seen as important to maintaining the health and wellbeing of residents. In September Executive Members agreed supporting seed funding towards creating an Arts Hub in Hertford. Beyond this cultural strategy for the district will be considered during 2018/19.

- **Community Development, Public Health, District Health Offer.** There is a clear link between these portfolio areas. Two of the three key corporate priorities are 'to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities' and 'to enhance the quality of people's lives'. The role includes supporting members and officers in 'outreach' aspects of council work. The council provides funding to Broxbourne and East Herts CVS to support our Community Development programme.
- I was particularly proactive in setting up the community wellbeing forum of member champions which has got off to a great start. It is a readymade vehicle to support officers in their community and public health duties and assists in turning public engagement into positive action. A good example is the recent grants workshop. By discovering the levels of need in each community the champions may offer support not only in the grants process but also in helping deliver solutions.
- In the coming weeks Forum members will work with officers in updating the council's Health and Wellbeing strategy which will also come to Overview and Scrutiny. It is also a link to contributing to the county wide strategies such as the upcoming Year of Physical Activity. The key to a good strategy is that it is a thread that runs through all of the council's operations and that it is focussed on prevention of ill health. This can be discussed in more detail during the scrutiny presentation.
- It is my expectation that members will play a key supporting role in the social prescribing project through their contacts and depth of knowledge within the community. In order for the system to work well there will be a need for some of those referred or prescribed to be mentored or introduced to new activities by community champions.

My portfolio includes attending Workshops and AGMs of our health and community partners such as the County Council, CCG, CDA, and CVS and visiting district wide charitable trusts, sports clubs, and cultural organisations when invited. I have also hosted or have spoken at community development events such as the Rural and Urban Conference, and chair stakeholder committees such as Ageing Well.

The outside bodies on which I represent the council include the East and North Herts NHS Trust Involvement Committee, and the county wide lifestyle and legacy partnership.

**Eric Buckmaster**  
Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing