

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



**15 APRIL 2013 - 2.30PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Chambers (Chairman), Councillor Miscandlon (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Booth, Mrs Bucknor, Hodgson, Miss Hoy, Stebbing, Sutton and Swan

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Butcher, Cotterell, Garratt and Jolley.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Cornwell

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jane Bailey, Richard Cassidy, Anna Goodall, Dan Horn, Phil Hughes, Geoff Kent, Alan Pain and Val Thomas - NHS Cambridgeshire

### **OS37/12    PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 11 March 2013 were agreed and signed.

**\* FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL \***

### **OS38/12    PROGRESS OF CORPORATE PRIORITY - LOCALISM**

Councillor Chambers introduced the Progress in Delivering the Localism Corporate Objectives 2012/13 Report and welcomed Cabinet Members, FDC Officers and Val Thomas from NHS Cambridgeshire.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Chambers asked that with the new benefits system now in place are you confident that you have put everything in place to deal with the changes. Councillor Garratt stated that this has been given a lot of consideration, and the team are coping well with claim processing. We were concerned that there would be a huge influx of applications following the changes, but this has not been the case. There is a concern that some people will bury their heads about how they will be affected by the changes and this is when they will find themselves in financial difficulties. We want to prevent it from getting to that stage, and so our message to claimants is that if you believe that your benefits may be affected please contact the Council;
2. Councillor Booth stated that with regards to the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2012-14, the report says that the Council helped 143 families to avoid being made homeless compared to 122 last year, and then goes on to say that 131 spaces of emergency accommodation were provided. He asked if the difference is the number of people that we were not able to help. Dan Horn stated that the 131 spaces of emergency accommodation were provided under the Government's Severe Weather Emergency Plan;
3. Councillor Booth asked how many cases were we not able to help. Dan Horn stated that we try to help everybody that comes forward, and if we do not have a duty to house we do have a duty to give advice and guidance and to help them to come up with a solution. Councillor Butcher stated that there have been cases where families have refused the help that we are offering;

4. Councillor Booth stated that the report is clear about how many people have been helped, but does not offer the full story with no data available about how many we had to turn away;
5. Councillor Stebbing stated that there are substantial changes in benefits being introduced, he asked how prepared the Council are to deal with these changes, and if consideration has been given to flexibility of opening hours in the one stop shops. Councillor Garratt stated that we have not gone as far as to look at the opening times in the one stop shops, but if this is an issue we will review. The Council will prioritise those people that need help most, looking to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported through the changes;
6. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the benefits changes are being rolled out gradually starting in a few boroughs in London, so are not affecting us here yet, she added that she understands that staff in the one stop shop have re-arranged annual leave in preparation;
7. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked for clarification on the figures on page 12 with regards to the number of days taken to assess claims. Geoff Kent stated that the target is 28 days and the current performance is 28 days, previously the team were performing at 21 days however following an increase in claims last summer this has pushed the overall performance to 28;
8. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the report is referring to rough sleepers where it states that Migrant Outreach Worker has assisted 16 homeless residents to return to their country of origin. Dan Horn confirmed that this is referring to rough sleepers. Councillor Garratt stated that there was an influx of Eastern Europeans who came to the area to work, but the work has dried up now, and for those that had no family ties here money was available to get them a ticket home. Officers confirmed that this service is still available;
9. Councillor Miscandlon asked if there is any data available to highlight claimants that have not responded to correspondence with regards to the benefits changes. Councillor Garratt confirmed that there is data looking at this, Officers are contacting people by post, and this will be followed up where possible if we have the capacity by door knocking;
10. Councillor Booth asked that with regards to the allocation of rural homes, are exception site projects being pursued. Alan Pain confirmed that he will come back to the committee with more details on this;
11. Councillor Booth asked if we are going to have a transitional process in the policy. Alan Pain stated that there will be no need for an Exceptions Policy as there will be no exceptions;
12. Councillor Booth stated that this is correct in planning terms, but is different when allocating housing so there will be a transitional period, or will we refer to the Local Connections Policy? Alan Pain stated that the detail will be in the Allocations Policy looking at the local need, and that policy will be separate to the Planning Policy;
13. Councillor Booth stated that the Local Connections Policy does not cover the Local Lettings Connections. Alan Pain stated that the connections are within the Allocations Policy. Councillor Jolley agreed that it does need that element in there, but stated that he believes that the Council's hands are tied;
14. Councillor Bucknor stated that there should be greater scores given within the framework for people with local connections, otherwise you are losing the local community. Councillor Jolley agreed but stated that the Housing Associations have different criteria;
15. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to the setting up of the March Credit Union, a lot can be learnt from the experiences of the Wisbech Credit Union, for example that a Monday is not a good day as there are so many public holidays. Councillor Butcher thanked Councillor Mrs Bucknor for the feedback and agreed that information from the Wisbech group would be very helpful when setting the March group up. He stated that he is pleased that the Wisbech group have lots of volunteers, and that they are looking at the possibility of opening on an extra day;
16. Councillor Swan stated that with regards to English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Training the report makes reference to opportunities for Wisbech, March and Chatteris but not for Whittlesey. He asked where do the people in Whittlesey who require this training go. Councillor Butcher stated that perhaps when this was being set up there was no call for this service in Whittlesey, however if you know of a resident that requires this please let the team know. Councillor Garratt confirmed that when this service was set up there was the greatest need in Wisbech, he confirmed that currently people in Whittlesey

are directed to the Adult Learning Centre in Peterborough, but agreed to look into this further to find out what the plans are in Whittlesey in the future;

17. Councillor Miscandlon asked if there are any plans to extend the credit union any further following the setting up of the March group. Councillor Butcher confirmed there are no plans at this time to extend the credit union any further;
18. Councillor Miss Hoy stated that she is surprised how little there is about Town and Parish Councils in this document. Councillor Butcher stated that there is more information coming out and that as this builds up it will become more prominent. Councillor Jolley stated that we need a closer look at communication between the District and Towns/Parish Councils;
19. Councillor Booth stated that when the Corporate Objectives were reviewed, Localism was not covered enough, he explained that he had raised this issue several times before. He stated that he was concerned that whenever Town and Parish Councils are approached it ends up costing them money, there needs to be a decent proposal in place for progression in this area. Councillor Butcher informed members that more details about this will be coming out from Cabinet;
20. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to the Making Money Count Project the report says that the support vehicle will be available from April 2013, she asked what the plans were for rolling this out. Dan Horn confirmed that the project is scheduled to start and agreed to circulate a summary to the members;
21. Councillor Miscandlon asked what the plans are in terms of highlighting these issues in other towns. Councillor Butcher stated that the project has been aimed at Wisbech and March in the first instance as this is where there is the most need, however the project will be rolled out to other areas if there is a need identified;
22. Councillor Swan asked if more information was available about One Voice 4 Travellers (OV4T). Dan Horn confirmed that he would circulate more information about this project;
23. Councillor Booth asked if following changes to funding, is the Community House considered to be a good use of resources, as deprivation is not just an issue affecting Wisbech. He agreed that the Community House does very good work, but that it is just concentrating on one area. Councillor Cotterell stated that the Community House was previously funded by Roddons, however they no longer fund this project. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that this area has been focused as it is in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in the Country, but she agreed that there should be more information about how it is being used and clearer data. Councillor Garratt informed members that the Community House is linked in to the Wisbech 2020 Vision;
24. Councillor Miscandlon stated that this needs to be clearer, we need to see that we are getting value for money. Councillor Garratt agreed to circulate more detail to the members;
25. Councillor Sutton stated that there is more resources going into Waterlees than any other area, but we are not seeing the results that we would expect. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that it is important that there are measurable targets, so that it is clear what is being achieved. Councillor Cotterell stated that we know that other towns and villages need this support too;
26. Councillor Booth stated that there are lots of small projects, but we need to focus on them for longer so that we see results. Councillor Jolley stated that this is the intention of the Wisbech 2020 Vision. Councillor Butcher stated that often when projects are funded they are given a timescale, so when the funding ends we are left with very little choice;
27. Councillor Miss Hoy stated that she agrees with what has been said adding that it is frustrating when I hear that FDC are part of a project, there needs to be more communication and joined up working practise otherwise everyone is spending money and work is overlapped;
28. Councillor Sutton stated that Councillor Mrs Bucknor referred to the fact that Wisbech is targeted as it is in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in the Country, he asked if there is data available that shows where it sits within that 10%. Councillor Mrs Bucknor confirmed that she has the data and agreed to forward this on to Councillor Sutton;

29. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that deprivation is not just a measure of the lack of money, there are multiple reasons which all need to be looked at;
30. Councillor Booth stated that activities supported by the Community House Sports Development Team, he asked if the staff were running the activities. Councillor Garratt stated that this is different from the Sports Development Team at FDC, the Community House activities are organised by the Community Support Team, the events are about getting the community involved so that they learn, work and play together;
31. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the Golden Age Team are wonderful, and that she is very impressed with the work that they do. She added that they really do target the right people, and that she has seen first hand the benefits that people get from this team, on what she understands is a very small budget. Councillor Cotterell confirmed that this team receive a nominal amount of finance, and always try to get other organisations to contribute what they can;
32. Councillor Booth stated that he understands that it is possible for FACT to apply for bus licence. Councillor Butcher stated that he has no knowledge that FACT are planning to operate as a bus service, but will look into it;
33. Councillor Chambers asked if the GP gym referral programme has been stopped. Councillor Jolley stated that the referrals came forward but patients were dropping out so the programme was withdrawn, however this has now been re-started. Val Thomas stated that there is an inequality in funding in this area and we need to ensure that it goes to where there is the greatest need, this is high on the agenda this year;
34. Councillor Swan stated that the GP referral system is frustrating for paying gym members as those on the programme clog the system at the busiest times, and leave just a few weeks later, he suggested that the income source should outweigh the referral users. Councillor Jolley stated that he understands the frustration but that we need to look after the people who are being referred;
35. Councillor Swan suggested that the people on the referral programme could be asked to use the gym at specific times. Richard Cassidy stated that the previous programme was not working because many of the people that were referred did not complete the programme. It is intended to re-launch the scheme in April, introducing more group support sessions which would take place during off peak times;
36. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the group sessions are a good idea, but was concerned that people would have issues with access to the leisure centres;
37. Councillor Swan stated that those that live close to the leisure centres should be encouraged to walk. Councillor Jolley stated that the point is that people are dropping out and so the programme is not working. We need to ensure that we are feeding back to the GP's better. Councillor Butcher stated that it might be a good idea to discuss this further at a Health and Wellbeing Partnership Meeting;
38. Councillor Miscandlon asked if the reporting from the leisure centres to the GP's has improved since the re-introduction of the programme. Councillor Jolley confirmed that we are making improvements;
39. Councillor Booth stated that it would seem that casual users of the gym cannot use the facilities at peak times. Councillor Jolley confirmed that at peak times you have to be a member to use the gym
40. Councillor Booth stated that there has been a letter of complaint recently in the local press with regards to the matter of people not being able to use the gym facilities, the Council should be submitting a reply to be published, letting them know that they can use the gym at off peak times. The information to the customer is not being publicised sufficiently. Officers confirmed that an article is going to be published in the Council's Fenlander pages;
41. Councillor Swan stated that he has had numerous complaints from pay monthly swimmers who now have to pay by direct debit. They want the flexibility of paying for the service each month, or indeed not to if they know that they will be away and will not be able to make use of the pool. Phil Hughes confirmed that once a direct debit is set up, a customer who is on a monthly direct debit, with no committed contract term, can contact the leisure centre and ask for a payment to be suspended for a month. Councillor Swan stated that customers do not

know that this option is available and nobody is telling them, looking at this from a commercial point of view it is important that we are keeping our customers happy;

42. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the option of being able to suspend a payment should be publicised better, as this may help the leisure centres to retain the members that are leaving when this is an issue;
43. Councillor Stebbing stated that leaflets should be available at the desk with all options with regards to membership, including the payment suspension option;
44. Councillor Swan stated that with regards to customer feedback there should be a system in place where customers get a personal response . Phil Hughes stated that customers are encouraged to make use of the 3C's service and will receive a direct response. Councillor Jolley stated that customers can also approach the leisure centre managers directly. Councillor Swan stated that customers have reported that they waited a long time for a response from the 3C's service. Richard Cassidy stated that how the Council listen to their customers is important, we try to help where ever we can, we need to demonstrate that we are listening, and that the 3C's system is working;
45. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the leisure centres had cut back on lifeguards as it had been reported to her that a pool was closed due to lack of staff. Phil Hughes stated that there has been no cut back on lifeguards and suggested that the shortage that day may have been due to staff illness on that occasion;
46. Councillor Booth stated that page 24 refers to contacting customers who raised areas for development, he asked if this was raised from a complaint. Richard Cassidy stated that this would be a complaint or a comment from a customer with a suggestion that we do something differently;
47. Councillor Booth asked if the details could be shared with the committee with regards to the 31 customers who raised areas for development, so that they would be able to get a better understanding about what is not working and how these issues have been addressed. Richard Cassidy stated that officers would be happy to supply that information;
48. Councillor Swan asked how much the email and text communication system was costing, he stated that it can be annoying when the leisure centre contacts you to say that you have not been to the gym for a week, and that if this is necessary he would rather see it come through as a free email. Phil Hughes stated that he does not have the information on the payback for this system, but confirmed that leisure centres send out a combination of emails which are free, and text messages at a very low cost of just 2p per message. He stated that the system is focussed on retaining you as a member. Councillor Swan stated that he is concerned that the payback for this system cannot be calculated as the messages are sent to people who have already paid as part of their membership. Councillor Butcher agreed and stated that we need to look into this system to see if it is paying off. Councillor Jolley stated that it is part of the improvements to the customer service process, but agreed to investigate;
49. Councillor Booth stated that the amount of money that this system costs is small. Councillor Swan stated that it is a small amount of money, but over a number of years it adds up;
50. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the report refers to the fact that the Wisbech Gets Physical project is losing the sports coaches as the Government are injecting resources into primary school sport. Councillor Garratt confirmed that the role of the sports development team is going to change from a provider to an enabler. This team have done a lot of work with the children and staff in Wisbech Primary Schools, and those teachers have gained valuable knowledge. The sports development team have already created the coaching tool kit, and this will allow them to focus on a wider role of support to all Fenland primary schools;
51. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the primary schools will have fixed funding ring fenced for sport. Councillor Garratt stated that this is possibly what will happen, but that decision will be made at the County Council. Val Thomas stated that currently it is managed by the schools themselves, however taking it forward the plans are unclear;

52. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she wants to feel comfortable that Fenland schools are getting sufficient funding. Councillor Garratt stated that officers may be able to look into the funding that will come from County Council;
53. Councillor Sutton asked if the sports development team are attending the March Cricket Tournament. Councillor Garratt confirmed that he is sure that they are, but agreed to confirm this with them and let the Committee know;
54. Richard Cassidy stated that it is important that we ensure the new coaching tool kits are followed up on and monitored, to ensure that the new scheme is successful;
55. Councillor Booth asked what is the expected rate of return on the £300,000 investment in the George Campbell Leisure Centre. Councillor Jolley stated that officers are still looking at the plans and are building the scheme at the moment, however we are not looking for big returns from this investment, its about improving the services and building up the gym facilities for customers;
56. Councillor Booth asked what the target is for the expenditure on leisure centres this year.
57. Councillor Booth asked what the current situation is with the mobile gym. Richard Cassidy stated that Cabinet decided to end the scheme. The vehicle is currently being marketed, and there has been some interest, but no firm offers have been received yet;
58. Councillor Booth asked if consideration has been given to leasing the mobile gym out as a semi-permanent structure. Richard Cassidy stated that officers would be happy to discuss if there was an interested party.

Councillor Chambers thanked the Cabinet Members, FDC Officers and Val Thomas for attending the meeting today.

(Councillor Sutton declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he is a landlord and has received a deposit under the home finder scheme)

(Councillor Booth declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he is employed by a Building Society)

(Councillor Jolley declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he is the chairman of the Parkfield Sports Club)

## **OS39/12 FENLAND HEALTH AND WELL BEING PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

Councillor Chambers (Chairman) introduced Val Thomas from NHS Cambridgeshire. Val Thomas presented the Fenland Health and Well Being Partnership Update to the Panel.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked how are GP groups going to be encouraged to be committed to the Partnership. Val Thomas stated there has not been a lot of collaboration in the past, but the GP's that are now attending are demonstrating a commitment to Fenland and their patients. We are all building up knowledge and understanding and GP's are beginning to see that this is going to make a difference;
- Councillor Booth stated that with regards to communication, he receives a glossy booklet as a District Councillor and another as a Town Councillor, he asked if there were plans to reduce the cost of communications and suggested that resources need to be targeted better in the future. Val Thomas stated that this would be a good issue for the partnership to look at as there might be a better way of getting the information out;
- Councillor Jolley asked how many GP practices there are in the area. Val Thomas stated that there are 43 practices in the area, but the GP groups are represented by areas and not by individual surgeries;

- Richard Cassidy stated that a number of new partners were attending the meeting, including the Local Commissioning Groups and it was clear that it created opportunities for them to identify others services on offer that they are able to tap into.

Councillor Chambers thanked Val Thomas for attending the meeting today.

## **OS40/12    FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2013/14 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

**Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2013/14 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel .**

4.40pm

Chairman