

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

23 FEBRUARY 2015 - 2.30PM



PRESENT: Councillor Mrs French (Chairman), Councillors, S Clark, Hodgson, King, Owen, Skoulding and Tierney

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cornwell and Tanfield

OBSERVING: Councillors Clark and Butcher.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Broker, Mrs Bucknor, Swan and Tunley

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Bailey (Member Services and Governance), Richard Cassidy (Corporate Director), Dan Horn (Head of Housing and Community Support) and Tom Lewis (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Val Thomas (Consultant in Public Health and Chairman of Fenland Health and Wellbeing Partnership)

OSC33/14 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of 5 January 2015 and 19 January were agreed and signed.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

OSC34/14 FENLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Members considered the Fenland Health and Wellbeing Partnership Update Report presented by Val Thomas, Consultant in Public Health and Chairman of the Fenland Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

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

1. Councillor Hodgson stated that with regards to sexual health, there is no mention in the report of the new clinic in Wisbech. Val Thomas stated that the new sexual health clinic in Wisbech is an achievement and we are now looking at ways that people can best access that new service in the area;
2. Councillor Mrs French stated that this is the type of information that members want to see in the report, it is a good news story and should have been highlighted as such. Val Thomas agreed that it is a good news story and something that they are very proud of, the contract was awarded last October and the focus now is to attract people to make use of the service;
3. Councillor Hodgson stated that the official opening was just two weeks ago. Val Thomas confirmed that this was when the last of the building works was completed but the service had been open since November 2014;
4. Councillor Hodgson asked how these new facilities are being publicised. Val Thomas stated that when you bring a new service to an area it takes a while for it to become established, historically people are happier to go out of the area for this type of service, and so it will take time. There is partnership working with the Terrence Higgins Trust to signpost people to these facilities;

5. Councillor King asked what value the partnership brings to FDC and would we notice the difference if this partnership did not exist. Val Thomas stated that the aim of the partnership is to bring people together to achieve certain outcomes for the area. Services involved recently worked together with regards to the Alcohol Services offered in Wisbech, the services are available at different times and there are new ways of signposting people to this service as a result of the partnership. The concept is not flawless, so far there has not been a good representation from the primary care groups, but we have committed members that attend regularly and conscientiously;
6. Councillor King stated that from this Council's point of view we are also concerned about alcohol, we have concerns about the affects alcohol has on anti-social behaviour but as a Councillor it does not bother me if a person goes home from work and gets drunk every night, and my concern is that this is where we blur the lines. As a Councillor my priority is the impact that alcohol has on the area. I also have concerns with regards to using planning policy to restrict fast food outlets, obesity is a health issue, as a Councillor I am concerned about litter from additional fast food outlets as this is a responsibility of this Council. Councillor Cornwell stated that we have a health and wellbeing duty and these issues are all part of that, no one organisation is in control of every element, there are many cross overs and so everyone must join together to get results. These issues need to be looked at in a wider context, but the answers are not simple and will not be found overnight;
7. Councillor King stated that we live in a world of ever decreasing resources and we have to be careful that we do not get 'sucked in' to deliver things that we do not need to. Councillor Cornwell agreed stating that a strategy is being developed to deal with these issues;
8. Councillor King stated that he is concerned that the report shows no PI's (Performance Indicators) no SMART PI's (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound Performance Indicators) he added that he does not believe that you can deliver anything without them. Val Thomas stated that there are PI's in place looking at specific issues i.e. smoking, health checks and alcohol, she agreed that the format of this report can be changed to include these in the future;
9. Councillor King stated that the report shows no actions with regards to mental health issues. Val Thomas stated that this is something that is a topic of discussion at the next meeting;
10. Councillor Mrs French stated that she is concerned that the partnership is getting into planning and licensing and asked how much it is costing this Council to be part of this partnership. Mike Cornwell confirmed that being part of the partnership costs FDC very little, just his time and some officer time;
11. Councillor Owen asked for clarification with regards to the term 'MI' on page 19 of the report. Val Thomas stated that Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a recognised intervention, a high proportion of people in Fenland smoke and have an unhealthy diet, this is a non-threatening intervention that has been found to be cost effective;
12. Councillor Owen stated that much of the report refers to Fenland or to Wisbech and asked for clarification. Val Thomas confirmed that the focus is on the whole area, but many of the projects are held in Wisbech;
13. Councillor Owen stated that there is no indication of what happens to people with mental health issues, there have been no improvements on this service and we should be asking why not. He added that he would like to see mental health being taken more seriously. Councillor Cornwell stated that there are changes for the better being planned. In addition there has been a consultation on out of hours GP services, looking to combine this service with the 111 service. Mental health services should be available through this service too. Val Thomas stated that there is a lot noise locally and nationally in the media and things are moving forward. More funding has been allocated to children's mental health services in the area. The Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) are looking at how the services can be transformed and a lot of effort is going into looking at what we are doing wrong and how we can manage those services better moving forward;

14. Councillor Owen stated that it seems as though nobody wants to know or take responsibility for people with mental health issues. Councillor Cornwell stated that there are people out there listening and trying to improve these services, there are problems with health services especially mental health services. There is a lot of pressure through the partnership and a lot of people trying hard to make a difference; it is the biggest challenge we have to overcome. Councillor Tanfield stated that this is also an issue for young people, the partnership working with schools is very helpful at identifying the issues and the causes early;
15. Councillor Tierney stated that we would miss the partnership, but that he thinks the partnership is in danger of going astray. He referred to page 19 - Reducing Health Inequalities, the original County Strategy term was 'Reducing Health Inequalities with respect to people's choices' and we need to get back to this term. Councillor Cornwell stated that there are a number of people who smoke and that is down to personal choice, it is down to the individual to make a decision about these choices;
16. Councillor Tierney agreed stating that the report does not say that;
17. Councillor Tierney stated that there is no reference to dental in this report, but that there are many enquiries with regards to this. Val Thomas confirmed that dental services are commissioned by the NHS but that this did not come out as a priority at the partnership, she stated that she appreciates that this is a problem for a lot of people and agreed to feed back at the next partnership meeting;
18. Councillor Tierney stated that there is a lot of talk about legal highs in the media, but yet this has no mention in the report either. Dan Horn confirmed that this is being picked by the Community Safety Partnership and agreed to feedback concerns at their next meeting;
19. Councillor Skoulding thanked Val Thomas for the report, stating it is a good report. He stated that the local business training referred to on page 18 of the report should be aimed at the supermarkets as this is where people are buying most of their alcohol from. Dan Horn agreed to feed this back at the next meeting;
20. Councillor Skoulding asked if the street drinking culture was specific to any group of people. Dan Horn confirmed that this issue was across the board and was not specific to any group of people.

Councillor Mrs French thanked Val Thomas for attending the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting today and answering the questions of the panel.

OSC35/14 PROGRESS IN DELIVERING THE COMMUNITIES CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2014 - 2015

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the Progress in Delivering the Communities Corporate Objectives 2014-2015 Report.

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

1. Councillor Mrs French asked why Cabinet members are not seeing and approving the reports for the Overview and Scrutiny meetings prior to them being published or being informed of the meetings. Richard Cassidy agreed to investigate further following the meeting;
2. Councillor Owen stated that it is very difficult to ask questions of the report as there is a lot of information but no targets. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that we have responded to comments from this panel about wanting to see more data in the reports;
3. Councillor Mrs French referring to page 33 of the report stated that there is no data for social landlords with regards to investigating complaints and confirmed that she has reported some herself belonging to Housing Associations. Dan Horn stated that the data in the report are issues that we have a statutory responsibility to investigate and address, issues regarding housing association tenants are passed on and taken up by the housing associations themselves;

4. Councillor Tierney referring to page 43 of the report, the disabled facility grants questionnaire. He stated that 26 people responded to the questionnaire and asked out of how many customers this response represents. Dan Horn agreed to let members know the exact figure but stated that off the top of his head about 100 households a year have adaptations made to their properties and the surveys are sent out a year later, therefore this return rate represents around 25%;
5. Councillor Tierney stated that it is good to see that 85% were satisfied but that it would have been useful to have known why the other customers were not happy. Councillor Cornwell stated that we are trying to make life better for people and that is the purpose of these adaptations. There may be a problem about how the question is being asked, and we are doing some work to look at this as sometimes the feedback from the customer is not specifically on the service provided. He pointed out that there is a limit to the amount of information on this report as we are reporting on the corporate plan and not going into a lot of detail about the services;
6. Councillor Hodgson stated that in terms of identified Houses in Multiple Occupation Wisbech is referred to many times in the report and asked if this refers to a certain ward or area of Wisbech in particular. Richard Cassidy stated that much of the data can be broken down by ward and agreed to circulate a breakdown;
7. Councillor King stated that it is good to see that the time taken to process benefits is showing as green and offered his congratulations to all concerned;
8. Councillor King referring to the performance measure with regards to the number of households prevented from becoming homeless he asked for clarification that we intervened on 65 occasions. Richard Cassidy confirmed that this is the number of enquiries that we have dealt with. He added that we do not want people to get too far into a crisis situation before they present themselves, and are encouraging people to come forward as soon as they can. We are working with organisations such as CAB to make sure people are coming forward early enough for us to be able to help;
9. Councillor King stated that he suspects that there is a huge unmet need there and is pleased that there are some actions in place to address that. He asked what else we do to help people. Dan Horn stated that we are always checking that we are not missing anything, working alongside 7 other local authority areas to check what processes they are following and what is working for them, looking at new ideas and initiatives moving forward;
10. Councillor King stated that the declining number is not due to the fact that we are not doing enough to help, and asked if there is another reason why the numbers are down. Dan Horn stated that there has been a downward trend, but it is also about some of the types of homeless applications coming in and the timeframe left to work with, sadly some are too late and so we are not able to address them;
11. Councillor King asked if officers believe that we take the necessary action to try to get to people early enough to be able to offer help. Dan Horn confirmed that he does, stating that we do so much to ensure that that we are not missing the opportunity to be able to help people;
12. Councillor King referring to the areas of development listed on pages 51 of the report stating that there is no mention of Age Concern under the heading of Area Golden Age. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that AGE UK are a major partner in the Golden Age programme, they always attend our events and are very proactively working with us. We hope that with their help we can get another project started, develop a way forward looking at encouraging retired people to be neighbourly. We want to capture this into our health and wellbeing approach, initially in more rural areas, volunteering on a very local basis;
13. Councillor Tierney stated that with regards to the information referring to HMO's, 97 houses were investigated following complaints and all of the houses that were investigated required further action, he asked why this is. Dan Horn confirmed that a lot of the investigations are intelligence based;

14. Councillor Tierney stated that although this is a very good system for investigating it leads people to believe that all HMO's are bad, and asked, to put this into context, how many HMO's are there in total in the district. Dan Horn confirmed that there are around 1000 HMO's in the area;
15. Councillor Tierney stated that this means that over 90% of HMO's are not causing any problems at all and suggested that this should be reflected in the report. Richard Cassidy stated that HMO's are not required to register as such unless they meet certain criteria, and this makes it very difficult for us to identify them until an issue is reported to us to investigate. He agreed that this could be reflected in a more balanced way in future.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered and noted the progress made by the Council in delivering the Communities Corporate Objectives.

OSC36/14 THE LEASE OF NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS, WHITTLESEY - VERBAL UPDATE

The Lease of New Road Allotments, Whittlesey Update was postponed as the Council requires time to consider the formal response received from Whittlesey Town Council last week.

Councillor Mrs French reminded the Overview and Scrutiny Panel that this was the last meeting of the municipal year and thanked them for their attendance during the year.

Councillor King on behalf of the panel thanked Councillor Mrs French for her work as Chairman of the Panel.

3.55pm

Chairman