

HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20th November, 2013

Present:-	Councillor Colin Eastwood – in the Chair
Councillors	Becket. D, Mrs Hailstones, Mrs Johnson, Loades. D, Mrs Simpson and Taylor.J
Active & Cohesive Members in Attendance	G Cairns, D Cornes, G Heesom, G Plant, A Rout and J Winfield
Also in Attendance	G Snell (Leader of the Council) & J Williams (Portfolio Holder)
Officers	J Sellgren (Chief Executive) D Adams (Executive Director Operational Services) M Bailey (Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships) A Arnott (Leisure and Cultural Services Project Office) J Cleary (Democratic Services Manager) M Stevens (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Julie Cooper.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23 October 2013 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the spelling of Burton being corrected from “Blurton”.

The Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships stated that on the issue of infant mortality a number of issues needed to be clarified at the Commissioners Working Group. An officer would attend the February meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair referred to an action from the previous meeting for Members to receive the consultation responses to the Health and Well Being Strategy. These had been circulated by email and if Members had any specific points on the matter, they could be raised with Democratic Services and he would then consider its discussion at the next scrutiny meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS

The Chair welcomed Members of the Active and Cohesive Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the meeting who had been invited to contribute to the item on physical activity. He also welcomed the attendance of Cllr Ben Adams (Portfolio Holder for Learning and Skills), Nicola Day (Public Health Commissioning Lead: Physical Activity

and Nutrition), Mr Mark Thornewill (Director for Sport across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent) and Mr Stancliffe (Head Teacher – Reginald Mitchell Primary School).

The Chair stated that the item for Scrutiny had come about as a consequence of receiving a presentation on the Health and Well Being Strategy. The amount of physical activity in primary schools in the Borough was the lowest in the North Staffordshire area and well below the national average. He was pleased that the County Council had submitted a comprehensive document on the issue to the Committee which had been circulated on the previous evening. Another concern of the Committee was the fact that in the Borough's health profile there was an above average level of obesity in year 6 pupils.

The Chair invited Mr Stancliffe to give a statement on the subject of physical activity in primary schools. He stated that one area which his Primary School suffered from was the lack of available sports facilities at the school. He wanted to have 16 sessions a week, but due to the lack of available facilities he could only have 10. The figures on physical activity in school were three years old. At that time, there was much more funding available and so there were often extra events, training and internal competitions. Some of the funding available in 2009 had been stopped on the formulation of the coalition Government in 2010. He however wanted to stress the importance of the Sports Associations and the continued importance of voluntary work in the organisation of competitions and leagues. Much of this work was still active but would not be included in the official figures. It was this hidden sport which was as important as official school activity. It was critical not to lose the goodwill of volunteers as without them the situation would be much worse.

Mr Stancliffe identified Ofsted as being a major issue for schools. Their intensity was causing staff to go into their shells where the delivery of school sport was considered. Until Ofsted said they were going to scrutinise P.E in schools it would not be perceived as a priority. Schools were not as committed to extra-curricular activity through a fear of Ofsted. Staffordshire County Council had helped to develop the Healthy Schools programme. This was no longer funded and so schools had to pay a fee to Entrust if they wished to participate in the programme. For schools it was just one of many programmes which were offered. He described the overall situation in primary schools as the worst time in twenty years.

A Member asked why schools were so fearful of Ofsted in the matter of P.E. In response Mr Stancliffe stated that when schools were in special measures, Ofsted appeared to only wish to focus on Maths and English. As a consequence schools in special measures would often do no real sport for 2-3 years.

The Chairman invited the Director for Sport across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to give his views on the current situation of physical activity within schools. He stated that the County Sports Partnership had been formed in 2006 and were contracted by Sports England to provide services. Sports England had changed the age groups that they were focussing their efforts on; it was now from age 11 onwards. Sports England would be investing Lottery Funding in 2013-14 and 2014-15 to build capacity in County sports Partnerships to strengthen links between primary schools and sports. This was a very new piece of work and he would be meeting with heads forums to identify how best to support them. He stressed the importance of using coaches and making activity fun for young people.

The Chairman invited Cllr Ben Adams (Portfolio Holder for Learning and Skills) to talk on the subject of physical activity in schools. He stated parents had a significant influence on child activity levels and activity outside of the school environment was of

equal importance to that provided in schools. Nationally schools no longer had a statutory responsibility for offering two hours of high quality Physical Education and 1 hour of additional sport either within the curriculum or as an extra-curricular offer. With the National Curriculum changes due to come into effect in September 2014, the only remaining statutory responsibility for sport and PE was for children to be expected to be able to swim 25m unaided by year 6 and for outdoor education and dance to be provided as an integral part of the curriculum.

Cllr Adams stated that it was important to ensure the sustainability of projects and to have good connections with the sports clubs and schools. The scrutiny process had made him aware of the lack of recent data on physical activity in primary schools and they were actively looking at ways to solve this problem. He believed in recording physical activity data. They had to go beyond just looking at physical activity in schools. It was important to capture the activity outside of schools. It was a very important subject with future health implications. He stressed that schools were autonomous and the County Council's role was one which was supportive. He wanted more parents to ask their Heads and Chair of Governors about physical activity in schools to raise its profile. Effective commissioning was critical which incorporated a level of monitoring the success of any project.

The Public Health Commissioning Lead for Physical Activity and Nutrition stated that she agreed with Cllr Adams that it would be desirable to record the amount of physical activity completed outside of schools. The challenge was the process undertaken to capture this data. There were some potential mechanisms being explored which were alluded to in the information pack provided to Members of the Committee. The Health and Well Being Strategy recognised that traditional services had been commissioned to deal with problems once they had become apparent such as morbid obesity. It was important though to look at things more preventatively such as through the encouragement of a healthy lifestyle. It was clearly a large piece of work to decide the actions that would be taken to improve physical activity in all age groups. How physical activity was co-ordinated was crucial, it was not just about high level sport but about healthy daily living.

A Member in response to the statements stated that they were fully in agreement with diversification in physical activity. Dancing and skateboards were good examples of fun activity which would help to encourage some youngsters to become more active.

A Member stated the outcome of improving physical activity was important because of the effect on the next generation. He believed all local authorities should commit themselves to delivering state of the art facilities for young people. A Member added that it was important that the best use was made of facilities. Cllr Adams in response to comments from Members stated that whilst capital expenditure on sporting facilities was important this was not the only area where progress could be made. Some activity could be done without any capital expenditure, such as walking.

The Chair stated that he was concerned about the lack of data, which had been acknowledged. He was also disappointed that Entrust had not sent a representative to the meeting. He felt there should be as few non-swimmers at the end of year 6 as possible and Entrust were partly responsible for delivering the swimming service to schools. He believed it was a lost opportunity for Entrust to engage with the Council. In response Cllr Adams stated that Entrust believed they could not contribute any more than the information they had already provided to the Committee by written representation.

Cllr Adams stated that he would feedback into the Health and Well-Being Board at County level on the discussion. He thanked the Committee for asking him to attend and to contribute to the debate.

The Chairman thanked all of the external speakers for their attendance on behalf of the Committee.

5. UHNS AND THE FUTURE OF THE MID STAFFORDSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

The Chair stated that the Committee had previously asked for more information on the matter which the report provided. There were several recommendations within the report but the Committee were not obliged to choose any of them. They could also modify any of the recommendations to their satisfaction. The Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships stated the subject would be considered by Full Council next week.

A Member congratulated the Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships on the quality of the report that had been circulated. He reminded Members that Accountability Sessions were held quarterly. It was important not to duplicate the work of these sessions. It was evident that considerable finance investment would be needed if the UHNS was going to take on more services.

The Chair asked the Leader of the Council if there had been any direct discussions with any of the other local authorities on the matter. In response the Leader of the Council stated that the original conversations had been with Stoke-on-Trent City Council. He was aware that the County Council had some concerns regarding the proposals for a Joint Committee. He personally believed the joint working approach would be beneficial in avoiding duplication by the different authorities. He believed what was best for North Staffordshire as a whole may not necessarily be the best outcome for the Borough. It was therefore important that the Borough Council looked at the issues and in his opinion this was best done in collaboration with the other authorities. He had spoken to the Chief Executive of the UHNS who was supportive of a joint approach believing it would add weight to any proposals. The Leader stated that whilst the accountability sessions were quarterly he did not believe these would keep up with the pace of change. He believed if there was a unified approach any challenge would be stronger.

A Member stated that it was important to progress the matter quickly. It was important that the residents of the Borough did not suffer as a consequence of the proposals for change. In support of this statement a Member stated that the authorities would be stronger collectively and could unite their resources in the best interests of the people.

The Chief Executive stated that the Chief Executive of the UHNS was supportive of a co-ordinated joint approach. He could support the process better if he did not have to facilitate four separate Committees. The process would be more in depth as a consequence. There was a consensus amongst the Committee that a joined up approach was the best way forward.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Health Scrutiny Committee supports the principle of establishing a Joint Committee with other local authorities, to consider the implementation of the proposals resulting from the changes to the Mid-Staffordshire NHS foundation Trust. In addition a smaller Group of Members from the Health Scrutiny Committee, in liaison with the Leader and Chief Executive, will meet to discuss the mechanics and terms of reference for the proposed Joint Committee.

6. THE LICENSING PROCESS

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report on the licensing process. She had recently attended a meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke Regulatory Bodies Group. A summary of the discussions which took place were included within the report. Appendix A to the report provided a brief overview of the Licensing Act 2003 and the powers that the Act gave to the Local Authority regarding the control and sale of alcohol. The licensing authority was not able to object on health grounds to an application. The four statutory objectives which had to be addressed were the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be accepted and the Committee consider whether to look at the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke Regulatory Group in a few months time.

7. DIGEST FROM THE HEALTHY STAFFORDSHIRE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the digest from the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee, which had been provided with the agenda for information and to help inform the future work plan.

8. WORK PLAN

Cllr Loades requested that the item on the work plan, Community Based Services, listed as a potential future item for Scrutiny should be received by the Committee at its next meeting scheduled for the 12 February 2014.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business within the meaning of Section 100 B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

COUNCILLOR COLIN EASTWOOD
Chair