

HEALTH, WELLBEING & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 7th December, 2020
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Ian Wilkes (Chair)

Councillors: Julie Cooper Barry Panter Silvia Burgess
Allison Gardner Ruth Wright Mark Holland
Tony Kearon Sue Moffat

Officers: Andrew Bird Head of Recycling, Waste and
Fleet Services
Denise French Democratic Services Team
Leader
Simon McEneny Executive Director -
Commercial Development &
Economic Growth
Sarah Moore Partnerships Manager
Krestal Al- Daami Housing and Partnerships
Policy Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor Helena Maxfield,
Portfolio Holder for
Community Safety and
Wellbeing

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bert Proctor and Councillor Jill Waring, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest stated.

14. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

15. UPDATE FROM CABINET

The Committee considered the report from Cabinet updating on the following services:

- Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation – the report noted that the Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA Service) had seen increased demands for its service. The Rough Sleepers service was delivered by Brighter Futures and continued to operate as normal. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was outlined – this was instigated between 1st November – 31st March when the temperature was

forecast to drop to zero degrees or below on a single night or during severe weather conditions such as rain and snow. The Temporary Accommodation service position was fairly static with approximately 16 households in such accommodation at any one time; the service was delivered by a mixture of Bed and Breakfast and temporary accommodation units.

- Domestic Abuse services update – the Police had advised that the expected increased demand in reporting had not materialised although partners expected an increase to occur as victims had not had access to safe spaces during lockdown to report incidents. The weekly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference had seen fairly consistent numbers of cases but services had seen a rise in more complex cases with greater risk and an increase of abuse from adult children to parent.
- Work to ensure visitors felt safe with reopening Town Centres post lockdown – updated signage had been installed in Kidsgrove and Newcastle town centres and public toilets had remained open with increased cleaning. Members received information on the provision of Street Marshals and Business Marshals and how the service was resourced.

In relation to a query earlier in the meeting, the Partnerships Manager outlined the role of the organisation Open Door Stoke on Trent whose role including delivering weekly outreach services in Newcastle; further information would be circulated outside of the meeting to all Members.

Members raised issues and queries as below:

- How could the Committee help with the issues around homelessness and rough sleeping? It was suggested that promoting and signposting people to the services of the NHA Service was important especially as their remit included preventative work.
- Did the Council have provision such as The Macari Centre in Hanley? The Committee was informed that the report on the Temporary Accommodation Policy later on the agenda would cover this in more detail but the Council did not own stock of accommodation and had to rely on other providers; the immediate issue was to build a resilient service and then enter into discussions with providers around additional provision. It was also important to have pathways that could support the person and enable them to remain in accommodation appropriate to their needs which were often complex.
- Could a progress update be made on the marshalling service? Members were informed that there were 2 marshal roles – Street Marshals who gave advice in the town centre and dispersed groups of 6+ people, and Business Marshals who give advice to businesses and reminders to businesses including relating to the operation of the 'Click and Collect' service during Lockdown. There had been very few negative reactions to the Marshals. The Committee was advised that the Marshals were current staff who were unable to undertake their current role due to the pandemic, such as J2 staff. Other Marshalling staff were provided through managing rotas to enable staff to undertake their substantive role as well as undertake duties as a Marshal. It was not thought there was any detriment to services but any specific issues could be raised with officers outside the meeting. The Council would be able to reclaim some of the costs through the Business Marshal Support scheme. Members commended staff for maintaining services throughout the pandemic.

Resolved: that the update be noted.

16. **TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY**

The Committee considered a report on a Temporary Accommodation Policy. The aim of the policy was to set out the principle of how the Council would seek to meet its responsibilities to people who were homeless or threatened with homelessness in the Borough. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing introduced the report and outlined how the Council had a statutory obligation to provide suitable accommodation for those who were eligible.

Members raised the following issues and queries:

- How were sources of help and support promoted? The Partnerships Manager explained this was through various methods including - banners on display in Newcastle town centre; social media; reacting to reports of rough sleepers; through regular checks carried out by staff. Members were informed that staff often knew who the rough sleepers were and where they were located and regular checks were made. There was a free phone number accessible via payphones, the number tended to be well known to rough sleepers who also knew locations of drop in services and other support. Reference was made to the BID Ambassadors based in the Guildhall who also knew how to access specialist services and support.
- Members noted that where hotels were used for temporary accommodation the staff may not be aware of how to find sources of help for those in need. The Partnerships Manager advised that people who were homeless or rough sleeping may have complex needs and specialist support was needed; they may also not meet the threshold to access social care. Over recent months there had been positive work with the County Council and progress was being made with accessing the specialist support that was needed.
- Members suggested it was a priority to ensure temporary accommodation was located within the Borough and asked if there was a limit to how far away such accommodation could be provided? The Partnership Manager explained that the priority was to ensure the accommodation was appropriate; provision had been used in Stoke on Trent as that was where many supported providers were located. The council did not have its own stock of accommodation. There had been positive discussions with partners and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government around providing pathways of support to address ongoing issues rather than just providing a bed for a night. The Partnership Manager asked for views on whether the approach in the draft policy was the right one. Members emphasised the need to ensure a balance was struck between providing the right temporary accommodation and enabling people to access their own existing support networks. The Partnership Manager responded that out of area could simply be a few miles outside the Borough where people may already be accessing other support services. There may be occasions where out of area support was helpful such as Rehab services or in cases of Domestic Abuse.
- Were there many cases of adults with learning difficulties in need of temporary accommodation and if so, it was particularly important that they could remain near their support group. The Partnership Manager explained that social care would be involved in these cases and efforts would be made to accommodate people close to home but this would not always be possible dependent on where specialist support was located.
- Reference was made to the reasons behind rough sleeping and whether there were options around a fast track approach to stop the situation accelerating. The situation may not be due to a need for specialist support but rather due to a particular combination of circumstances. The Partnership

Manager outlined work that had been undertaken over recent months and how greater hardship had been seen due to the pandemic. She felt the main reasons for homelessness and rough sleeping remained the same and there was a role around preventative work; training and better promotion around availability of services and support. She felt there was a positive opportunity with the Housing Advice Service being brought in-house from April 2021.

Resolved: That

- (a) The Temporary Accommodation Policy be received and the Committee requests that the Policy reflect that the Council will endeavour to find accommodation within the Borough in recognition of the importance of existing support networks but it is accepted that this is not always possible or appropriate in certain situations;
- (b) Signposting information be sent to Bed and Breakfast providers who offer temporary accommodation to enable this to be passed on or used as appropriate; and
- (c) The Committee receive a further update on the role and work of the Newcastle Housing Advice Service as it progresses back in-house.

17. MINUTES OF THE HEALTHY STAFFORDSHIRE SELECT COMMITTEE - 26 OCTOBER 2020

The Committee considered the digest from Staffordshire County Council outlining the work of the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee at the recent meeting on 26th October 2020.

Resolved: that the update be received.

18. MEETING WITH THE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP

The Committee considered the notes of the regular meeting held with Tracey Shewan of the Clinical Commissioning Group on 20th November.

Members were advised that information regarding MRSA and C-diff numbers had been received and circulated to all the Committee. There were a number of other queries arising from the meeting and a response would be sought and the information circulated to all Members.

Resolved: that the update be received.

19. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme. Councillor Moffat had confirmed earlier in the meeting that the Scrutiny Review of Parks and Open Spaces would commence with an informal meeting on 15th December to discuss the scope of the Review.

Members discussed Domestic Abuse. It was noted that the earlier report had referred to potential increases in cases and Members asked whether there was under-reporting and if so, the extent of this. The Committee agreed that they would be keen to understand the challenges ahead for local services and if there were to be an increase in demand, as has been previously expected during the pandemic, if providers had the resources to respond. Members also expressly mentioned their concerns over the national increase in Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs),

increases of reported Child to Parent violence and the link between mental health and domestic abuse.

The Partnership Manager explained that the expected increase of cases as a result of the lockdown hadn't materialised although partners still expected an increase to occur as victims had not had access to safe spaces during lockdown to report incidents. The Partnerships Manager added that neglect was now included within the criteria and definition for DHRs which may partly reflect the increased numbers locally. The Partnerships Manager also explained that support services for Domestic Abuse were funded and commissioned by the County Council and Office of the Police and Fire Commissioner. Any report to the Committee on Domestic Abuse would therefore need input from partners, in order to give a true reflection of capacity and available resources.

Members suggested a report on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) including the impact of disruption to services for children and young people caused by the pandemic and what contingency measures were in place. The report to also cover ASB by adults.

Members referred to the item on the Work Programme regarding the impact of a No Deal Brexit which had not been included on the agenda; Members noted this was outside the remit of the Committee but asked that it be ensured that all future items on the Work Programme were relevant to the Committee's focus.

Councillor Moffat informed the Committee that the New Vic had been awarded £200,000 for project work about impacting faith and race hate. Members agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting on this project and the opportunities for the Borough.

Resolved: that the next meeting include reports on Domestic Abuse, Anti-Social Behaviour and information on the project about faith and race hate as outlined at the meeting.

20. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no Members of the Public present.

21. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.

22. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 1 MARCH 2021**

Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.45 pm