

Minutes

of the Meeting of the

Adult Services & Housing Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 17th March 2017

held at the Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

Meeting Commenced: 10.30 a.m. Meeting Concluded: 12.55 p.m.

Councillors:

P Reyna Knight (Chairman)

P Mary Blatchford (Vice-Chairman)

P Robert Cleland

P Ruth Jacobs

David Shopland

P Liz Wells

P Deborah Yamanaka

A Peter Crew

P David Jolley

P Richard Tucker

A Roz Willis

P Ann Harley (substitute for Cllr Willis)

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Officers in attendance: Sheila Smith, Director People and Communities; David Jones, Interim Assistant Director; Mark Hughes, Head of Housing and Directorate Governance; Gerald Hunt, Head of Commissioning; Caroline Massey, Housing Development Manager; Kevin Mulvenna, Housing Policy Officer (People and Communities); Leo Taylor (Corporate Services)

ASH **Declarations of Interest by Members (Agenda Item 3)**

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None.

ASH **Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 November 2016 (Agenda Item 4.1)**

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Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

ASH **Draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy (Agenda Item 6)**

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The Housing Policy Officer presented the report outlining the draft strategy.

He responded to Members comments and queries as follows:-

(1) *numbers of rough sleepers* – the numbers of genuine rough sleepers was low (second lowest in the West of England and Somerset). However, the

higher numbers of beggars on the streets, most of whom were not homeless, could give a false impression. Members noted that in dealing with rough sleeping, the Council's emphasis was on outreach and, for those willing to engage, this generally resulted in positive outcomes. The challenge was around reaching those reluctant to engage.

It was agreed that any available information about the ethnic origins of rough sleepers would be provided to Members.

(2) *the "hidden homeless and beggars"*– he said that beggars without housing issues could "muddy the waters" of getting to the bottom of rough sleeping, acknowledging however that many had genuine problems (eg drug/alcohol misuse, mental health problems) and there may be instances of hidden homelessness (eg sofa surfing).

(3) *the need to more effectively interweave engagement and partnership throughout the strategy* – although there was increased emphasis on multi-agency partnership working in the document, it was acknowledged that this issue had been picked up in consultation feedback. It was proposed, for instance, that more connections were needed to Town Centre regeneration. The strategy would be revisited to ensure that these issues were addressed.

(4) *increasing homelessness trend and the significant decline in finding private rented sector accommodation for those households affected* – the increase was relatively small, but the upward pressure was acknowledged. Unless private rented sector rents reduced or supply increased, the Council would probably struggle to fund this accommodation. It was very likely that the issue would worsen as the Hinkley Point development attracted more workers to the area and consideration was being given to a number of initiatives including an ethical letting agency (using Hinkley Section 106 funding) to help address the problem.

He also acknowledged that direct payments of benefit under Universal Credit to recipients presented significant challenges for the Council and its partners.

(5) *care-leaver homelessness risk* – A multi-disciplinary officer had been appointed to ensure provision for care leavers (such as trainer flats) and who worked closely with a wide range of housing and support providers.

(6) *Home Choice* – it was acknowledged that allocations had fallen and that this was due to lower numbers of affordable homes coming forward and other economic pressures preventing existing tenants from moving out.

Concluded: that Members' comments on the draft strategy be forwarded to officers in the form of the minutes.

ASH 23 **Housing White Paper (Agenda item 7)**

The Head of Housing and Directorate Governance gave a presentation outlining the implications for the Council of the Government's Housing White Paper "Fixing our broken housing market".

Members sought and received further clarification on the following issues:

- opportunities such as “build to rent” to develop the private sector market and the role of the Council in encouraging investment; and
- the possible impact of the national building skills shortage and local impacts associated with the Hinkley Point development

Concluded: that the presentation be received.

ASH 24 Adult Social Services and Housing Budget – impacts and mitigations (Agenda Item 8)

The Director People and Communities and Head of Commissioning updated Members on Adult Social Care and Housing budget developments, noting that although there had been a series of scrutiny meetings to discuss the budget in January this year, there had been a number of challenges since then. Of primary concern was the £3.1m overspend in 2016/17 and continuing significant budget pressure going forward.

The Government’s 3% levy together with a £900k grant would help address these challenges but officers acknowledged that the “drip-fed” nature of the release of funding and potential strings tying expenditure to new projects, such as around the elderly and discharge from hospital, were likely to represent considerable constraints.

Following discussion of the Panel’s approach to on-going scrutiny of how the budget was being managed going forward it was:-

Concluded:

- (1) that the budget update be received; and
- (2) that a budget steering group be established, chaired by Councillor David Jolley, for the purpose of monitoring the budget and its management.

ASH 25 Integrated Team Development (Agenda Item 9)

The Interim Assistant Director, Adults’ Support and Safeguarding gave a verbal update on the Integrated Care Teams. He said that challenges had arisen due to a number of developments including the changes in the way that GP services were being organised in the district; structural changes to, and focus, of North Somerset Community Partnership (NSCP) following the mobilisation of its new contract with NHS commissioners; and the varying operational priorities of the two organisations.

As a result of these issues, it has been agreed by the Council and NSCP that some of the integrated management and governance arrangements would be temporarily put on hold to allow each organisation to better focus on its own immediate responsibilities and priorities with a view to restarting the process at a future point.

Members sought and received clarification on the following:

- Staffing arrangements within the four locality teams;

- Implications of the recently announced additional Government funding for social care.

Concluded: that the update be received.

**ASH
26** **Community Meals (Agenda Item 10)**

The Interim Assistant Director, Adults' Support and Safeguarding gave a verbal update on the community meals service covering: changing trends in the use of the service; current issues and challenges; and a review of how the service would need to change going forward into the future.

Officers responded to Members' comments and queries as follows:

- (1) *Possible synchronisation with Community Health teams to provide additional assistance around meals* – all options were being considered as part the review.
- (2) *Use of volunteer drivers to help cover week-ends* – consideration was being given to the possibility of more flexible driver rotas. Volunteers had been trialled in the past but had proved unviable due to additional costs.

Concluded: that the presentation be received.

In thanking the Interim Assistant Director for his presentation, the Chairman noted that this would be his last meeting before leaving the authority. Members thanked him for his significant contribution to the work of the Panel and wished him well in the future.

**ASH
27** **Performance Monitoring Information (Agenda Item 11)**

Members considered the Performance Monitoring Information report setting out the directorate position against performance targets relevant to the Panel's remit as at 31st December 2016 (Q3).

Members sought and received clarification on the following issues:

- numbers of houses in Multiple Occupation;
- the reduction in Home Choice allocations; and
- numbers of complaints about poor housing accommodation

Concluded: that the Panel receive the report.

**ASH
28** **Panel Steering Groups - Updates (Agenda Item 12)**

Chairmen of the Panel's four steering groups gave verbal updates on the work of their respective SGs.

Concluded: that the updates be received.

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29** **The Panel's Work Plan (Agenda Item 13)**

Members considered the Work Plan which had been updated to reflect the outcomes of discussion from the previous Panel meeting.

Concluded: that the work plan be updated to include actions and proposals arising from the current meeting.

Chairman
