

## **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 14 March 2006**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **14 March 2006** when there were present:

Chairman: Cllr Mrs T J Capon  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr T Livings

Cllr Mrs R Brown  
Cllr C J Lumley

Cllr D G Stansby  
Cllr Mrs M S Vince

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P R Robinson.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

G Woolhouse - Head of Housing, Health and Community Care  
J Bourne - Leisure and Contracts Manager  
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

### **ALSO PRESENT**

County Councillor W J C Dick  
County Councillor R A Pearson  
S Brown, Operations Manager, Holmes Place

### **99 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **100 HOLMES PLACE PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) providing Members with an update on progress and development of the leisure management contract.

The Chairman welcomed Mr S Brown, Holmes Place's new Operations Manager to the meeting.

Mr Brown advised that:-

- There had been a number of senior staff changes over the last six months. This offered the opportunity of a fresh approach to the leisure contract.
- Vandalism continued at the leisure sites, with the exception of Great Wakering Sports Centre. Holmes Place were working closely with the Police to try to reduce such incidents, particularly with respect to Clements Hall, the Freight House and the Mill.

- The continued arts developments at the Mill were very pleasing to note; it was further hoped that one of the film societies might use the cinema for promoting films.
- Work was drawing nearer to completion at the Rayleigh Leisure Centre, which was due to open ahead of schedule to the public on 13 May. Equipment had now been ordered and staff recruitment was underway.
- It was anticipated that customers would be given the option of joining either Clements Hall Leisure Centre, Rayleigh Leisure Centre or dual membership of both sites.
- Talks were taking place with local bowls clubs with a view to setting up a bowls club at Rayleigh Leisure Centre. This would not, however, be exclusive. Bowling would be available for anyone to book.

Members expressed concern at the continued instances of vandalism at the Mill, the Freight House and Clements Hall Leisure Centre. Particular concern was raised with respect to the vandalism of the Mill toilet cubicles. Although it was noted that the vandalism related to the toilets situated near the main doors, Members nevertheless considered that staff should have been able to hear the vandalism occurring.

It was also noted that the mirrors in the Mill toilets had been scratched for some time and needed to be replaced.

In response to a Member concern relating to the problems associated with poor ventilation at the Freight House, and in the Carriage Room in particular, officers advised that Holmes Place had investigated the possibility of installing air conditioning at the Freight House, but that the associated costs were prohibitive. It was clear that the installation of air conditioning would necessitate significant investment and it was likely that this would have to be achieved in stages. Holmes Place were, in the meantime, investigating alternative ways to address the issue.

It was noted that Members felt there would be merit in Holmes Place exploring the possibility of matinee performances of film, particularly aimed at the elderly who found it difficult to access public transport late in the evening.

Responding to a Member concern with respect to a lack of publicity for the auction house at the Freight House, Mr Brown advised that the publicity for this was the responsibility of the local antiques dealer who had booked the Freight House for this event. Holmes Place would, however, indicate to him that the profile for the event was low in the Rochford area.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to delegate customers, Mr Brown confirmed that, although no firm bookings had yet been made, Holmes Place were in the process of following up on enquiries that had been made with a view to securing some delegate bookings.

### Resolved

That the contents of the Holmes Place progress report be noted. (CD(F&ES))

#### **101 HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT: CANCER DRUG USAGE IN SOUTH ESSEX**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care bringing to Members' attention the findings of an investigation carried out jointly by Essex County Council, Thurrock Borough Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

The Chairman welcomed County Councillors W J C Dick and R A Pearson to the meeting. Cllr Dick advised that a joint study conducted by the County Council, Thurrock Borough Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, following publication of a Department of Health report in June 2004 which found widespread variation in prescription rates of approved cancer drugs, had concluded that South Essex 5-year survival rates were as good or better than the national average for the majority of cancers.

It was evident that the data within the Department of Health report was imperfect and it was noted that, given the vast numbers of drugs available, it was difficult to compare like for like. It was further noted that prescribing practices around the country varied according to consultant preferences; some consultants would prefer to use a particular drug, while other consultants would opt for a different one. In addition, it was also observed that the South Essex Cancer Network (SECN) often used drugs that had not been appraised by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE).

The Department of Health report, in addition, did not make allowances for instances where cancer patients actually chose not to receive drugs.

There were undoubtedly instances of drugs being prescribed for an individual and any drugs not used being thrown away. It was, however, the practice within the SECN to group together more than one patient so that drugs could be used without such waste. There was a danger that the Department of Health report could penalise cancer networks that handled drugs efficiently, rather than encourage less waste.

It was clear from the Southend Patient and Public Involvement Forum that cancer patients were very satisfied with the quality of treatment received at Southend Hospital.

The investigation did, however, conclude that the absence of an oncology pharmacist within the SECN may have been a contributing factor to the variations in cancer drug usage highlighted by the Department of Health report, as the pharmacist would have taken a lead role in undertaking audits of cancer drug usage and measuring compliance with NICE guidelines.

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In response to a Member concern relating to the possibility of cancer patients within the Rochford District having to travel to Ipswich to receive treatment, the County Councillors advised that this was not the case. The SECN was exploring the possibilities of setting up, in addition to existing facilities, specialist cancer treatment centres where cancer specialists would be grouped so that specialist operations on rare forms of cancer could be performed more frequently than was currently the case in hospitals. It was anticipated that this could lead to a reduction in the death rate from rare kinds of cancer from 15% to 2%.

Responding to a supplementary Member enquiry relating to the difficulties of relatives visiting cancer patients in hospital, the County Councillors confirmed that any specialist cancer centres would have to accommodate relatives as well as patients. It was planned that Broomfield, for example, would have 600 car parking spaces for visitors alone.

### **Resolved**

That the conclusions of the health overview and scrutiny study of cancer drug usage in Essex be noted. (HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 8.17 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....