

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 19 April 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **19 April 2005** when there were present:

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs M A Starke (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs R Brown
Cllr Mrs T J Capon
Cllr P K Savill

Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr C J Lumley

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
G Woolhouse	- Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
A Law	- Solicitor
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

Dr P Geoghegan	- Chief Executive, SE Partnership NHS Trust
J Tout	- Chair, SE Partnership NHS Trust
M Waddington	- Head of Patient/Public Involvement, SE Partnership NHS Trust

171 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment to point (2) of Minute 109 to read:-

That a Member level meeting be arranged between Rochford District Council and Rayleigh Town Council should any further problems arise relating to the skateboarding facility in King George's Playing Field, Rayleigh.

172 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions and in response to Member questions the following was noted:-

Overall Work Programme – Gypsy Traveller Sub-Committee (Minute 320/04)

The Sub-Committee had held its first meeting to consider a consultation document on 'Gypsy Sites and Planning' and the Council's response had been forwarded to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Sub-Committee would need to agree a programme of work to consider other issues but Members agreed that a decision on the way forward should be deferred until the policies of the next Government become clear at which time a report be brought back to this Committee.

Housing Care and Support Strategy for Older People in Rochford (Minute 534/04)

The Housing Best Value Sub-Committee has been tasked with considering what arrangements should be put in place on the client side.

However, following the decision taken at Extraordinary Council held on 13 April 2005 regarding the future of the housing stock work needs to be undertaken in preparation for the transfer including choosing a partner and balloting tenants. The Sub-Committee will meet once the partnership role has been established.

Outstanding issues would be carried forward.

173 SOUTH ESSEX PARTNERSHIP NHS TRUST – FOUNDATION STATUS

The Committee welcomed representatives from the South Essex Partnership NHS Trust to the meeting and received a presentation on proposals to become a Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (FT).

Members noted the salient points as follows:-

- Mental health services currently provided include:-
 - Adult mental health and social care
 - Child and adolescent mental health
 - Older people's mental health (and social care in Southend)
 - Essex wide forensic services
 - Low secure services
 - Learning disability services
 - Substance misuse services
- Around 700 staff work from approximately 60 sites across South Essex.
- The 4 main hospitals are Runwell, Basildon & Thurrock Mental Health Unit, Rochford and Thurrock.
- The Health and Social Care Act completed its passage through Parliament clearing the way for a new type of trust, the NHS FT.
- 'Acute' hospitals were in the first wave of FT's, which became operational in April 2004.
- Initial applications for the second wave, which included mental health, were submitted to the Department of Health (DoH) in November 2004.
- NHS FT's have been set up by an Act of Parliament and all NHS Trusts have to be in a position to be considered for FT status by 2008.
- An FT builds on the existing NHS but will provide greater freedom to look at local needs.

- Working with partners is seen as an essential part of the success of a FT.
- The FT would be assessed for a period of 12 months once it has been set up and then performance managed on a 3-monthly basis.
- Operating with FT status will ensure that surplus funds at the end of each financial year can be carried forward to be used towards specific projects.
- The alternative option would be to do nothing until 2008, when legislation directs that FT status has to be put in place.
- 3 layers of management exist in a FT; the membership, a Board of Governors and a Board of Directors.
- The local community have already shown great interest and within the last 3 months a total of 6,000 members have signed up. It is anticipated that remaining vacancies will be filled by the end of the year.
- FT's are encouraged to engage a minimum of 5,000 up to 15,000 members, from the age of 12 upwards, made up of members of the public, patients, carers, police, probationers and staff.
- The membership should reflect the demographics of the area it represents in terms of age. Increasing numbers of vulnerable young people are being referred. They are frequently affected, for example, by parents with mental health problems such as schizophrenia or attempted suicide.
- A Board of Governors sets the strategic direction and is elected from the membership, with a greater proportion representing the public.
- 6 constituencies across South Essex are represented; Rochford would have 3 members on the Board.
- The Board of Directors would be responsible for the day-to-day management and delivery of the service and be accountable to independent regulators.
- The FT is responsible to Parliament through the Office of the Independent Regulator, to the Primary Care Trust through legally binding contracts and to the community through the Board of Governors.
- It is anticipated that recommendations will be made to the Secretary of State in December 2005 and passed to the regulator. During the early part of 2006 assessment would take place, with full establishment anticipated later that year.

The following Member concerns/responses to Member questions were noted:-

- The formation of a FT would not attract extra funding, but there would be more opportunities to generate income by, for example, offering spare capacity to colleagues in other parts of the County or by working with the private/independent/voluntary sectors on shared projects.
- Large-scale membership must lead to higher administrative costs.
- The Mental Health Act makes provisions for persons to be detained against their will in order to provide treatment in hospital, provided that it can be demonstrated that they are at risk. Once a patient is functioning at a level that is considered to be safe and has returned to the community, restrictions cannot be enforced that would infringe on a person's liberty.

174 REPORT OF THE HOUSING BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Housing Best Value Sub-Committee with recommendations from its meeting held on 8 April 2005 relating to amendments to the lettings policy.

The officers report to that meeting had been appended together with an update document identifying amendments proposed following formulation of the original report.

Cllr Mrs Vince had been unable to attend that meeting and congratulated the Sub-Committee on the amount of work and careful consideration that had been undertaken, particularly in respect of the following:-

- A separate register to be kept specifically for key workers.
- The recently published Housing Needs survey formed part of the support for the policy.
- The Council's policies were beginning to complement each other.
- Housing Management officers would make regular inspections to accommodation; this would be particularly beneficial in relation to the upkeep of gardens, failure of which has a detrimental effect on immediate neighbours and the surrounding community.

Recommended to the Community Services Committee

- (1) That, for the necessary purpose of identifying key workers for the identified Housing Corporation funded projects, the definition of key worker be as follows:-

“a key worker is an individual who works in either the public sector or whose employment is of particular importance to the community”

and that a banded approach be adopted to the letting of these units as set out in the report.

- (2) That, apart from its specific application to the identified projects, the term 'key worker' be removed from the lettings policy.
- (3) That the financial criteria that will be used to assess a person's affordability to rent privately or purchase a property, as set out in the report and associated update document, be inserted into the lettings policy.
- (4) That the five points for not having a separate garden with children be removed from the lettings policy.
- (5) That the Council reserve the right to deviate from the points system in order to allocate an extensively adapted property for the disabled to someone in need of that adaptation.

- (6) That the Reasonable Preference category of the letting policy be expanded to read – “people who need to move to a particular locality in the District where failure to move would cause hardship to themselves or others. This may be due to a need to access medical treatment, to give or receive care, or to take up employment, education or training opportunity”.
- (7) That there be no alteration to the policy in respect of accommodation provisions where that accommodation has small bedrooms or unusual layout.
- (8) That the policy on shared facilities be altered for clarification to read – “you share with a relative, but are a separate family/household or an extended family”. (HRHM)

175 REPORT OF THE PLAYSPACE SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Playspace Sub-Committee requesting endorsement of the decisions taken at its meeting held on 31 March 2005.

The Sub-Committee had met to give further consideration to the issues emerging at Sutton Court Playspace and to recommend a subsequent plan of action for addressing them, with a view to developing a working template which can be applied District-wide, including consideration in detail of the resource implications.

Members were concerned to hear that incidents of anti-social behaviour involving young people were reported to have taken place at this playspace since the Sub-Committee met on 31 March 2005. This could not be confirmed as the Chairman of the Playspace Sub-Committee had been unable to contact the Police and the Council had not received any such reports. Concern was also expressed that people should ensure they are given an incident number once they have made a report to the Police, in order that it can be monitored.

Members endorsed the fact that decisions taken in respect of this particular playspace should be used as a template which can be applied across the District.

Officers confirmed that the playspace would be locked again if a serious incident occurred during the trial period of leaving it unlocked. Whilst the responsibility at the current time rests with the District Council, volunteer help would be required if this were to continue. The District Council would consult the Parish Council in respect of opening and closing times.

Members felt that the Police should be requested to visit the playspace on a nightly basis for at least one week to provide an official presence with a view

to deterring anti-social behaviour. On a Motion moved by Cllr P K Savill and seconded by Cllr Mrs R Brown it was agreed that a letter of request be sent to the Community Policing Team.

Members noted that the Parish Council had agreed that it would endeavour to attract funding so that it could contribute to 50% of the cost of any improvements to the playspace, which would be agreed in conjunction with local residents and the District Council. On a Motion moved by Cllr D G Stansby and seconded by Cllr P F A Webster it was felt that the Sub-Committee's resolution should be strengthened to highlight this.

Resolved

- (1) That the Sutton Court Playspace, Rochford, remain unlocked for a trial period of two months, provided that ball games continue to cease at a reasonable time each evening.
- (2) That officers write to the Community Policing Team requesting that a visit be made by the Police to this playspace each evening for at least a week to monitor the situation relating to anti-social behaviour.
- (3) That the Youth Service work in conjunction with local users of the Sutton Court Playspace, Rochford, to provide some design work for the District Council to cost out in consultation with the Parish Council, who would provide 50% of the cost.
- (4) That the work on the design/costing be completed within two months, following which a further meeting of the Sub-Committee be arranged to agree some recommendations.
- (5) That a copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the Playspace Sub-Committee held on 31 March 2005, together with a covering letter from an officer, be sent to the complainant.
- (6) That a press release be issued once a design had been agreed upon.
(CD(F&ES))

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman

Date