

18 MARCH 2014

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Tuesday, 18 March 2014.

p Cllr Mrs P Jackman (Chairman)
p Cllr S P Davies (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

J E Binns
p D A Britton
p Mrs P J Lovelace
ap B D Lucas

Councillors:

p A D O'Sullivan
p N S Penman
p D J Russell
p M S Wade

In Attendance:

Councillor:

Mrs D M Brooks (Portfolio Holder, Health & Leisure)
Mrs J Cleary (Portfolio Holder, Housing & Communities)
Mrs C Ward

Officers Attending:

M Devine, G Miles, Ms A Righton and Ms M Stephens, and for part of the meeting, Ms S Bennett, B Byrne and Miss H Edwards.

39. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

41. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

42. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL.

Cllr Beck, the Council's Representative on the Police & Crime Panel was unable to attend the meeting.

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED:

That this item be deferred to the June Panel meeting.

43. REOFFENDING RATES IN THE NEW FOREST (REPORT A).

The Panel considered re-offending statistics relating to the District and the strategies in place to deal with the levels of re-offending.

In discussing the many strategies in place in the New Forest that directly or indirectly aimed at reducing re-offending rates, it was recognised that the Council played a pivotal role in multi-agency approaches. The District Council, along with other key partners such as the County Council, offered a range of essential services for offenders including: housing, benefits, education, training, employment, social and health services among others.

The Council also supported the Hampshire Troubled Families Initiative. Troubled families were those that had problems and caused problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector. The New Forest had a dedicated Troubled Families Coordinator who worked closely with key partners to ensure that troubled families in the New Forest had the chance of a better life. The work with troubled families in the New Forest had had a positive impact on the reduction of re-offending rates in the District. Members recognised that engaging with families could sometimes be challenging but understood that officers had various methods of approaches to encourage families to accept assistance.

The Panel briefly discussed the level of arson crime in the District and noted that arson was particularly concentrated along the Waterside. The Panel agreed that further work should be undertaken, by way of a report to a future Panel meeting, to understand the level of arson crime in the New Forest and the strategies in place to combat this.

The Panel recognised that extensive work had been undertaken by the Community Safety Team, along with other council colleagues and key partners, to reduce anti-social behavior and drivers for re-offending. Members congratulated Community Safety Officers on their hard work and diligence.

The Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder indicated that the impact of the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill on the work of the Community Safety Team and its partners was yet unknown. She suggested that the Panel consider establishing a Task & Finish Group to examine the processes and systems in place that manage the perpetrators and victims of crime in the New Forest. This should also include the existing work of community safety team and housing. The Panel were happy to support this suggestion and agreed that officers meet to fully scope out the terms of reference, and map the technical legislative changes and bring the matter back to members at a later date.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Panel supports the Council continuing to monitor and influence the contractual elements of the Community Rehabilitation Company in order to deliver an accessible and appropriate service for New Forest offenders;
- (b) That the Panel monitors the performance of the new system of National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company once the services are operational; and
- (c) That a Task & Finish Group be established to examine the perpetrators and victims of crime in the New Forest with officers drafting terms of reference for the Group, before invitations for membership were sought.

Action: Annie Righton

44. CONSULTATION ON THE CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2014-2017 (REPORT B).

The Panel considered the child poverty strategy 2014-2017 consultation document and discussed a future work programme item on the Council's method to tackle child poverty in the District.

Panel members expressed the view that whilst appreciating that child poverty was a national issue, there were pockets of severe deprivation in the New Forest. Members felt that any interventions or programmes to combat child poverty should be localised and focused to the needs of the New Forest. Members were unclear what initiatives were being run in the New Forest and how effective these were.

The Panel therefore agreed that a Task & Finish Group should be established to review the current programmes being delivered in the New Forest, which directly or indirectly tackled drivers of child poverty, with officers drafting terms of reference for the group before invitations for membership were sought.

In relation to the response to the consultation document, the Panel agreed that members email their views to the Health and Leisure Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a Task & Finish Group be established to review the current programmes being delivered in the New Forest which directly or indirectly aim to tackle child poverty, with officers drafting terms of reference for the group, before invitations for membership were sought; and
- (b) That Panel members email their views regarding the consultation response to the Health and Leisure Portfolio Holder.

Action: Martin Devine

45. WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING (REPORT C).

In assisting the Panel set its work programme for 2014/15 the Chairman invited the Portfolio Holders to update the Panel on their recent activities and future work plans.

The Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder gave members a brief update on her activities she reported the following: -

- The housing purchase programme was progressing well. 36 houses had been purchased so far.
- The Joint Action Group bid for commissioning for crime trends had been refused.
- The Safer New Forest Partnership had been granted £25K for a full time Mental Health Worker.
- The Partnership's bid for an Environment Services Worker has been deferred until the government announced the parameters for the Restorative Justice funding that would be made available to the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC).
- The bid for an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor for New Forest and Eastleigh had been approved.
- The Council had supported a bid made by Rape Crisis for an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor for Romsey, New Forest and Eastleigh but the bid had been deferred. The Council would seek clarification from the PCC on whether the decision on the bid would be made by 31 March, the end of the current funding, after which New Forest residents would have no service.
- The launch of Appletree Care lines had been successful.

The Health & Leisure Portfolio Holder suggested that the Panel consider examining activity/fitness rates among young people in the District with input from Hampshire Public Health.

Heads of Service and members made suggestions for items to be included in the future work programme including: -

- Community Safety Partnership Draft Strategic Assessment
- Killed and Seriously Injured Task & Finish Group Final Report
- Domestic Homicide Final Report
- Welfare Reform Impacts
- Affordable Housing & Funding Programme Update
- Arson Incidents in the New Forest and the work of the Arson Forum
- Impact of the Integration of the Offender Management Team and Probation Trust
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in the New Forest
- Update on Appletree Care Lines initial performance data.

The Panel agreed that the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman meet outside of the meeting and make amendments to the Work Programme, to include the suggestions given at the meeting, with assistance from Heads of Service, for consideration and approval at the June Panel meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, with assistance from Heads of Service, make amendments to the Work Programme, to include the suggestions set out above, for consideration and approval at the June Panel meeting.

CHAIRMAN

(COMP180314)