

14 JUNE 2016

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in the Bradbury Room, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Tuesday, 14 June 2016

* Cllr S P Davies (Chairman)
Cllr D J Russell (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* D A Britton
Mrs L D Cerasoli
* I C Coombes
* Ms K V Crisell

Councillors:

* A H G Davis
* Mrs P J Lovelace
* N S Penman
* M L White

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Mrs J L Cleary (Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder)
A D O'Sullivan

Officers Attending:

C Read, Ms J Bailey, Ms M Stephens, Mr R Stevens and Mr R Topliss

Apologies:

Cllrs Mrs Cerasoli and Russell

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 15 March and 16 May 2016 be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

6 SERVICE MANAGERS

The three newly appointed Service Managers, whose areas of responsibility fell within the terms of reference of the Panel, were in attendance and gave a brief overview on the current and future challenges facing their new services.

Ms Bailey, Health & Leisure Service Manager, informed members that a new management structure for Leisure had been developed. However, she was unable to share this with members at this time, as the structure was in its initial stages of consultation with staff and Employee Side.

Following reorganisation, the Leisure Service now included public health as part of its core function. The wide ranging services provided by the Council's health and leisure centres were discussed. This included providing services for an ever widening client base, with increasing gym membership and more learner swimmers. The use of information technology through online booking apps, swipe-entry and payments to assist customers was highlighted. Unlike other council services, the Leisure Service had to actively compete for business with private sector providers and other local authorities which meant that the service had to maintain a competitive edge.

The future challenges and opportunities facing the service included seeking to achieve an affordable service, working with health sector partners, building and maintaining capacity through the greater use of I.C.T and the recruitment and retention of professional and dedicated staff. Despite these challenges the Service Manager expressed optimism for the future of the Service.

Mr Stevens, Community Service Manager, circulated the new Community Service management structure. Under the new structure the Community Service Manager was also the Council's lead officer for Community First, Citizen's Advice and the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The service was responsible for a large portfolio which included over 80,000 properties for collecting council tax, 10,000 housing benefit claimants, over 9,000 residents entitled to Council Tax Reduction, and rent collection for over 5,000 council tenants. The management of Disabled Facilities Grant was a new responsibility for the Service Manager, having previously sat under the remit of Housing. Key projects moving forward were highlighted and included Universal Credit, the reduction of the weekly benefit cap, the council tax reduction scheme and welfare reform. Possible challenges facing the service included changes to domestic rate retention, possible council tax re-banding, the impact on rent collection/payment through welfare reform and the Government initiative 'Pay to Stay'. The Community Service Manager would work closely with other Service Managers in facing challenges and felt positive that his new team of dedicated and professional officers would rise to meet these challenges.

Mr Topliss, Housing Service Manager circulated the new Housing Service management structure. Whilst there had been a number of reductions in the number of senior managers within the service, the Service Manager felt confident that the proficiency of the service would be maintained due to the commitment of the remaining team, but acknowledged it would be a challenge. There were a number of vacancies within the service which had yet to be filled. This was due to the fact that there had been a freeze on appointments and there was a general shortage of experienced housing officers. A number of urgent internal reviews had already been undertaken within the Housing Service such as private sector leasing and older person's accommodation.

The initial priority would be to maintain the current high standards in service provision, in light of the structural changes. The Housing Service Manager was optimistic that this could be achieved.

7 KEY ACTIONS AND SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME

The Panel considered the key delivery actions and service reviews pertinent to the work of the Panel.

The programme of reviews and projects falling within the remit of the Panel and progress updates were set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report to the Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the approach taken to delivering the service review programme and the progress updates contained in the report be noted.

8 THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE HEALTH AND LEISURE SERVICE

The Panel considered the future direction of the Health and Leisure Service following the recent changes to the Council's management structure and the appointment of the new Health and Leisure Service Manager.

Following the reorganisation, Service Managers had been asked to review their services with the view to making efficiency savings and/or ensuring that the cost of their service did not increase between now and 2020. Health and Leisure would form part of a programme of major service reviews taking place across the Council. The fundamental review of the service would take place in 2017, scoping of the review was now underway.

The Health and Leisure Service Manager had proposed an initial management restructure which would contribute towards to the service's savings. As well as the management restructure, a business plan had been developed setting out the vision for the service and the focus for resources moving forward. This was set out in paragraphs 5.1-5.4 of the report.

The new structure had been circulated to staff for consultation and the Employee Side's views would be sought and a report submitted to EMT for consideration. Once this process had been completed, the new structure could be shared with the Panel at the September meeting.

Members commented on the increase in the demand for the service and the positive ways in which the service could develop its current I.T solutions such as the Health and Leisure Centre App. Further development of the App would be taken forward by the new I.C.T Service Manager once he was in post.

The change in focus of the service towards the health agenda was discussed and was particularly pertinent to the New Forest with its aging population. The Service's plans for the future would include a new marketing drive seeking to engage older persons.

The Panel agreed to review the changes to the Service once the new management structure had been formally approved.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information contained in the report be noted; and

- (b) That the new management structure be presented to the Panel for information in September.

Action: Joanne Bailey

9 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered their future work programme as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel's work programme set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes be agreed.

10 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Communities reported the following: -

- The Safer New Forest Strategy Group had recently been combined with the Joint Action Group and was now called the Community Safety Strategy Group. The Group was working well under its new format.
- The building of the 21 houses at the North Milton estate was on target.
- As building costs had increased considerably recently, Housing Officers were examining alternative sites and models with respect to building Council houses within the New Forest.
- The new Service Managers were now in post and had developed new teams. The Portfolio Holder spoke of her confidence and optimism in the new teams and future of the service.

CHAIRMAN

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

ITEM	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	TIMING/LEAD OFFICER
HOUSING			
Welfare Reform	To review the transition to Universal Credit and impact on residents/tenants.	Report to Panel	November 2016 Ryan Stevens
Housing Strategy	Review delivery of affordable housing and housing provision.	Report to Panel	November 2016 Richard Topliss
CRIME & DISORDER			
CCTV Provision	To undertake a 'health check' of CCTV provision/service in the District	Report to Panel	September 2016 Geoff Bettle/Colin Read
Statutory Nuisance Task & Finish Group	To consider findings of the Group	Report to Panel	November 2016 Joanne Mclay
Safer New Forest Partnership Plan/Community Safety Update	To consider inputting into the Plan	Report to Panel	January 2017 Grainne O'Rourke
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE			
Health & Wellbeing of Gypsy, Traveller, Romany Community	To consider the health & wellbeing of the GTR particularly young people/children in the New Forest	Presentation to Panel	November 2016 TBC
HEALTH/LEISURE			
Progress of the Health & Wellbeing Board Action Plan	To review the progress of the current action plan	Report to Panel	September 2016 TBC
Health & Leisure Service	To consider the review of the service.	Report to Panel	September 2016 Joanne Bailey

Community Grants	To review the Community Grant applications and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder	Report to Panel	January 2017 Colin Read
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