

Minutes of previous meetings

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 4 OCTOBER 2018 AT 10.05AM

PRESENT: Councillor Paton (Chairman), Councillors Carrigan, Coleman (as substitute for Councillor S Sidgwick), Finlayson, Layden, Mallinson J, and McDonald (as substitute for Councillor Harid).

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Glendinning – Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder
Ms Richardson – Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)

OFFICERS: Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager
Regulatory Services Manager
Principal Health and Housing Officer
Policy and Communications Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

HWSP.55/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Harid and S Sidgwick.

HWSP.56/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

HWSP.57/18 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and Part B be dealt with in private.

HWSP.58/18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – 1) It was noted that Council, on 17 July 2018, received and adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 29 March 2018 and 7 June 2018. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 August 2018 be approved.

HWSP.59/18 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

HWSP.60/18 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.22/18 which provided an overview of matters relating to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the most recent Notice of Executive Key Decisions, copies of which had been circulated to all Members, had been published on 14 September 2018. There were no items within the Panel's remit contained in the Notice that had not been included on the Panel's Work Programme.

The report included a table of the progress on resolutions from previous meetings of the Panel and the current Work Programme. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer highlighted a number of items within the Work Programme which had not been scheduled, he advised that he would seek to timetable those events prior to the next meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED – That the Overview Report and Work Programme (OS.22/18) be noted.

HWSP.61/18 THE IMPACT OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager (HPA Manager) submitted report GD.74/18 which provided an update on the impact on Carlisle City Council Homeless, Prevention and Accommodation Services following six months operational delivery of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The HPA Manager reminded the Panel of the duties which the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the Act) placed on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas (regardless of priority need status, intentionality or local connection); and to provide homelessness services to all affected, for as long as they were eligible for assistance.

The Public Duty to Refer came into force on 1 October 2018 and placed a legal duty on other public sector organisations including: Youth Offending Institute; Secure Colleges; Youth Offending Teams; Probation Services; Job Centre Plus; Social Services authorities; emergency departments; urgent treatment centres; hospitals; Secretary of State for Defence: to refer any person they considered at risk of homelessness to the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Team within 56 days. Given that the Duty had only come into force three days previously, the HPA Manager stated its impact was not yet quantifiable.

In terms of the implementation of the Act since April 2018, the HPA Manager advised that, by and large it had been positive both for staff and clients. Time spent with clients had increased as Officers were required to compile Personalised Housing Plans and carry out individual Needs Assessments. In addition the administration of the new system, which required quarterly reporting to government, had been carried out with reasonable success.

The HPA Manager advised that whilst the issues affecting, and options open to people experiencing homelessness had not changed, however, the tools given to Officers providing support services had. Early feedback from Officers indicated that the new way of working under the Act afforded less flexibility in approach to individual cases, however, further bedding in of the new system may reduce that perception. In addition the new Act may have made client's expectations greater in relation to the length of time the Council would support them.

In considering the update Members raised the following comments and questions:

- How did the Council deal with people experiencing homelessness who did not want the support offered to them?

The HPA Manager responded that people had the right to choose what circumstances they lived in, the Council would offer support and information to those at risk or who were homeless, but it was a matter for the individual whether or not they accepted it.

- Was there a national body reviewing the implementation of the Act?

The HPA Manager advised that there was a group set up by central government which sought feedback on the Act implementation, she stated that overall, the implementation had gone well.

- Had the Duty to Refer formalised the teams working relationships with partner organisations?

The HPA Manager felt that the Duty had made other public sector partners aware that they had responsibilities in relation to the prevention of homelessness, and that the Duty would reduce silo working across the public sector and promote joined up early interventions.

She explained that she had spent a significant amount of time visiting partners explaining what responsibilities the new Duty would confer on them. It was her view that part of the purpose of the Duty was to reduce the number of incidents of complex cases presenting to the Council's Homelessness Service late on Friday afternoon, when it was often difficult to source appropriate accommodation and support for individuals.

- With reference to paragraph 3.2 of the report, a Member asked what impact the Act had made on Housing Associations.

The HPA Manager explained that the Council had good relationships with the Housing Associations operating in the district, the accessibility and supply of properties had not been affected by the Act, but the timescale for people being nominated for rehousing as a result of the legislation had increased, therefore applicants would spend longer in temporary accommodation placement.

- What was the current number of homeless people in Carlisle?

The HPA Manager advised that the 2nd quarter returns were being compiled, she undertook to provide a written response with the information once the return had been completed. The Council helped on average between 1,000 to 1,200 homeless person annually, she did not anticipate the figure would rise significantly this year, however, the method which those persons were recorded had changed.

Another Member asked whether it was possible to be provided with data showing the age groups and gender of homeless people in the District.

The HPA Manager indicated that she would circulate those details.

- Did the Council provide different types of temporary accommodation?

The HPA Manager confirmed that the Council had approximately 50 units in the city for the provision of temporary accommodation which included single bedroom flats, 2 and three bedroom houses and, spaces specifically for women and children, and single men. Some of those schemes were staffed on a 24 hour basis and secure, other were not staffed. An assessment of individual case needs was undertaken as part of the allocation process.

All clients were offered 1:1 support in a wide range of areas, in addition to housing, such as medical matters and school placement. The HPA stated that Members were welcome to visit any of the sites, and were they interested in doing so, they should contact the team to discuss arrangements.

A Member asked whether the Council's supply of properties for homeless people was enough to meet the demand for places.

The HPA Manager confirmed that the provision was sufficient for the current level of demand and that throughput and occupancy was closely monitored.

- A Member noted that the Council in working with other public sector partners in providing services to the homeless, he asked how data regarding individuals was shared between organisations.

The HPA Manager explained that there was a protocol which the relevant organisations had signed up to which stipulated how data would be shared between the individual authorities.

The Panel conducted a lengthy and in-depth discussion of how the Council's Homelessness Team's work linked with the Social Work provided by Cumbria County Council, particularly in relation to Looked After Children leaving the care of the Local Authority.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act (GD.74/18) be welcomed.

2) That the Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager circulate to the Panel:

- a. the legal definition of homelessness
- b. the number of homeless people in the district;
- c. a breakdown of homelessness people in the district by gender and age group.

3) That a further update report focussing on the impact of The Duty to Refer be submitted to the Panel in autumn 2019.

HWSP.62/18 EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Policy and Communications Manager introduced Ms Richardson to the Panel, and presented Emergency Planning (PC.20/18).

Emergency Planning was a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the function was facilitated by the Policy and Communications Team. The Council's ability to respond to an emergency was reliant upon cooperation from key roles within the Council and partnership working through the Cumbria Resilience Forum. The report provided an overview of the statutory duty, partnership work and key areas for future development.

The Policy and Communications Manager gave summary of the Cumbria Resilience Forum (CRF), Community Risk Register and CRF Emergency Plans along with examples of the exercises which had been undertaken on an annual basis.

He reported that the Council had prepared an Emergency Plan which aligned with the CRFs plans and set out how the authority would respond within the framework of the CRF. The Emergency Plan was reviewed and updated annually.

The Policy and Communications Manager reported on the incidents and related debriefs which the Council had responded to since 2017 and gave an overview of the work being undertaken with communities to raise awareness of, and support, Community Emergency Planning and Resilience.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- With reference to Table 1, a Member noted that Warwick Road was not shown as having a Community Emergency Plan in place.

The Policy and Communications Manager confirmed that a Plan had not been developed for the Warwick Road area which had been a key focal point for the development of a Plan, once the

recovery stage had been reached following the 2015 floods. Both ACT and Newground had undertaken door to door work to promote the development of a Plan, which sought to help communities build flood resilience.

He indicated that the community may be holding off creating a Community Emergency Plan until the details of what additional “hard” flood defence measures were to be installed by the Environment Agency. After which a plan could be developed which would take into account the new infrastructure. He further noted that Willowholme had an informal plan, which it was understood would be further developed following confirmation of which EA scheme(s) were to be implemented.

Ms Richardson added that ACT had sought to support the work of Parish Council's and communities to assist in the development of ideas for inclusion in the Community Emergency Plans. She noted that each community or area had particular needs which needed to be considered during the creation of the Plans. ACT had prepared and distributed household level emergency information (copies of which were circulated to Panel Members for information) that advised to householders on what action to take in the event of a flood. She felt that such information, as well as the encouragement of people in communities to work together increased people's sense of resilience.

- Had consideration been given to the use of measures to manage the upstream parts of rivers to reduce flooding the city?

The Policy and Communications Manager stated that the Environment Agency (EA) had a number of options for measures to reduce flooding and its impact in the district, that were undergoing consultation in advance of the submission of funding bids to government. As part of its identification of suitable schemes, the EA had considered the implementation of upstream flood mitigation measures, however, an assessment of the catchment area capacity had indicated that there was no further storage capability upstream, consequently the Agency had focussed its efforts on managing the passage of water through the district.

A Member commented that flood defence planning tended to focus on areas where significant numbers of properties were affected, yet there were areas of the district where on occasion a small number of properties were flooded.

The Policy and Communications Manager agreed that there were a number of sites where small scale flooding occurred and that those would require investigation by the appropriate authority. Following a flood event it was usual practice for the EA to write a Section 19 report on the incident, in cases where the number of properties affected fell below an identified threshold, the Making Space for Water Group investigated the flood event.

Ms Richardson commented that where a small number of properties were affected by flooding, a community response was often helpful individuals, however, each scenario presented different issues.

The Chairman noted that residents who had been affected by flooding were scared that another event would occur, he felt that they wished for the water to be prevented for entering the city to reduce the likelihood of flooding.

Ms Richardson agreed that the fear of flooding was a big stress factor which had the potential to negatively affect people's mental health. She reiterated that the generation of a Community Emergency Plans often helped people to feel better prepared and able to deal with a flood event, thereby increasing their resilience.

The Policy and Communications Manager added that those concerns were also shared by public agencies, he noted due to the widespread impact, flooding events were particularly high risk. The Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel (EGSP) received reports from the EA on its plans for future flood management, it was hoped that this would continue following the implementation of any future approved schemes so that the Council could continue to challenge the Agency on future risk. He considered that there was potential for the Panels to work together on a joint scrutiny of flood risk management and community resilience, following the installation of new flood defence measures.

The Panel indicated its support for the proposal.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as set out in the report, and it was:

RESOLVED – 1) That Emergency Planning (PC.20/18) be noted.

2) That following the installation of new flood defence measures, consideration be given to holding a joint agenda item with the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise flood risk management and community resilience.

3) That the Panel be kept informed on the Cumbria Resilience Forum performance against national standards.

HWSP.63/18 AIR QUALITY UPDATE

The Regulatory Services Manager submitted report GD.73/18 which the Panel had requested and that provided the latest review and assessment of air quality in the District.

The Regulatory Services Manager reminded the Panel that the Environment Act 1995 had identified seven pollutants which the Council were required to measure and review air quality. Locations with poor results were designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and led to an Air Quality Action Plan outlining the measures needed to reduce the pollutants in the area. The principal method for monitoring pollutant levels was diffusion tubes which were site in 28 locations across the City measuring Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels on an hourly basis, in addition there was a real-time monitoring station at Paddy's Market which also measured particulate and Benzene levels on behalf of DEFRA.

The report contained a summary of the measurements recorded at the diffusion tubes in a number of the AQMAs, the Regulatory Services Manager noted that in a number of areas there was a downward trend in relation to NO₂ levels and consideration was being given to the downgrading of a number of the areas. Local press had latterly published a report which suggested that air quality in the city was in breach of acceptable limits, the Regulatory Services Manager explained that the World Health Organisation suggested guidance levels for NO₂ concentrations, but that these were not a legal standard unlike the Air Quality regulations.

In considering the update Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member welcomed the report and asked whether it was feasible for future reports to provide data which would provide allow comparisons to be made about air quality of different days or times of day?

The Regulatory Services Manager advised that such information was only retrievable from the monitoring station at Paddy's Market. Air quality data had been collected since 1998 and the level of exposure for NO₂ had never been found in exceedance of the guidance levels. The

average hourly level of NO₂ in the district was 200mg³, with the annual figure of 40mg³ unlike the annual figure of 40mg³ which reflects long term exposure.

The Member asked whether the annual monitoring figures would provide comparative data on time and day.

The Regulatory Services Manager stated that such details could not be provided in relation to the annual detail, but was able to be collated from the monthly data. The monthly monitoring data also provided information in relation to seasonal variation. He further noted that a count analyser had been installed on Stanwix Bank, but had subsequently been removed as it had not recorded any exceedances.

The Member sought clarification as to whether the Council's equipment was able to generate an annual mean for a particular time, for example, 4pm on Saturdays.

The Regulatory Services Manager advised that only the monitoring station at Paddy's Market was able to provide such information.

- Why was the data in the report different from the story published in the local press?

The Regulatory Services Manager noted that the figures which had been quoted in the press were from 2015 so were not current. The WHO guidance was also a best case level rather than a legal standard.

- Why did the Council concentrate its Air Quality Monitoring on NO₂ levels?

The Regulatory Services Manager explained that formerly the Council had reported on all pollutants, whilst there was no issue with NO₂ concentrations exceeding guidance levels, it was the highest level pollutant and therefore required reporting on.

Cleaner vehicle engines had led to a drop in NO₂ levels, however, that reduction had been tempered by inaccurate reporting of emissions levels by vehicle manufacturers. The Regulatory Services Manager considered that steps to address vehicle emissions were likely to lead to further drops in NO₂ concentration in the air.

- A Member commented that she wished to see future reports consider the impact on public health of air quality.

The Regulatory Services Manager indicated that he was able to provide any information the Panel requested, the Council's review of its monitoring and resulting Action Plan were available on the Council's website. The data on Air Quality had been a reason for the Environmental Health team to support the making of a southern relief road to the south of the city following the drop in NO₂ levels in city after the building of the northern relief road.

The Principal Health and Housing Officer cautioned that correlatory data was not available, for example, numbers of hospital admissions following an incidence of poor air quality, such as when rain fell following the extended warm spell in May and June 2018.

A Member commented that he would be interested in seeing data based on postcode areas which reported on both air quality and public health data.

Another Member felt it would be beneficial for the Panel to scrutinise the Air Quality Action Plan and contribute to its development.

The Regulatory Services Manager responded that outdoor air quality had improved significantly in the last half century, so much so that it was likely that it would be overtaken by indoor air pollution in the coming years. He explained that as modern homes were increasingly insulated that had a detrimental impact on the air quality within the building and that effective ways of ventilating buildings were needed to address the issue.

- Would the Council be required to maintain levels of air quality prescribed by the European Union, following Britain's departure from the organisation?

The Regulatory Services Manager advised that the European legislation on air quality had been directly transposed into British Law, therefore it was likely to remain. The Guidance Levels identified by the World Health Organisation were very similar for pollutants and particulates, and whilst a future government may look to make changes, the present guidance was based on evidence and as such was very robust.

The Chairman thanked the Regulatory Services Manager for the report.

RESOLVED: 1) That Air Quality Update (GD.73/18) be noted.

2) That future reports to the Panel focus on the Air Quality Action Plan and health impacts related to air quality.

(The meeting ended at 11:59am)