

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 14 JANUARY 2021 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Paton (Chair) (until 11.46am), Councillors Alcroft (as substitute for Ms Ellis-Williams) Dr Davison, Mrs Finlayson, Mrs McKerrell (until 1.00pm), McNulty (until 1.00pm), Shepherd (as substitute for Councillor Tarbitt) and Miss Whalen.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Ellis - Deputy Leader and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder
Councillor Nedved - Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Christian – Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Mallinson – Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

Sergeant Blain - Cumbria Constabulary

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Economic Development
Neighbourhood Services Manager
Team Manager - Parking and Enforcement
Health & Wellbeing Manager
Policy and Communications Manager
Principal Health & Housing Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

HWSP.01/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Ms Ellis-Williams and Councillor Tarbitt.

HWSP.02/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interested submitted.

HWSP.03/21 PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

HWSP.04/21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That it be noted that Council, at its meeting on 5 January 2021, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October and 19 November 2020. The Chair will sign the minutes at the first practicable opportunity.

HWSP.05/21 AGENDA

RESOLVED – That the order of the agenda be amended so that item A.4 be taken after A.2 to accommodate external attendees.

HWSP.06/21 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

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

HWSP.07/21 LOCAL ENVIRONMENT (CLIMATE CHANGE) STRATEGY

The Corporate Director of Economic Development submitted report PC.02/21 which provided an update on the progress of the adoption of the Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy.

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

- The Panel had requested that a representative of the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership (ZCCP) be invited to attend the meeting to help the Panel to gain a better understanding of the carbon baseline which was important for the authority in setting its target. Why had this not happened?

The Policy and Communications Manager reminded the Panel of the background of the ZCCP and their work. The ZCCP had received National Lottery Funding and were in the process of making the relevant appointments to the Partnership. It was proposed that the Partnership Manager would be invited to attend Scrutiny when the appointment process had been completed. He added that the project proposals had been shared with the Council and had been incorporated into some of the local actions as set out in the action plan and community engagement plan.

Referring to the Cumbria Baseline report, the Policy and Communications Manager added that key dates had also been included in the action plan to provide an overview of the 2037 target alongside the trajectory and scale of reductions required across Cumbria.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development agreed that the baseline was important and there was a need to understand how it affected the area. She had proposed that the Members Advisory Group, as the lead on the issue, received a presentation on the baseline report to gain cross party understanding on the carbon baseline for Cumbria and Carlisle.

A Member responded that the expectation for the meeting had been the attendance of a representative who had been involved in the preparation of the bid with first-hand information.

- A Member was concerned that the preparation of the Strategy had taken two years and there was a need for urgent action. She felt strongly that Members needed to have a good understanding of the urgency and carbon baseline before the matter was considered at Council to be able to understand what the Council needed to do to meet targets and where to prioritise.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development reminded the Panel that the matter was a cross cutting matter that affected all aspects of the work of the Council across the District. The report would also be considered by the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel. She suggested that an informal Council Briefing take place for all Members to be briefed on the evidence base for the report.

The Policy and Communications Manager drew the Panel's attention to the Targets section of the report which set out a breakdown of the Net Zero Target. The targets linked to some of the Council's own direct production emissions and was a shortcut to where the Council's target would impact the Cumbria baseline figures. He asked the Panel how they would like to see this information set out to make it clearer and easier to use.

A Member responded that it would be beneficial for the report to include examples of how the targets could be achieved. The Policy and Communications Manager reminded the Panel that all Members had received the Cumbria Baseline report which included a clear example scenario of how Cumbria could work together in partnership to achieve some of the reductions. Likewise the City Council action plan included a five year scenario for cumulative reductions to the Councils carbon footprint

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that the baseline was important, however, the Strategy helped set out the Council's direction and there needed to be a balance in getting an understanding of the baseline and moving forward with the projects.

A Member commented that Scrutiny had open transparent discussions to shape the final document and actions, they needed expert knowledge to inform the debate and did not feel that informal Council was the right setting for the information to be shared.

- Were there dedicated officer resources for the climate emergency work?

The Policy and Communications Manager drew the Panel's attention to the list of contributors to the Strategy from the whole Council. The Strategy was a whole organisation Strategy which required all Officers and Members working together to deliver the actions. He reported that the ZCCP had, as one of five new roles, appointed a Local Authority Climate Co-Ordinator as well as allocating significant new resources to help Cumbria reach the target.

- The knowledge of the climate emergency had changed significantly since the production of the Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030, had the review of the Local Plan begun?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development confirmed that the review process had started, and the main focus was the St Cuthbert's Garden Village and the goal to have a carbon zero development.

- A Member commented that she felt there were two risks with regard to the implementation of the Strategy, the first risk was the lack of urgency on the Strategy and the second was the risk in trying to change residents behaviour.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development agreed that there was an urgent need in moving forward with the Strategy. Once the Strategy was approved Officers could move to implementation and look at the required budget. She stated that the Council would play a role in helping to change residents behaviour by leading through example and by helping individuals to understand the impact of their behaviour.

The Policy and Communications Manager highlighted the action plan which identified six months of actions within the constraints of the pandemic and recognised the link between the recovery from the pandemic and tackling climate change.

- How was the consultation for the Strategy published, how many responses were received and how representative of the City's population were they?

The Policy and Communications Manager reported that there had been over 60 responses to the consultation which gave in depth and detailed responses to key questions. There had not been a demographic survey carried out with the consultation.

- When the Strategy had been previously scrutinised the Panel felt that the tone of the document did not reflect the required leadership. How were the detailed consultation responses be incorporated into the document?

The Policy and Communications Manager assured Members that the consultation feedback had been used in shaping the action plan and responses were represented in the themes contained within the document.

- The Panel asked that the risks associated with the Strategy be amended to include the risk of not having the Strategy and the adverse impact of not doing anything to address the climate emergency.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development agreed to set out the risk of no action within the report. The Policy and Communications Manager added that the risks would be formalised and included in a risk register within the Council following the adoption of the Strategy and approval of the Action Plan.

- How would the Council deal with procurement and its impact on other organisations it enters into contracts with? How was climate change weighted against the importance of value for money and a balanced budget?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that the Procurement and Commissioning Strategy had been amended in September 2019 and required that organisations that engaged with the Council measured the environmental cost of the work that they did.

- A Member asked for more information on Carlisle Community Action.

The Policy and Communications Manager reported that the ZCCP would be providing resources to the Group and he would circulate more information to the Panel.

- A Member asked the Panel to support the following:
 - That the Movement Theme included more options for staff, in particular cycling and walking options for short journeys within the city;
 - That potential new services regarding food waste was vitally important and should be endorsed as future action plan objectives.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder commented that the pandemic had created a focus on climate change and sustainability. She set out the ongoing work being undertaken with partners and urged Members to agree the Strategy and Action Plan as working documents so that the Council could move forward in implementing the actions and demonstrate the work that was being carried out.

- The Panel requested that the following matters be included in the Strategy:
 - Training for staff and Members;
 - Change to the language to encourage more education, engagement and inclusion with the public;
 - Include partnership with Schools to engage young people.
- It was felt that the establishment of the Citizens Jury for Carlisle should be a priority.
- The Panel requested that the monitoring of the outcomes of the action plan take place every six months not annually.

RESOLVED – 1) The Panel scrutinised the amended Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy (PC.02/21) and recommended that the following be included in the Strategy:

1. Training for Officers and Members
2. The risk of doing nothing and the adverse impact of not doing anything
3. That an update report be submitted to the Panel every six months
4. Behaviour change to be done in partnership
5. Partnership with schools

2) That the Policy and Communications Manager provide the Panel with more information on Carlisle Community Action.

3) That the Corporate Director of Economic Development and the Policy and Communications Manager be thanked for their detailed work in preparing the amended Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy and Action Plan.

HWSP.08/21 REVIEW OF PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS

During consideration of the following matter the Chair left the meeting due to technical issues. Councillor Mrs Finlayson (Vice Chair) thereupon took the Chair.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager submitted report CS.05/21 which contained the revised Public Space Protection Order and the combined Public Space Protection Order for alley gates inviting comments from the Panel as part of the consultation on the revised Orders. Comments were also welcomed on the over-arching Local Environmental Crime, Action and Enforcement Strategy but the primary focus of the discussion would be around the proposed revisions to the Public Space Protection Order. Sergeant Blain, Cumbria Constabulary, was present at the meeting to support the discussion.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager briefly introduced the Local Environmental Crime, Action and Enforcement Strategy which outlined the Council's approach to maintaining clean streets and neighbourhoods and reinforced its commitment to taking robust enforcement action against those responsible for enviro-crimes such as littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling. The Neighbourhood Services Manager, further added that Panel Members would be interested in the work of the Council to influence positive behaviour change and also the action planned to tackle other negative behaviours for example, deploying a camera enforcement vehicle to tackle roadside litter and to give the Civil Enforcement Officers powers to challenge and potentially issue fines to motorists parked with engines idling, to support wider carbon reduction efforts and improve local air quality.

The Team Manager - Parking and Enforcement detailed the amendments to the PSPO as set out in appendix 2 of the report.

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

- There was some concern regarding the safety of those removing alcohol containers from individuals who may suffer from addiction.

Sergeant Blain confirmed that Cumbria Constabulary were primarily responsible for the removal of the containers. He set out the safeguarding procedures that were in place for individuals who may have an addiction. In response to a further question he explained that any safeguarding needs were referred to the relevant organisation the following day. He added that the legislation within the PSPO for begging and rough sleeping was only used as a last resort, Cumbria Constabulary met weekly with key partners and exchanged information daily to avoid prosecutions.

- The Panel and the Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder felt that the links between Cumbria Constabulary and the Homelessness Services were critical in ensuring that the PSPO provided ongoing support to individuals and were reassured that the procedures in place were successful in reducing anti-social behaviour and providing help to those in need.
- How safe was it giving people the opportunity to move on and where would they go if they were rough sleeping?

Sergeant Blain confirmed that safeguarding was a major concern for those individuals who were rough sleeping and the Police did what they could to dissuade them or move them to a safer location. The Police engaged with individuals about options, however, often the individual was passing through. A head count of rough sleepers was taken each week and individuals were discussed at the weekly meeting to ensure support was offered. The latest head count for the city had been one.

- Did the Police liaise with Border Force when dealing with beggars and rough sleepers?

Sergeant Blain confirmed that the Police could check on an individual's status on the street and immigration were part of the weekly hub meetings. In addition Cumbria Constabulary worked closely with Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary to identify individuals who may be crossing the border.

- How did the Police deal with children who were begging?

Sergeant Blain explained that if the Police believed there was a safeguarding issue with a child they would invoke their powers to take the child into temporary care.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder thanked Council Officers and the Police for their hard work in producing a sensitive yet firm document which ensured safeguarding procedures were followed and helped to make Carlisle an excellent place to live and work.

- How many individuals who were rough sleeping had refused offers of accommodation during the pandemic?

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder responded that the Homelessness Team worked extremely hard to provide support to those in need and to his knowledge only one individual refused the offer of accommodation.

- A Member suggested that authorised buskers and traders be issued with a permit or identification which showed that they had permission to be in the city centre.

The Team Manager agreed to discuss the matter with the City Centre Team. In response to a request the Team Manager informed the Panel that the Enforcement Team, City Centre Team and Police had prepared the Busker Code of Conduct and she would circulate a copy to Panel Members.

- How had the consultation process been undertaken?

The Team Manager set out details of the consultation process which included newspaper advertisements, social media posts, advertisement of the PSPO in affected areas and a survey of affected residents. Due to the current circumstances the consultation period had been extended.

- Referring to cars idling, a Member asked if this could be promoted as a public campaign to highlight the environmental impact.
- What work was being undertaken to change the behaviour of those who littered and was any work carried out with businesses?

The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that the Council's Enforcement Officers were very proactive and worked seven days a week, they were visible and engaged with those seen littering. The Council did carry out prosecutions and this action was supported by the Courts. Littering was an ongoing issue especially with chewing gum and cigarettes, he reported that a bid had been submitted for grants to increase the recycling capacity in the city.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel had considered the Review of Public Space Protection orders (CS.05/21).

2) The Team Manager - Parking and Enforcement circulate the Busker Code of Conduct to Panel Members.

HWSP.09/21 ACTIVE SPACES REVIEW

The Health and Wellbeing Manager submitted the Active Spaces Review (CS.02/21) which outlined the programme of investment into the Council's Active Spaces stock for 2021/22 and set out the longer term strategic direction for making improvements beyond the next financial year.

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

- How did the City Council support Parish Councils and other bodies who looked after play areas in their parishes?

The Health and Wellbeing Manager responded that the City Council helped to organise the annual independent inspection of the play areas and helped to secure Section 106 monies from new developments which went directly to the relevant Parish Council.

In response to further questions the Health and Wellbeing Manager explained that Section 106 contributions had to be related to the development they came from and were a legal contract. Every Section 106 was individual, the Health and Wellbeing Team were consulted on the use of the monies as part of the planning process with the aim of achieving the best outcome for the local community. Should a development put a play area in place which a management company ran then the planning agreement would include the appropriate checks and balances, which could be enforced, to ensure the safety of the play area.

- What equipment or measures were in place to ensure play equipment was accessible for all?

The Health and Wellbeing Manager highlighted the specialist equipment that was in place in some parks in the City. He added that the key criteria for any new Active Space development was accessibility to everyone to encourage inclusion.

- Referring to Priority 1, a Member asked what happened to the play areas if the funding for the project did not come forward.

The Health and Wellbeing Manager explained that all of the play areas were in a safe condition, if capital funding did not come forward works would be delayed until funding could be secured.

There was revenue funding in the budget for ongoing repairs to allow the play areas to remain safe and open until they were replaced or refurbished.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder commented that the City Council should be very proud of its well managed green spaces and play areas. The Health and Wellbeing Team and the Green Spaces Team worked very hard and were expanding the outside offer to encourage more exercise outdoors.

RESOLVED – That the Panel considered the Active Spaces Review (CS.02/21).

HWSP.10/21 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

It was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that Council Procedure Rule 9, in relation to the duration of meetings be suspended in order that the meeting could continue over the time limit of 3 hours.

HWSP.11/21 AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION AND ADOPTION

The Principal Health and Housing Officer submitted report GD.07/21 which summarised the Local Authorities Air Quality Action Plan.

The Principal Health and Housing Officer set out the background to the Air Quality Action Plan and the consultation process which had been undertaken and the responses received.

The Panel considered the low number of responses received and the number of Members who had not been able to stay at the meeting. The Panel asked that the report be brought back to its February meeting, if timescales allowed, for further scrutiny by the Panel. If timescales did not allow Members could pass their responses to the consultation directly to the Principal Health and Housing Officer.

The Panel discussed the changes to bus routes and the efficiencies that had been made and suggested that further work be undertaken to link bus routes to the cycling and walking network. A suggestion was also made that park and ride schemes be considered for the City.

The Panel noted the aspiration to open Waverly Viaduct and asked for an update on the Waverly Viaduct to be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder acknowledged the work that had been undertaken to produce the detailed Action Plan. He highlighted the continuously improving air quality in Carlisle and some of the practical work that had happened to achieve clean air along with the discussions that were ongoing with the public transport providers in the City and the County Council Highways Team.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder also drew attention to the excellent work that had achieved the clean air in the City which everyone benefited from.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel scrutinised the Air Quality Action Plan Consultation and adoption (GD.07/21).

2) That an update on the Waverly Viaduct project be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

3) That the Local Authorities Air Quality Action Plan be reconsidered by the Panel, if timescales allowed. If not Panel Members would submit their response to the consultation directly to the Principal Health and Housing Officer.

HWSP.12/21 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.02/21 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer drew the Panel's attention to the Notice of Executive Key Decisions which had been published on 8 January 2021. She reminded the Panel of the Task and Finish Group to review the Performance reports.

The Panel then considered its Work Programme.

RESOLVED 1) That the Overview Report OS.02/21 be noted.

2) That the following matters be submitted to the Panel on 25 February 2021:

- Community Centre Update
- Performance Report – Quarter 3
- Emergency planning response to Covid 19

[The meeting ended at 1.35pm]

SPECIAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 28 JANUARY 2021 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Finlayson (Vice Chair), Councillors Atkinson (as substitute for Councillor Ellis-Williams), Dr Davison, McKerrell, McNulty, Tarbitt, Whalen.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Ellis, Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Mallinson – Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Nedved – Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder

OFFICERS: Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager

HWSP.13/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ms Ellis-Williams, Paton and Mallinson, Leader.

HWSP.14/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interested submitted.

HWSP.15/21 PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

HWSP.16/21 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2021- 2026

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager (HPA Manager) submitted report GD.11/21 which set out the strategic aims, priority objectives and actions identified as part of a statutory review and consultation process; targeting Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping in Carlisle from 2021 to 2026, as outlined within the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan.

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

- Which key findings from the consultation and service review were carried forward into the Strategy as priorities?

The HPA Manager responded that the data collated from the service review and public consultation had been assessed with a view to informing the priorities of the proposed Strategy. An aim of the Strategy was to provide support to those most in need which included those experiencing or at risk of multiple exclusion and domestic abuse. There were not a vast number of rough sleepers in the district, however, the Covid 19 pandemic had highlighted the number of people at risk of rough sleeping. Following the government's "Get Everyone In" instruction that all rough sleepers be provided with accommodation during the first national lockdown, the service was contacted by a number of individuals who were living transiently, for example staying with friends or family due to having no accommodation of their own. The restrictions imposed during the lockdown meant that those options were not available to all individuals, their coming forward to access services made the Homelessness team aware of the scale of the issue which had also informed the priorities of the new Strategy.

The Domestic Abuse Bill was likely to receive parliamentary assent in April 2021 and placed additional duties on local authority homelessness services. The HPA Manager outlined the work being undertaken with the county council in preparation to meet those new duties.

- Had consideration been given to the creation of a Prison Leavers Pathway, including a Service Level Agreement with other relevant organisations?

The HPA Manager welcomed the suggestion and drew Members attention to Objective 2 of the Action Plan within which the establishment of a prison release review was an action. It was a crucial area for the service to focus on as, due to the number of agencies involved in preparing prisoners for release, there could be disparity of information sharing that may end up in a prisoner being released without accommodation provision. Initial discussions on the matter had been undertaken with the local Probation Service with a view to potentially setting up a partnership group to work on the issues.

A Member asked whether prison leavers housed in the Council's homeless accommodation had to have been formerly resident in the district.

The HPA Manager advised that when looking at housing a prisoner at the end of their sentence a number of criteria were assessed which included whether there was a local connection to the place. In the main the offenders housed in Carlisle did have a local connection, however, as the city provided the Approved Premises for the county for housing released prisoners, it did provide accommodation to prisoners not formerly from the district. Additionally, individuals with no connection to the city may request to be housed in Carlisle upon release, the HPA Manager gave an overview of how that process was managed.

- A Member expressed concern regarding the use of the term "customers" to describe those using the Council's Homelessness services.

The HPA Manager undertook to reconsider the wording.

- Were pets allowed in the Council's homelessness accommodation sites?

The Council operated a number of accommodation sites some of which were shared/emergency occupancy, in that environment pets were not permitted, but they were allowed in sites where persons were accommodated individually. Were a person with a pet to be only able to be housed in shared/emergency accommodation initially, the Council had a number of options for including kennelling and fostering placement for their pet.

- Were the characteristics of those accepted as homeless within the district related to the demographics of the wider population?

The HPA Manager explained that the characteristics were used as reporting measures to regional and national bodies as required. Using characteristics helped to shape services for example through user profiling and identifying marginalised groups.

- A Member welcomed the Strategy's objective of continuing partnership working.

The Council was very committed to partnership working as it recognised that it was not able to address the issue of homelessness alone. It was important that partners embraced and supported the Strategy as that increased the likely success of its implementation.

- Did the Winter-readiness plan require all rough sleepers to be accommodated through the winter season?

The Winter-readiness plan was part of the Homelessness Team's annual work and it was an achievable objective to ensure that all rough sleepers were accommodated through the winter season. The team also applied Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEPs) under which they had a duty to house rough sleepers when temperatures dropped below 0°C in order to safeguard life.

In addition to the placement of rough sleepers in accommodation under the Winter-readiness plan and SWEPs, the HPA Manager also worked with accommodation providers to encourage them not to evict tenants during periods of bad weather. Currently there was a national freeze on evictions taking place.

- Would the Action Plan have defined performance measures and could they be reported to the Panel on a 6 monthly basis for scrutiny?

The HPA Manager confirmed that were the Strategy and Action Plan to be approved timescales for completing actions and other appropriate metrics would be developed and would form the basis of performance reporting to the Panel.

- Lone females were an especially vulnerable group in terms of rough sleeping, what key actions were proposed to support them?

Safeguarding and Harm Minimisation were key objectives of the Strategy and included lone/young females. In the preparation of the existing Strategy, a piece of work had been carried out with a cohort of females to better understand their experience of using homelessness services and the factors which had contributed to that need. The data gleaned from that work was used to formulate priorities within the existing Strategy which had been carried over to the currently proposed one. A significant finding from that work was the length of time lone/young females accessing services had been victims of abuse or living in a transient way, this had led to a focus on preventative work being undertaken by the team to try and provide support to those individuals earlier on.

- What work was the Council doing with private sector landlords to prevent people becoming homeless as a result of tenancies ending?

The HPA Manager responded that the Council employed a Private Rented Sector Officer who worked with landlords in relation to evictions, but also proactively by working to bring empty properties back into use, to increase the level of available housing. The team were also able to provide ongoing tenancy support and skills to tenants as well as providing rent safeguards. Moreover, the impact of the Covid pandemic restrictions increased the likelihood of some tenants accumulating rent arrears, Officers were working with housing associations to identify those who were at risk of arrears for the first time with a view to preventing possession action being taken.

- How was the lack of specialist accommodation provision for the under 35s being addressed?

The HPA Manager explained that young people were a priority group for the service. There were a number of factors that made provision challenging including additional needs and rent caps for those in receipt of benefits, the service was working with a range of partners to address the issue. The Private Rented Sector Officer worked with landlords to promote higher

standards in accommodation, and support may be provided to individuals including furniture pack and tenancy support.

- Was any further work planned to get feedback from service users on the Council's homelessness service?

The HPA Manager noted a number had responded to the public consultation, but for some it was harder to reach groups accessing and contributing to the consultation was challenging. Officers carried out ongoing engagement with service users to find out their views on the service in order to ensure that it was relevant and meaningful support was given.

- Did the service work with third sector organisations, for example, Churches Together?

The HPA Manager confirmed that Officers did work with Churches Together along with other faith groups and third sector organisations. That work comprised working together to identify rough sleepers and those at risk of it, but also providing support to individuals when they had taken on permanent accommodation. Integration into a community, having support were important factors in enabling individuals to become settled in accommodation, the Council's Homelessness Service was not able to provide unending support to individuals it had found permanent accommodation for, however, third sector organisations were well placed to carry out that function.

A number of Members felt it would be useful if an executive summary of the Strategy be produced to give an easily accessible document, they suggested that it include: a short summary of the aim of the Strategy, and how key findings from research work had formed objectives and priorities within the Strategy.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder thanked the Officer and her team for producing the Strategy and their own ongoing work directly supporting those experiencing homelessness as well as the team's success in drawing down external funding to assist with the work. He hoped the Panel felt able to support the Strategy.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder reiterated thanks to the HPA Manager and her team. She noted that as part of the development of the Strategy she had raised issues in relation to Care Leavers, Armed Forces personnel and domestic abuse and was pleased to see that they had been incorporated in the Strategy.

The Panel thanked the Officer for the detailed report and the efforts of her and her team in developing the Strategy

RESOLVED 1) That the Panel supported the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 - 2026.

2) That a Prisoner Leavers Pathway be developed.

3) That a series of performance measures and timescales relating to the Action Plan be devised and form the basis of future performance reports on the Strategy to the Panel.

4) That an Executive Summary document be produced.

[The meeting ended at 11:43am]