



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
HELD ON 23rd JANUARY 2024**

PRESENT: Councillor C Bain (Chair), Councillors D Maycock, R Claymore,
S Daniels and C Dean

County Councillor County Councillor T Jay

CABINET Councillor Samuel Smith

The following officers were present: Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Joanne Sands (Assistant Director Partnerships), Lisa Hall (Safer Communities and Homes Manager), Leanne Costello (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer) and Tracey Smith (Democratic Services Assistant)

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J Jones.

66 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th November 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor C Deam and seconded by Councillor S Daniels)

67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T Jay declared an interest as the Leader of the Council and the County Council representative. They confirmed that they had requested to be removed as the County representative on the Committee and that for this evening they would provide the update on health related matters considered by Staffordshire County Council and then leave the meeting.

68 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair updated the Committee that the sheltered housing item they were expecting at tonight's meeting had been delayed and asked the Committee if they agreed to hold an extra meeting on the 4th March 2024 to discuss this item.

The Committee:

Resolved to hold an extra meeting on the 4th March 2024 to consider the item.

(Moved by Councillor C Dean and Seconded by Councillor D Maycock)

69 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were none.

70 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET OR COUNCIL

There were none,

71 UPDATE ON HEALTH RELATED MATTERS CONSIDERED BY STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Chair advised that the most recent digest had been shared with the agenda pack before handing over to County Councillor T Jay to provide an update who updated the Committee with the following information –

- There were two key items at the last meeting Maternity and neo natal services and the Performance and Finance Overview.
- There is now a Patient Safety Officer in place which was a recommendation from the Ockenden report.
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent has the highest neo-natal mortality rate in the UK. An improvement group has been established to better understand the data and identify areas for learning an Infant Mortality review has been commissioned and a root cause analysis is completed for every neonatal death.
- CQC visited UHNM Maternity Services in March 2023 where a section 29a notice was issued with further actions identified in the final report.
- There is still a backlog in Cahms referrals.
- There is a deficit of £66.4 million reported in month 6, however they are looking at efficiencies of £75 million to bring this back on track.

Following comments and questions from the Committee the following information was confirmed:

- There are deadlines in place against actions for neo natal service improvement. Until actions are closed off certain types of birth were not able to take place.

- A key area of failings is around staffing which has got worse since the pandemic. There have been successes with staffing recently at the UHNM and Derby and Burtin, however in the first instance the new staff would require training and support. Whilst there were still vacancies this was not critical.
- The £64 million pound deficit covers the whole ICB area.
- The waiting list for CAHMS referrals is concerning.
- That the staffing situation may have made the budget situation worse as the service would have had to rely on agency staff etc
- No details were provided around where the efficiency savings would come from

The County Council representative left the meeting at 6:15pm.

72 DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning, Councillor S Smith and the Assistant Director, Assets, Paul Weston to present the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning on the Disabled Adaptations Policy to review and consider the proposed draft Housing Assistance Policy (for the delivery of Mandatory and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants) prior to submission to Cabinet for full approval and adoption, before handing over to the Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that the Housing Grants, construction, and Regeneration Act 1996 is the main piece of relevant legislation around this piece of work. The Council do not currently have a policy on place. It was noted that the policy affects the most vulnerable in society before handing over to the Assistant Director, Assets who highlighted the following –

- In the absence of a Housing Assistance Policy the Council have been delivering grants through the mandatory grant process which places a cap on grants at £30000 and has no option for discretionary grants or alternatives to providing grants.
- The Policy, whilst recognising that the Council has a limited budget provided by Government via County through the Better Care Fund through County (there is no new money attached), takes into account the caps on grants which was set in 2008 that has not changed in line with rising costs and allows for the Council to offer a Top up Grant of up to £25000.
- As there is no additional funding the additional grants could reduce the amount of grants awarded overall.
- The Professional Fees Grant will help cover costs for grant applications that do not progress or where they do and that the costs would have been recovered from the grant itself.
- The Help to Move grant would allow applicants to seek alternative accommodation where adapting the property will not suit their needs.
- Means-testing of grants will continue.
- Passporting, eligibility and timings remain in line with the statutory process.

- This is purely for grants; this does not apply to Council tenants however it does apply to private renting tenants and tenants of Social Housing Providers as this is the way the legislation is written.

The Committee made the following comments/observations and asked the following questions:

1. Do we have any data around why some grants do not go through and was this due to lack of support?
The Officer confirmed that data is captured however this was not available at the meeting but there were several reasons for this, such as people passing away, moving out of the area, moving into care or with family, or not fitting in to the criteria for the grants. And whilst people can make direct applications, generally the process is set up to support people end to end.
2. Clarification around third-party applications? Would an adult child making an application on behalf of parents be mean tested?
The third-party application covers when someone is making an application on behalf of the applicant. The applicant may not always be the recipient of the works. This can complicate the process around who is being assessed and this would depend on where the parent is living, i.e. if the parent is living with adult children who own the property. The aim is to protect the Council where they complete work on a family members property for them then to ask the recipient to leave.
3. Whether any work was being done around other areas of the County that may receive surplus funding when Boroughs such as Tamworth don't receive enough? And whether the recommendation made to Cabinet from the committee to Lobby Government in this area had progressed?
The Officer confirmed that there are some districts that have greater demand than funder and some that have surplus funding. As would be expected authorities look to protect their budgets and any surplus funds are often in a different way if it is written in a policy such as this.
Representations have been made to Government on numerous occasions and a review was expected but this hasn't happened yet so have to make assumptions based on expected funding through the allocations process.
The Portfolio Holder agree to double check on the progress of this and follow up with the Committee.
4. If an applicant has an occupation health assessment what are the timescales to go through the process?
The Officer confirmed that this is a statutory process and the Council have 6 months to approve the application and a further 6 months to supply pay out the funds. If the Council is managing the process there is a waiting list for applications being started (Which is approached in date order) however this may not be longer overall as the Council is managing the process overall.
5. Would more manpower within house reduce the timescales?
The officer confirmed that staffing costs are part of the overall project and that with current funding, additional resource would come out of the budget meaning that whilst applications could be processed quicker, they would run out of funding sooner and has less money to manage the process and complete the works. The Officer confirmed that that they can only work

within the resource that they have available. It would require an additional funding resource to deliver at both ends of the process.

6. The Committee expressed concerns at the wait times associated with the process particularly where someone has been assessed as requiring the adaptations to live safely.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that these were maximum waiting times and asked whether the committee wanted to see what the average wait times had been historical?

The Chair confirmed that this would be helpful but more importantly would like to understand what risk assessment is done for the time whilst people are waiting for their application to be assessed and where does the liability lie if someone is discharged from hospital or at home and assessed as needing adaptations who is liable whilst they are waiting for an application to be processed if anything were to happen to them.

The Officer confirmed that the Council has an obligation to fund grants and complete the application within the statutory guidelines, the Council does not have the Health and Safety responsibility throughout the process,

7. Clarification around the prioritisation process?

Currently there is no prioritisation process applications are progressed in date order.

The new policy does allow for some prioritisation, however within the categories, these will still have to be prioritised in date order, as where a number of applicants are assessed as urgent there must be a process to work through these. Due to the prioritisation this could result in lower priority applicants moving down the list.

8. Committee highlighted it would be useful to see information around waiting times for DFG's for the last year, more information around prioritisation along with what arrangements are in place to support people during waiting times and a recommendation was moved to:

RESOLVED By the Committee:

1. to defer the recommendations and asked for report to be bought back to the Committee at the extra meeting of the Committee on the 4th March 2024 with greater clarity on what arrangements are in place during the waiting period and more information around the prioritisation of applications.

The Chair thanks the Officers and invited them to leave the meeting.

73 HOUSING STRATEGY QUARTERLY UPDATE TO DECEMBER 2023

The chair welcomed the Portfolio Holder Housing and Planning, the Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods, Jo Sands and the Safer Communities and Homes Manager, Lisa Hall to the meeting to present the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning and the Assistant Director, Partnerships on the Housing Strategy Quarterly Update to December 2023 to update the Committee on actions

within the Tamworth Borough Council Housing Strategy to 31 December 2023 which directly impact on health and wellbeing of Tamworth communities.

The Chair handover to the Portfolio Holder who highlighted in reference to a question raised at the last update that was a weekly outreach session at the Sacred Heart in Glascoate may account for disproportionate figure in the area before introduced the Officers, the Assistant Director handed over to the Safer Communities and Homes Manager who highlighted the following information from the report.

- Priority 1
The Council has just approved the first two First Home properties at the Two Gates site and a further seven properties will be coming thorough at the Coton Lane estate
- Priority 2
The Council have been successful in receiving a grant from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) for 13 projects to promote healthier housing and health inequalities.
Around fuel poverty figures from beat the cold have been included.
Beat The Cold were successful in bidding for a £10500 grant but have now declined due to staffing and money has been split amongst other voluntary sector organisations to deliver services/
CHS (Community Homes Solutions) are currently contracted to assist with the HUG project.
COMF funding is going to provide a temporary post of an empty homes officer to focus on bringing some of the 400 empty properties the Council have back in to use which will ease pressure on the housing register.
There are currently 93 HMO's within the Tamworth.
Damp and mould figures have gone up on quarter 3 which is expected for this period.
A case study has been included around a couple that were suffering with damp and mould in their private rental an were successful in being rehoused within a sheltered accommodation scheme significantly improving their quality of life
Figures for HMO inspections and Council housing repairs have been included.
- Priority 3
4 out of the 4 applications to the ECO4 scheme have been approved.
GBIS (great British Insulation Scheme) has received 64 enquiries.
- Priority 4
Appendices attached provide further information.
DFA and DFG figures attached
The figure for completed cases of 0 indicated cases that have gone through from start to finish during this period, the team approved their first case in December.
Updates on hospital to home and details of COMF funding were also included.

The Committee made the following comments/observations and asked the following questions:

1. The Committee thanked Officers for the comprehensive report and sharing some good news stories. It was recognised that the outcome of the case study was great.
2. Clarification around the category under the repairs for 'jobs awaiting payment approval'?
The Officer clarified that there is a period between invoicing and payment cycle and that is the gap between the two.
3. With regards to tackling empty homes the Committee asked why empty homes are taking so long to turnaround and whether this needed to be address?
The Officers confirmed that this sits under the Assistant Director, Assets and that she would pass the information on and ask for a response.
4. The Committee discussed how regularly they need to receive the report moving forward and whether this could be less frequent on the basis that if exceptional items arise these can be brought to the Committee separately?
Officers confirmed that they could bring a report back to the Committee in July they would have two whole quarter to report on.

RESOLVED That Committee:

Considered and endorsed the report as presented.

*(Moved by Councillor D Maycock and seconded by
Councillor R Claymore)*

That the report returns to the Committee in six months in a twelve month format.

*(Moved by Councillor D Maycock and seconded by
Councillor C Dean)*

74 FORWARD PLAN

There were no new items identified from the Forward Plan.

75 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

The Committee currently has no working groups.

76 HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

The Chair confirmed that he would like to consider an item for the workplan around the pharmacy provision including out of hours within the borough. The Committee agreed. It was agreed to try to get a copy of the pharmaceutical needs assessment for the committee to look at first.

The committee were also interested in seeing information around the picture of Dentistry within the borough as a possible item to be added to the workplan in the future.

The Chair highlighted to the committee that a meeting was held by the ICB in December where The Board voted and approved the recommendation within the decision-making business case; namely, to make permanent the existing temporary service change and maintain inpatient mental health services at St George's Hospital, supported by an enhanced community service offer.

The Committee noted their disappointment at this decision but agreed that under the circumstances they would remove the item from the workplan, however the committee agreed that they would like to receive an update on current and proposed future service provision in our town.

Chair