



# **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 16th JULY 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor C Bain (Chair), Councillors R Claymore, S Doyle, H Hadley, P Pallett, P Turner and A Wells

**CABINET** Councillor Carol Dean  
Councillor Lewis Smith

The following officers were present: Rob Barnes (Executive Director Communities), Joanne Sands (Assistant Director Partnerships), Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Lucy Mitchell (Disabled Adaptations Manager), Leanne Costello (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer) and Laura Sandland (Democratic and Executive Support Officer)

## **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Bailey and Natalie Statham. Apologies were also received from County Councillor J Jones.

Apologies were also received from Councillor A Wells that he would be arriving late to meeting. Councillor Wells arrived at 6:15pm.

## **2 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE-CHAIR**

Councillor R Claymore was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

*(Moved by Councillor C Bain and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)*

## **3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were approved as a correct record.

*(As the only member of the committee 2023/24 Councillor C Bain moved the minutes as a correct record)*

#### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **5 UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair highlighted to the Committee that a meeting of the Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee is on the 17<sup>th</sup> July and the that Members could watch the meeting and that the items discussed would impact on the borough. It was highlighted that Democratic Services would share the link to the agenda.

The Chair also asked the Committee if they had any objections to the meeting of the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 being moved to the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The Committee did not raise any objections.

#### **6 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were none.

#### **7 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET OR COUNCIL**

There were none.

#### **8 UPDATE ON HEALTH RELATED MATTERS CONSIDERED BY STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Chair confirmed that there is a County Council representative on the Committee, County Councillor J Jones and that apologies had been received from them.

We have also not received a digest to share.

#### **9 ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE 2024**

Councillor Wells arrived at 6:15pm.

The Chair welcome the Assistant Director, Partnerships and the Portfolio Holder for People, Services, Leisure & Engagement to introduce the report on work done to ensure the Council meets its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and associated plan.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the item highlighting that the report was returning following endorsement by Cabinet in July 2023 with the agreement that the Committee would receive an annual update. The Portfolio Holder thanked Officers for the work done in this area and highlighted the key successes of the Council listed in the report.

The Assistant Director thanked the team and HR for the work done in this area and recognised this as a good new story.

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

1. In section 7.2 of the action plan, it states that Cllr Smith is to be the Armed Forces Champion and how this sits within the Constitution, also whether a recommendation had gone to last years Cabinet that an appropriate Champion be selected and where possible this should be a member of the veteran's community?

The Chair confirmed that the Constitution states that a Member of the Cabinet cannot be a Champion.

The Officer confirmed that the Armed Forces is named within the Cabinet Members portfolio but the use of the word champion within the action plan could be reviewed.

The Committee agree that it could not endorse the action plan (recommendation one) until the action plan has been updated.

2. In Section 1.3 of the action plan in connection with the prominent anniversary of VE Day, the wording 'consider events' is used. Would it be more appropriate to use the wording 'plan events'?

The Officer confirmed that the first planning meeting for this event had already taken place and the wording for this matter could be changed.

3. Is it possible to get a breakdown of the budget allocation and how this was used for the Royal British Legions?

The Officer confirmed that they would investigate this and come back to the Committee.

A motion was moved to recommend to Cabinet that the Council continues to financially support the Royal British Legion in organising Armed Forces Day events. The motion was not carried.

The Committee commented that there would several organisations that would benefit from the Councils support and that this should be looked at.

**The Committee did not move the recommendation to:**

1. Endorse the updated Tamworth Borough Council Armed Forces Covenant work plan.

**Resolved that the Committee:**

2. Recognised and affirmed the award to Tamworth Borough Council of the Silver Employee Recognition Scheme Award.

*(Moved by Councillor C Bain and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)*

## 10 DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director Assets, Paul Weston, and the Disabled Adaptation Manager, Lucy Mitchell, and the Leader of the Council who was there in the absence of the Portfolio Holder for the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning to review and consider the proposed draft Housing Assistance Policy (Appendix A) for the delivery of mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), prior to submission to Cabinet for full approval and adoption for private sector delivery, and in the interim period of not having a Council Adaptations Policy, consider the policy foundations within this Policy for Council delivery.

In addition, review and consider the Interim Policy Position Statement (IPPS) for Council adaptations in scenarios where the Council can reject, refuse or pending permission, for example where tenants are intending to purchase their property, are in arrears or facing eviction action, or are looking to move home and the exceptional circumstances for applying discretion (Appendix B).

The Leader of the Council introduced the report before handing over to the Assistant Director who thanked the team for their work on the reports. They highlighted that there are applications for discretionary fundings for adaptations which cannot move forward until the policy is in place as well as providing transparency in this area.

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

1. What expert advice did Officers receive when they were writing point 3.9 C of the policy, how many tariff levels there are and whether the Officer was aware of how many conditions that this would exclude?  
The Officer confirmed that no specific advice had been taken but this part of the policy was written in line with the Government recommendations, the wording contained within the policy allows the Council to claim back money from the Government for DFG purposes.  
With regards to the number of tariffs this is something that they could come back to the Committee on and the Officer agreed to provide a copy of the data that was used for points 3.9 C and D.  
In terms of those excluded by this there is a policy foundation and a discretionary element. If there are additional factors that need to be considered then they would be.  
A motion was proposed that Cabinet removes lines C and D from section 2.9 in the draft, this was not carried.
2. The Committee acknowledged the work that had gone into the policy and that the Council are providing a much-needed service and that massive efforts have been made since the changeover of the service.
3. As this is the policy, how we are going to do this, what are we currently implementing and what are the challenges?  
The Officer confirmed that the service is being delivered within the statutory framework, but the policy outlines the terms and conditions around that and allows the Council to offer the four discretionary grants. It

was confirmed that all mandatory grants are going through as legislation requires. The discretionary schemes would be relatively easy to set up as they sit on the back on the mandatory grants and the applicants are already known to them.

4. What are the challenges for delivering on the ground and are we doing this?

The Officer confirmed that we are now delivering grants and have a foundation in place to deliver a safe grant adaptation service.

5. How do we effectively prioritise a moving list? Do we have a contingency where if someone urgent comes to us that we won't have to say we have run out of money?

It was confirmed that all new enquiries are triaged within 6 weeks, to check if they are eligible and can move forward. We are also operating a triage plus process, whilst they are waiting for caseworker resource work is being undertaken to get landlord permissions, OT assessments etc to work smarter and save time.

6. It has been reported that some local authorities do not have the money to meet their legal requirements.

The Officer confirmed that as they currently have a backlog of cases they do have a surplus of funds but it is expected based on historical data that the Council will run out of funding, and if that is the case a budgetary proposal will be put forward for Members to make a strategic decision. Tamworth receives a far lower settlement than other areas and has been this way since 2008. The formula to set this looks at population density and disability data from 2008 which is outdated. Tamworth also has a difficult to adapt housing stock and bill costs have risen but the grant rise has not matched this.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Portfolio holder has written to Government to request that the Borough's grant allocation be reviewed and that they would be lobbying the Leaders board and other Committees they sit on.

7. Clarification over whether County Council sets the limit that each area gets?

The Assistant Director confirmed that budgets are set by Central Government but paid through the Bettercare fund and therefore goes through the County Council, but the County has no say over the allocation.

8. How many people are on the waiting list.

The Officer confirmed that across Council adaptations and DFG that there were 300 people on the waiting list, at various stages, some are at triage stage, some have work on site and some are at tying up stages.

**Resolved that the Committee:**

1. Reviewed and considered the proposed assistance provided by the Council under the draft Housing Assistance Policy (Appendix A)
2. Commented on the inclusion of various 'Discretionary Schemes' proposed.
3. Formally recommend the Policy to Cabinet for approval and adoption in

August.

4. Allowed for utilisation of the Policy to cover Council adaptations until such a time as a separate Policy can be prepared and submitted to this Committee for review.
5. Recommend the Interim Policy Position Statement for Council adaptations (Appendix B) to Cabinet for formal adoption.

*(Moved by Councillor S Doyle and seconded by Councillor R Claymore)*

## **11 FORWARD PLAN**

There were no items identified from the Forward Plan.

## **12 WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

The Committee proposed setting up a Disabled Facilities Grants working group to support the Officers.

## **13 HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY WORK PLAN**

The Committee received the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Work Plan. The Chair highlight that the Committee are due to the receive the Housing Strategy Update at the next meeting in September.

## **14 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider excluding the Press and Public from the meeting by passing the following resolution:-

“That in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meeting and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, and Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public”

*(Moved by Councillor S Doyle and seconded by Councillor R Claymore)*

## **15 DISABLED ADAPTATIONS SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning presents several key proposals that collectively lead towards the development of the adaptations service.

The Committee did not move the first recommendation.

**Resolved that the Committee:**

1. Endorsed recommendations 2-5 within the report

*(Move by Councillor C Bain and seconded by Councillor R Claymore)*

---

Chair