

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY & OLDER PEOPLE  
POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL,  
CHELMSFORD ON 19 MAY 2011**

**Membership**

- |                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| * W J C Dick (Chairman) |                                      |
| * L Barton              | * R A Pearson                        |
| * P Channer             | * Mrs J Reeves (Vice-Chairman)       |
| J Dornan                | C Riley                              |
| * M Garnett             | * Mrs E Webster                      |
| * C Griffiths           | Mrs M J Webster                      |
| * E Hart                | * Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman) |
|                         | B Wood                               |
| * S Hillier             |                                      |
| M Page                  |                                      |
| * Present               |                                      |

The following also were in attendance: Cabinet Member A Naylor, P Coleing, Co-Chair and Ms M Montgomery, Deputy Co-chair of Essex AH&CW Older People's Planning Group.

**36. Attendance, Apologies and Substitute Notices**

The Committee Officer reported apologies had been received from Councillors M Page, C Riley, M Webster and B Wood.

**37. Declarations of Interest**

Non prejudicial declarations of interest were declared for the discussion on district council matters under Item 6 on Extra Care Sheltered Housing, by Councillors L Barton, P Channer, B Dick, M Garnett, C Griffiths, S Hillier, J Reeves, E Webster and J Whitehouse who were also district councillors.

**38. Minutes of last meeting**

The Minutes of the Committee held on 14 April 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was agreed to revise the order on the published agenda and to take Item 5, on The Learning Revolution, before Item 4 on the new terms of reference.

**39. The Learning Revolution (Implementation Review Date)**  
(Minute 24, 11 March 2010 refers)

The Committee had received and adopted the report from the Task and Finish group on the Learning Revolution in March 2010. A report was received (CWOP/21/11) comprising an addendum from Ros Sanders, Principal Officer, Adult Community Learning (ACL), reviewing and updating the progress on the recommendations.

After introductory remarks from Cllr Whitehouse, who chaired the Task and Finish Group, Ms Sanders and Cabinet Member Jeremy Lucas outlined areas of progress, and where proposed action was included in longer term service objectives. Some recommended actions were tied-up with other large reviews (e.g. the ongoing review of ECC's property portfolio which could impact on the range of hiring venues available in future). The following specific issues were highlighted and/or discussed in detail.

(a) Hiring of venues

Changes to opening hours had opened-up a greater opportunity for a wider 'keyholder policy' with specific additional people identified as being responsible for opening ACL premises and libraries during periods when, ordinarily, the premises would be closed. For example, both North Weald Parish Council and a voluntary group had moved into their local library and had taken on responsibility to be a keyholder for the venue for activities 'out of hours'. An accompanying system of appointed keyholder training had been implemented.

In addition, ACL and Libraries were applying common rates for the hire of premises that made provision of a differentiated fee for voluntary groups. Members questioned the eligibility criteria for subsidised rates. The rate of commercial rents were part of the ECC commercial property strategy review due in the autumn.

Members discussed ways to make library venues more flexible in the range of events they could host and cited an example of a library in Rochford in which all bookcases could easily be pushed back against the wall so as to create further open space.

(b) Support for Informal Learning Organisations

Some ACL and Library managed accommodation was available to informal learning organizations, subject to service needs.

(c) Display of information

The largest libraries would operate as information hubs, with information displayed in categorized zones. The leaflets provided in libraries would support and tie in with ECCs core businesses and those which supported other ECC service areas, and also where there was no other source for the information. Smaller libraries would display a small range of leaflets primarily of local interest only, local places to visit and prospectuses of local Essex colleges. Libraries in areas identified with 10% social deprivation would also carry leaflets on benefits, pensions and advice for disabled people all of which were targeted at low income groups, older people and disabled people.

Members discussed the availability of information leaflets in libraries. This had been reviewed as part of ECC's New Ways of Working and consideration given to how best to give advice and advocacy with a final delivery model for

implementation later in the year. It was suggested that this could be a suitable area for future scrutiny.

Members supported the provision of a wide range of information in libraries but questioned whether, in some instances, display of some leaflets could be duplicated at other nearby venues and whether reference to other advice centres may be more appropriate. It was acknowledged, however, that the library should be seeking to be the 'first port of call' for information and that it need not all be on immediate display but could be available in folders or on request to help alleviate space demands. Members stressed that the library service should seek to maximize the amount of information that could be made available through the learning Opportunities information portal. An example was cited where library staff in Braintree also had easy access to Braintree District Council information systems and a similar arrangement was in place in Uttlesford. It was hoped to encourage further partnership working.

The Audit Committee would be ensuring that ECC's accounts were posted online and it was suggested that this availability should be highlighted to ECC library staff.

Members questioned the future form and administration of community budgets but acknowledged that it was unlikely that there would be any additional funding to that already available from the Adult Community Learning budget.

Thereafter, the chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Ros Sanders for attending and invited a further progress update in due course. The witnesses then left the meeting.

#### 40. **New Terms of Reference and membership of the Committee**

The Committee received a report (CWOP/20/11), as amended, which detailed new terms of reference and membership agreed at Full Council on 10 May 2011. The terms of reference reflected changes to Cabinet portfolio responsibilities and new areas that now came under the Committee's scrutiny remit. In particular, the Essex Drug and Alcohol Action Team would be invited to give a presentation on their work and future plans to the Committee at a future date. It was **agreed** that Councillors Penny Channer, Elizabeth Hart, Mick Page and Colin Riley be appointed as new members of the Committee and they were welcomed to the Committee by the Chairman.

#### 41. **Extra Care Housing** (Minute 5, 13 January 2011 refers)

The Committee received a report (CWOP/22/11) giving a further update on Extra Care Housing (ECH) in Essex, outlining new developments, the private finance initiative, capital funding, private market developments and general strategy. Roger Wilson, Assistant Director of Housing, Epping Forest District Council, Craig Watts, Head of Performance and Service Support, Castle Point District Council, and Susannah Westwood, Senior Planning and

Commissioning Officer were present at the meeting to provide further information.

(a) Introduction

The Chairman referred to the Essex Dementia Strategy and Action Plan, which had been discussed at the previous meeting, and the indications that it may be more cost effective for some people with higher care needs to be accommodated in ECH facilities rather than into formalised residential care. Castle Point, Epping Forest District Council, Harlow District Council and Uttlesford District Council had previously been identified as having either no extra care housing and/or no plans for ECH and they had each been invited to update the Committee on their future plans for ECH. A representative from each of Castle Point and Epping Forest District Councils were in attendance (as indicated above).

(b) ECC Perspective

There were new ECH schemes planned in Basildon and Chelmsford with completion dates in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Both schemes were social rent tenure with 15 units also for sale at Basildon in a shared equity scheme with the local housing corporation. However, it was noted that nationally there had been issues with this model of ownership. The Basildon site also had four re-ablement units. A Green Gym initiative at the Basildon site was aimed at increasing resident confidence in open spaces. There was potential for further developments in Chelmsford and Epping, but these were dependent on planning consent and capital funding. Proposals were also anticipated from local authorities wishing to upgrade existing sheltered housing to ECH.

There was also a planning application in progress for a development in Boreham that was neither a registered care home or extra care facility but a hybrid of both. It was anticipated that there would be a range of different models from private developers in the future, which would include ECH. Members raised whether social and private developments might lead to a two tier system of differing standards but this was refuted. Instead, schemes would be developed in a socially responsible way to create a mixed community with owner occupation spread throughout a care community and not concentrated in one area within a development.

(c) Epping Forest District Council (EF)

A need for ECH had been identified in the Epping Forest area although actual locations in the district had not been found to date. EF were looking to commission work to identify where extra care was needed in the district. It was anticipated that some residents with higher needs, currently in sheltered accommodation, could benefit from such a new provision.

A sheltered housing scheme (historically a Part two and a half scheme) in Waltham Abbey was cited as an example of a facility which now did not meet ECCs social care standards for ECH. It was likely to be recategorised as a

lower care sheltered housing scheme. ECC Social Care were working closely with the facility. A social care needs assessment of current residents was being carried out in the next two weeks to determine residents care needs and the services required to meet these. In particular, there was concern about the removal of night time carer presence. Meetings had been held with residents to try and address their concerns. ECC needed to look at the appropriate response to resident needs rather than the blanket provision of a service that may not actually be needed in most cases. Whilst not wishing to pre-empt the findings of the review, it was noted that previous reviews of other schemes had often identified little night care actually being needed. In any case, this most recent review exercise had highlighted the need for further ECH provision in the district.

Members discussed and acknowledged that the Epping Forest district was a difficult area to administer due to its geographical spread, diverse rural and urban concentrations, parts of it adjacent to London boroughs and limited public transport services. The current sheltered accommodation in the district was open to non-council tenants. Potential sheltered housing residents now expected a higher standard of accommodation than previous. Whilst there were no plans to replace existing sheltered accommodation, a substantial amount of sheltered housing accommodation in the district dated from the 1960s and 1970s and significant modernization of the accommodation was underway.

The running of two sheltered housing schemes had recently been transferred to housing associations as it was thought that this was more appropriate and cost effective.

(d) Castle Point

Castle Point District Council (CP) were looking to develop ECH services. A stakeholder forum the following week would be developing an older people strategy review identifying short, medium and longer term objectives. 22% of the current population in CP were aged 65 years or over which was projected to increase to 30% by 2020. Demographic issues in the district were being considered as part of the development framework and action plan to be finalised in January 2012.

Sheltered accommodation in CP dated from the late 1960s and 1970s. Currently there were eight schemes providing 280 units in the district plus a further 140 private sector units. The sheltered accommodation was open to non-Council tenants. To date there were no programmes to replace existing sheltered accommodation but consideration was being given to finding cost effective ways to renew facilities to meet identified needs and provide new delivery models, including working with partnerships where appropriate.

Three sheltered housing schemes were highlighted in the district which still relied on shared bathroom facilities and had no lift. Consequently these were not attractive propositions to potential residents at present.

(e) Overview

Members questioned whether there was an overarching strategy for sheltered housing and ECH, with common data across districts. It was stressed that data was collected locally and issues often would be addressed locally as each district/borough council had the statutory responsibility for housing provision. However, it was noted that ECC was a statutory consultee for district councils housing proposals. It was acknowledged that the demographics and care needs were different for every district. There were regular meetings of the Housing Liaison Group and Essex Housing Officers Group to share appropriate housing information across the districts.

A draft ECC ECH Strategy is being produced and will include district level data already circulated in January 2011. The strategy will be ready for consultation in July 2011. EF had subsequently requested whether the data in the draft strategy could be drilled down to town level rather than just district level. If it was found that this was possible, relevant information could be disseminated to other councils. However, it was stressed that the information held by ECC was complicated and did not include the effect of demand for services from self funders. Exit data from sheltered housing schemes was also being reviewed to try and identify alternative ECH solutions. Consultation with tenant panels would be included in the review.

It was identified that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment includes projections for care needs and makes reference to some district level needs, and was available to all partnership organisations.

In addition, it was harder to obtain an overall strategic picture when there was also a range of private sector models. However, often the private sector model of care most associated with ECH only comprised a concierge service and community alarm. Consequently, there are instances where people are unable to remain in their homes as they need a higher level of care.

(f) Conclusion

The Chairman thanked the three witnesses for attending and invited further updates as appropriate in the future. The witnesses then left the meeting.

42. **Meals on Wheels.**

(Minute 82, 11 November 2010 refers)

The Committee received a report (CWOP/23/11) from Gary Raynor, Community Wellbeing Delivery Manager, who was also in attendance for this item, providing information on luncheon clubs that were ECC funded, district council funded, independently funded and private meal providers.

(a) ECC funded luncheon clubs

Members had previously questioned whether some people who did not qualify for Meals on Wheels service chose, instead, to visit luncheon clubs. The analysis provided for the meeting indicated variations in the level of subsidy

provided for ECC funded luncheon clubs. Clubs based in Harlow, for example, were in areas where it had historically been hard for council officers to engage with minority and ethnic groups on health and wellbeing matters. It was noted that the lunch provided was only part of a broad range of activities at these centres, and that luncheon club members would be paying a membership fee to reflect this. It was stressed to elected Members that the value of luncheon clubs was the social interaction, stimulation and general wellbeing of the attendees together with the opportunity to disseminate ECC information, advice and guidance.

(b) Essex Cares luncheon clubs

Essex Cares ran day centres utilizing meal providers throughout Essex although information on the numbers attending were unknown. ECC 's contract with Essex Cares to run these services stipulated contractual obligations on particular outcomes and not on funding allocations for each specific activity. It was acknowledged that further drilled down information on these services may not be easily available. However, it was stressed that the Committee were trying to ascertain if some people using these luncheon club facilities on one or more specific days of the week (because they did not qualify for Meals on Wheels) might, if given the opportunity, wish to use a purchased full cost Meals on Wheels service on other days. If this was the case then the cost effectiveness of the extra service would need to be evaluated.

(c) Other luncheon clubs

The analysis did not provide information on financial assistance from outside bodies. Members queried whether there were other clubs not included in the analysis that might receive funding from other organizations such as charities.

(d) Health and wellbeing benefits and cost effectiveness

It was stressed that the analysis on luncheon clubs had provided general costs per meal for a population that did not meet the critical and substantial needs assessment to qualify for the Meals on Wheels service. As indicated previously there were also health and wellbeing benefits for attendees at these clubs. Members were reminded that there was also a care call element within the Meals on Wheels service. Part of the current evaluation of the Meals on Wheels service was whether the subsidy could be justified as a prevention strategy for those with wider needs and thereby make Meals on Wheels more cost effective. Discussions on the wellbeing element of the service were ongoing with the WRVS. ECC needed to consider if quicker and more consistent pricing responses should be made to reflect the higher imported food costs incurred by WRVS. However, the Cabinet Member was uneasy with increases in contributions for some of the most vulnerable people in society and stressed that ECC should not strive to further disadvantage them.

The Cabinet Member highlighted an initiative to encourage parish councils to be more involved in the running of certain local community wellbeing services.

(e) Conclusion

In conclusion Members appreciated the need to find a suitable financial balance to ensure the cost effectiveness of subsidies for both luncheon clubs and the Meals on Wheels service and meeting the ongoing cost of high level support for those with critical needs in the community. At the same time, the scrutiny being conducted by the Committee would need to consider potential service enhancements that could be recommended to shape the new Meals on Wheels Service contract (currently with WRVS) when it came up for renewal in October 2012.

Members recommended to Officers that a revised pricing policy for Meals on Wheels be drawn up and that they look at incorporating inflationary increases in future.

**43. Forward Look**

The Committee received a report (CWOP/24/11) comprising a forward look for the Committee outlining future areas of work and this was noted. A meeting between the Chairman and Vice Chairmen would be arranged to determine areas of focus beyond the July meeting of the Committee. The Chairman was confident that by maintaining a strict focus the Committee could meet a potential increased workload from its wider scrutiny remit, using scrutiny in Committee and via task and finish groups as appropriate.

**44. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was confirmed that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 9 June 2011, at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1.

The meeting closed at 12.05 p.m.

Chairman