

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY WELLBEING & OLDER PEOPLE POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 13 JANUARY 2011

Membership

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

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

1. Attendance, Apologies and Substitute Notices

The Committee Officer reported apologies had been received from Councillors C Riley (substitute) and M Webster.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared. During the meeting both P Coleing and M Montgomery declared an interest in Item 5 as they were tenants in sheltered housing and P Coleing also had participated in a Sheltered Housing Working Group the previous year.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the Committee held on 9 December 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to Councillor S Hillier being added to the apologies for absence.

It was **Noted** that North Essex Mental Health Trust had offered a Member briefing on mental health strategy.

4. Member Visits to residential care homes (quarterly report)

The Governance Officer confirmed that all Members would be receiving a letter updating each of them on the number of assessment visits to residential homes that they would be asked to undertake during the next year. The assessment reporting process would change and would be completed by using proformas from the Care Quality Commission website.

5. Extra Care Sheltered Housing

The Committee received a report (CWOP/01/11) from James Wilson, Senior Manager, Adult Social Care Source and Supply, and Cathie Lockhart, Housing Strategy Officer, giving an overview of the Extra Care service in Essex.

(a) Introduction

The term 'Extra Care' housing (ECH) was used to describe developments that comprised self-contained homes with design features and support services available to enable self-care and independent living. In Essex the provision of a twenty four hours a day on site care response had been identified as a fundamental feature of ECH. Although older people made up the majority of users of ECH, people with disabilities that were not age related were increasingly making use of this type of housing. ECH also was now being used for intermediate care and rehabilitation as well as longer term housing.

(b) Current provision

ECH had been developed opportunistically over the previous 15 years resulting in a variety of provision across the county. As a result of a review in 2009 the following three schemes had been decommissioned as they had not met certain requirements as follows; the size of the scheme making the provision of twenty four hours a day care unviable (Tendring), unsuitable bedsit accommodation with shared bathrooms (Colchester), and unsuitable building design and quality (Epping Forest).

The current provision was for 14 schemes, totalling 348 units. Another 65 units, some of which were to be shared ownership, were in development in Basildon with the scheme due to open in November 2011. There was also assessment being undertaken of a potential site for over 60 units at the Anglia Ruskin University site in Chelmsford which would be of mixed tenure. Early discussions also were ongoing regarding a site at Dovercourt. Any future development of ECH would require substantial capital investment with a substantial element of this usually provided by grant and the remainder via the provider organisation's borrowings. However, achieving an affordable rent was also a pre-requisite for grant approval. ECC was also exploring the possibility of being able to fund two schemes via the Social Care Private Finance Initiative.

Members discussed whether intermediate care placements made at ECH sites could prevent accommodation being available for clients with greater needs. There were specific contractual agreements with providers as to the number of beds at a location to be dedicated to intermediate care. For instance, the contract awarded for the new facility at Basildon included provision for four specific re-ablement flats.

(c) Analysis of current and projected Extra Care Housing Needs

An analysis of current ECH needs had been prepared which compared current capacity with projected requirements for Essex, by district, based on a nationally recognised assumption of 25 units of extra care housing being provided per 1,000 population over 65 years with care needs. The analysis suggested insufficient supply with some areas particularly lacking in provision at this time, although it was acknowledged that the need for such housing would vary across the county depending on the demographics of the local population and the availability of sites. It was suggested that ECH provision also needed to align with strategies elsewhere in Adults Health and Community Wellbeing to support people in their own homes.

Members queried the basis on which some of the analysis had been undertaken, the distinction between local authority and private providers and whether all relevant planning concerns were being highlighted. In particular, Members requested more information on the site options being looked at. A variety of residential homes in the west of the County bordered onto London Boroughs and Members discussed whether priority would be given to Essex residents above those currently residing in the London border area.

The proposed reduction in Housing Benefit would not impact on eligibility for, and receipt of social care, but it could affect the levels of affordable rents and service charges and impact on the future viability of some housing schemes.

(d) Eligibility and viability of Extra Care Housing

Although there were some exceptions, general eligibility for being accepted into ECH was based upon meeting the national Fair Access to Care 'substantial and critical' criteria and a client requiring individual care for at least six hours a day. Members discussed the merits of a balanced ECH community where up to a third of the residents might not actually require individualised care arrangements. However, it was acknowledged that it was currently thought that a minimum of 40 ECH units at a location would be required to make it financially viable. Smaller existing schemes did not have the flexibility to meet this requirement and could increasingly struggle to be financially viable. Members suggested that it was often overnight care needs that were unmet at sheltered housing complexes as site managers would only be on site during office or day time hours. Members were keen to encourage and provide the support necessary for people to live independently in the community wherever possible. Consequently, appropriate sheltered housing schemes should be encouraged to upgrade to ECH accommodation standards wherever possible, as it could reduce the number and cost, of clients otherwise transferring direct from sheltered housing to a formal residential care home. ECC were trying to encourage district and borough councils to review their sheltered housing provision and make them more appealing to clients requiring ECH.

Local authority housing officers from Castle Point, Epping, Harlow and Uttlesford would be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to give an overview of their respective policies on, and provision of, ECH.

(e) Conclusion

Significant capital or land investment from ECC, or elsewhere, would be required for new ECH developments and ECC continued to work with a range of partners, in both social housing and the private market, together with any funding opportunities afforded by potential PFI or PPP schemes, to try and meet projected future demand for ECH.

6. Homelessness amongst former forces personnel in Essex

The Committee received a report (CWOP/02/11) from Colchester Borough Council (CBC) on their Homelessness Review and Strategy Evidence Base and Action Plan and a Homelessness Strategy Update 2009. A draft Scoping Document that had previously been submitted to the Committee was also included. Karen Paton, CBC Strategy and Solutions Project Officer (Supported Housing), and Tina Hinson, CBC Strategic Housing Manager, were in attendance at the meeting to introduce the item.

(a) Introduction

The Committee had previously resolved to investigate whether there was a significant issue of homelessness amongst former forces personnel and initial attention had focussed on the army garrison town of Colchester. The CBC representatives confirmed that there were statutory requirements to prepare a local homelessness strategy based on a local evidence base and to provide accommodation for the homeless. There was also a strategic duty in preparing a Strategic Housing Market Assessment so that each district/borough could ascertain its housing needs.

(b) Definition of homelessness and data collection

The Evidence Base collected data from a number of organisations including Single Homelessness survey information from the Colchester Emergency Night Shelter (CENS), information on rough sleeping in the Borough collected by Beacon House (an organisation based in Colchester that provided health advice and made GP referrals for homeless people in Colchester), the North East Essex Drug and Alcohol Service (NEEDAS), and Colchester job centre. Members questioned why there were differing definitions of homelessness used across the different sources and the figures from Beacon House and NEEDAS, in particular, did not reconcile with those recorded in the rough sleepers' counts (a physical count on one particular night) or with the single homeless survey. It was explained that the reason for the difference was because the Rough Sleepers count was a census count of street homeless people (those 'bedded' down in the open air on one particular night) which was different to homeless people that had no fixed abode (used by Beacon House,

NEEDAS and the Single Homeless Survey) as not all homeless people were rough sleepers. Members suggested that soup kitchens run by local churches and other non statutory organisations, that provided homelessness support, might have a clearer idea on the numbers of homeless people.

(c) Information on homelessness amongst former service personnel

The Strategy Evidence Base prepared for the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008 document had revealed that no service personnel (or those having just left the service) had been accepted as homeless. However, this matter could be disguised, with the actual priority need for homelessness identified being for other family circumstances at the time rather than for being ex service personnel. It was also acknowledged that former service personnel (and their families) may not stay in the area where they were garrisoned after leaving the service. It was also thought that there was a considerable support network of ex-service personnel, through the British legion and other similar organisations, which provided considerable assistance within the community. Any recording system for homelessness also would not pick up a historical service record.

Advice and assistance was also given to applicants when they did not meet the re-housing eligibility criteria under homelessness legislation. A Housing Options Service could point those not eligible for council re-housing to alternative providers and could sometimes offer a rent and deposit guarantee scheme for homeless people who were not a priority need. It was pointed out that the CBC strategy did not focus particularly on armed forces personnel. However, there were a number of groups in Essex which could assist with further information on homelessness to help the Committee gauge if there was a particular issue with former services personnel: Essex Housing Officers Group (would be able to collate information if requested); the Homes and Community Agency (which made 'Home Buy' disbursements to ex forces personnel); the Supporting People Team at ECC (which provides supported housing and other support services).

(d) Conclusion

Members acknowledged that, whilst the CBC Evidence Base did not particularly search for information on former servicemen, the data collated from varying sources had not indicated a particular issue with ex-servicemen being homeless in the area. The Governance Officer made reference to academic studies being available on the subject of homelessness of ex-service personnel and it was suggested that appropriate authors of these studies could be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.

7. Performance Indicator NI 130

The Committee received an update report (CWOP/03/11) on Performance Indicator NI130, the percentage of all adults, older people and carers in receipt of social care services that are receiving Self Directed Support. John Mackinnon, Senior Operational Manager (West), Adults Health and

Community Wellbeing Access, Assessment and Care Management (West), was present at the meeting to introduce the item.

There had been significant improvements in Performance Indicator NI 130. The Adult Social Care scorecard for November 2010 had highlighted a significant increase in the number of people receiving personal budgets. In November the number of people receiving personal budgets had increased by 1217 people - which was almost double the average monthly increase. Operational management were confident that the improvements would continue to be maintained and the year end target would be achieved. The increase had been largely due to the success in transferring existing service users to a personal budget following their annual review. In addition robust processes had been implemented to ensure that all service users received the relevant information and support during the review process to enable them to make informed choices.

To further illustrate this, the following initiatives were highlighted:

- (i) "Significant views of other" – Service users were experiencing a smoother transition through the care service placement service whilst increasingly taking up the personalisation agenda and self directed support.
- (ii) Central Review Team – only one or two workers now were assigned to each case so as to avoid a user having to deal with multiple members of the support team;
- (iii) Mobile Operator – occupational therapists now travelled with the equipment vans to facilitate quicker installation of adaptations on site;
- (iv) Independent Living Fund payments to those over 18 years of age had now been stopped and ECC were working with people to identify alternative ways to meet their care needs, using self directed support where possible;
- (v) The skills and expertise of Essex Cares staff in knowing their users and carers and working with social workers would be further drawn upon;
- (vi) ECC were working with Capita recruitment services so as to further increase the flexibility of recruited support staff and occupational therapists by encouraging increased self employment where appropriate.

The Chairman stressed that the service needed to be available equitably across the county. However, it was acknowledged that the service was needs based and the levels of need would vary between different areas in the county.

8. Forward Look

The Committee received and noted the Forward Look (CWOP/04/11).

9. Dates of Future Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 10 February 2011.

The future meeting dates were noted as follows:

- Thursday 10 March 2011
- Thursday 14 April 2011

The meeting closed at 11.27am.

Chairman