

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2013

Present: Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman), and Councillors Brindle, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Joy, Munford, Mrs Parvin and Vizzard

66. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEB-CAST

RESOLVED: that all items on the agenda be web-cast

67. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mannering and Yates.

68. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

69. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

There were no Visiting Members.

70. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

71. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: that all items be taken in public as proposed.

72. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2013

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2013 be approved as a correct record and duly signed.

73. URGENT ITEM

It was proposed that an urgent update be taken on the Street Triage Pilot Scheme which the Committee were evaluating as part of its Mental Health Review.

RESOLVED: that the update on the Street Triage Pilot be taken as an Urgent Item.

74. AMENDMENT TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that the Update on the Street Triage Pilot be taken as Item 8 on the Agenda and the scheduled item, Warn Homes Eco Pilot Review, be taken as Item 9.

RESOLVED: that the update on the Street Triage Pilot be taken as Item 8 on the Agenda and the scheduled item, Warn Homes Eco Pilot Review, be taken as Item 9.

75. UPDATE ON STREET TRIAGE PILOT

Police Constable Shane McMahon was invited to update the Committee on the Street Triage Pilot Scheme being undertaken by Kent Police in partnership with the Kent and Medway NHS Social Care and Partnership Trust (KMPT). Police Constable McMahon made it clear from the outset that the opinions he was expressing were his own. He made the following points:

- Mental Health would be the No.1 illness by 2020;
- It was recognised that there was a need to work with the NHS;
- The Police were risk adverse because of bad press;
- The Police's main power was S136 of Mental Health Act, giving power to detain; and
- If someone was found in a public place by the police they would be taken to a place of safety i.e. a hospital or a Police Cell as still stated in legislation.

The officer described his positive experiences of working with health professionals to the Committee. He gave an example of working with an ambulance crew and their ability to identify that someone who was thought to be suffering from a Mental Health crisis was actually suffering from an aneurysm which enabled the correct treatment to be given. He explained that by going out with Mental Health trained staff as part of the pilot scheme, it gave the Police the ability to diagnose and identify the best treatments. It also provided access to the same tools available to NHS.

The officer spoke of the culture of both organisations and approaches to Mental Health being challenged through the pilot scheme with positive outcomes. NHS staff were given an insight into some of the crisis situations faced by the Police. As part of the pilot they would encounter someone at a crisis point, possibly under the influence of drugs or alcohol whereas they would usually encounter the person after they had calmed down.

The following points were clarified in response to the Committee's questions:

- It was confirmed that the scheme was a countywide pilot;
- The Police's responsibility ceased when the person was taken to a place of safety (other than a Police cell) and assessment began;
- The resources involved included five police officers and five Mental Health nurses covering a five week shift pattern on Thursday, Friday and Saturdays nights;
- In terms of cost, a hire car was used and the Mental Health staff were provided on overtime;
- For someone to be sectioned, 2 doctors were needed; and
- Time was currently lost with S136 teams having to travel across the county. A central unit or team would be preferable.

The pilot had run for 12 weeks but was so successful it was being continued. As a result of the initial 12 week pilot 18 people had not been issued S136 by the Police because of the improved knowledge and understanding of a person's needs from working with a Mental Health professional. This offered a financial saving of between £1200 and £1400 per assessment that would have had to have been made and meant that space was available for those most in need. However in some cases, it was explained, S136 was right course of action.

Members questioned the follow up process and next steps following the pilot scheme. They were informed that a database was being developed to help identify those people dealt with most often. Some people would be issued a S136 once in their lifetime; others could receive several in one week. This was information that would be shared with partner organisations. The scheme was to be extended until the end of March 2014.

In terms of the scheme going forward and next steps, the Committee was informed that it was about building trust, establishing relationships and breaking down barriers between the Police and the NHS. The Committee was told that this could be achieved by extending the shift rotation period and involving more staff over a longer period of time, thus increasing involvement. With greater flexibility to have more staff involved barriers could be broken down and knowledge could disseminate more quickly.

Members were informed that there was evidence that the pilot was making a difference with quicker access to more appropriate treatment and people not being unnecessarily detained under S136. This in turn lessened the impact on the NHS with only right cases being taken forward. The officer told the Committee that as a long term solution and outcome having a dedicated Mental Health professional at the end of a hotline would solve an estimated 60-70% of the problem. It would open up access to treatments and advice on courses of action that the Police were unaware of.

Members queried what happened on Sunday to Wednesday when the scheme was not running. The officer explained that the knowledge being acquired was being utilised across other shifts. In addition to this Custody Sergeants received training in Mental Health and Community Psychiatric Nurses were available to Custody Sergeants. He added that a person who had been taken to a police station would not be released until they had been seen by a Mental Health professional and assessed.

The Committee questioned the paperwork involved in the process. It was informed that there was a feedback summary completed at the end of every case, at the end of shift and the end every set of shifts. It was confirmed that as a result of the pilot scheme this was being reviewed. At the 12 week review of scheme improvements in this area had already been made.

Members questioned whether a police cell was the best place to take someone suffering a Mental Health crisis. The officer told that Committee that in his opinion it was not. A person in distress would be surrounded by loud, violent people and may feel they were being treated like a criminal; S136 suits in hospitals completely different.

The Committee questioned whether there were any statistics that showed that mental health was worse in certain areas. The officer told the Committee that anecdotally it was worse in areas of social deprivation – certainly more awareness in these areas (Thanet, Dover and Folkestone were mentioned) but that conversely the Police were also called to very affluent areas. The message was that Mental Health affects all.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

76. WARM HOMES ECO PILOT REVIEW

Neil Coles, Housing Services Manager was invited to update the Committee on the Warm Homes Eco Pilot Review which the Committee had originally considered in August, approving the following decision:

- That the Council implements and borough wide Warm Homes ECO pilot, initially targeting the wards of High Street, Park Wood, Shepway North and Shepway South.
- That the Council enters into a service level agreement with Enterprise plc to deliver the Warm Homes ECO pilot.

The scheme was launched on 21st Oct but lost momentum when it became clear a government announcement was due in December which would alter the funding and emphasis of the Energy Company obligation.

On the 5th December the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced significant changes in the level of funding and targeting. The main changes were:

- The timescale; originally until March 2015 but now until March 2017;
- The level of funding; the funding could now be spend over a longer period, effectively reducing the amount spent each year. This would reduce the amount that energy firms have to spend each year;
- The emphasis; the most severely deprived areas and those of certain means tested benefits will still have some support but support for insulating hard to insulate homes, particularly homes with solid walls, has been significantly reduced; and
- The level of funding; many works are not fully funded and schemes do not progress due to incomplete funding

The Committee was informed that Npower were no longer going to fund the affordable warmth strand of the project designed to help people on certain means tested benefits. Kent County Council had negotiated with Enterprise's supply chain and the affordable warmth element could now be provided by a new service provider.

The Committee considered whether or not the Council should continue to support the Warm Homes scheme and concluded that the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services receives a report recommending an amendment to the Housing Assistance Policy to allow assistance to be given to households in receipt of means tested benefits to top up shortfalls in ECO funding to enable measures to be installed.

Mr Coles told the Committee that the scheme had already been launched and marketed. It had been suspended during the phase of uncertainty already described.

He elaborated on the second recommendation put forward. He explained that the Capital Programme was an area that could be influenced. The funding gap to top up the shortfalls from energy companies could be met through the Capital Programme being used to provide additional funding via Housing Assistance programme. It was explained that amending the Housing Assistance Policy to allow a top up in funding would be more cost effective to the Council as the alternative was that a resident could apply for the entire funding they required for a new boiler, for example, by providing the Council with two quotes. What the Council was trying to achieve with the recommendations put forward was a means of unlocking the funding available.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Council continues to support the Warm Homes scheme.
- b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services receives a

report recommending an amendment to the Housing Assistance Policy to allow assistance to be given to households in receipt of means tested benefits to top up shortfalls in ECO funding to enable measures to be installed.

77. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Future Work Programme. It was confirmed that the Homelessness Strategy would be returning to it but the date was still unconfirmed. Members also considered its Mental Health Review and a follow up meeting with the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group. It was agreed that this should be arranged for the New Year.

RESOLVED: that a follow up meeting with the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group be arranged for the New Year in relation to the Committee's Mental Health Review.

78. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.11pm