

**SOCIAL ISSUES SCRUTINY PANEL****1 February 2011****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Love (Chairman) (P)

Achwal (P)  
Coates (P)  
Clear (P)  
Cooper  
Gemmell (P)Hammerton (P)  
Hicks (P)  
Prowse (P)  
Weston (P)  
Witt (P)**TACT Representatives:**

Mr Rickman

**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillor Thompson (Portfolio Holder for Communities)

**Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:**

Councillor Tait

---

**1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillor Thompson declared a personal and prejudicial interest, due to her involvement as a Cabinet Member in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Panel requested that she remain in the meeting, in her capacity as Portfolio Holder, under the provisions of Section 21(13) (a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that she could provide additional information to the Panel and/or answer questions.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 11 November 2010 be approved and adopted.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **VILLAGE INFORMATION AND SERVICE ADVISOR (VISA) PROGRAMME**  
(Oral Report)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting representatives of the VISA Programme Project Team - Lorraine Ronan (Winchester City Council / NHS Hampshire Head of Community Wellbeing) and SarahKate Abercrombie (Winchester City Council Community Wellbeing Officer).

Mrs Ronan reported that other members of the Project Team, Gill Sweeney (Hampshire County Council Adult Services District Service Manager (Winchester)) and Elizabeth McKerracher (WACA Assistant Chief Executive) had unfortunately been unable to attend the meeting.

Mrs Abercrombie gave a presentation on the VISA Programme (available via this [link](#)) and together with Mrs Ronan, responded to questions and discussion.

The VISA pilot sites were to be Winnall and Stanmore. A similar Hampshire County Council initiative was being trialled in rural areas and both schemes would complement each other's work. VISA was intended to 'signpost' information from various organisations and agencies to support older people living in their own homes. This would be delivered face-to-face by the VISA 'agents', as opposed to via leaflets and/or the internet.

During discussion, the important role of the Ward Councillor, especially in rural communities, was acknowledged. It was explained that the VISA Programme would support Councillors with their work and also complement the active community groups and existing information channels in rural areas. Mrs Abercrombie noted the Panel's comments that a VISA style initiative in rural areas should respect these well established information networks.

Mrs Ronan referred to the Gloucestershire pilot of the VISA Programme as referred to in the presentation. She reported that there had initially been some similar concerns of the programme's operation in rural areas. However, after three years, the scheme had become widely supported and was now acknowledged as an example of good practice.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted

5. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOME: ACTIVE COMMUNITIES QUARTER 3 2010/11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE**

(Report [SO123](#) refers)

The Assistant Director (Active Communities) updated the Panel that, with regard to CUL/007/J (Youth Music), discussions were ongoing of the possibility of utilising the previous 'Broadway Bean Café' in the Broadway as a temporary box office facility for town area community events. She also gave an undertaking to advise the Panel as to which youth music programmes were district wide initiatives, as opposed to being based only in the town centre.

The Panel also requested an update on progress to achieve the associated milestones against this business plan objective, as several were shown as currently 'off-target', despite a Youth Music worker having been in post since September 2010. With regard to the Sport and Physical Activity Report card at Appendix 3, Members also requested some further explanation on the detail of the information presented, such as how the monthly targets were calculated.

In response to questions, the Head of Strategic Housing explained that the Homeless Prevention Fund was intended for proactive measures to combat homelessness. This included a rent deposit scheme for private sector tenancies. A report to Cabinet would set out proposals for the utilisation of the fund which had benefited from government uplift in recent years.

With regard to CWT/CWT/006 (Winter Warmth Campaign), although the Head of Community Wellbeing clarified that this was now being successfully delivered in partnership with Hampshire County Council and the NHS, this had not been reflected in the performance information in the Report.

Councillor Thompson also queried whether delivery of milestones associated CWT/CWT/009 (Youth Democracy) should have appeared in the Report as an 'exception' for scrutiny. It was understood that associated events had taken place, including some Councillors having attended successful local democracy events at schools.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Panel requested more accurate presentation of performance information in future reports, to allow Members to properly scrutinise delivery of the Council's priorities.

RESOLVED:

1. That the performance information in the report be noted.
2. That future reports contain a more accurate presentation of performance information, to allow Members to properly scrutinise delivery of the Council's priorities.

6. **COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO HOLDER – QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2010/11 – LANDLORD SERVICES**  
(Report [SO124](#) refers)

Responding to questions, the Head of Landlord Services advised that he had not been made aware of any reliability issues relating to the recently procured gas boilers. He undertook to check this with colleagues in the Property Services team.

Mr Rickman (TACT) reiterated the comments of TACT in the Report that tenants were generally very satisfied with the performance of Landlord Services.

The Panel referred to some anecdotal comments from tenants that repairs undertaken by one of the Council's maintenance contractors were not always

completed within an acceptable timeframe. Councillor Thompson advised that she would seek urgent improvements if there were any issues that meant the Council's priorities in this area were not being delivered.

At conclusion of discussion, the Panel congratulated the Head of Landlord Services and his team for achieving the levels of performance shown by the information in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the performance information in the report be noted.
2. That the Head of Landlord Services and his team be congratulated for achieving the levels of performance shown by the information in the Report

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING – 2011/12  
(LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 4)**  
(Report [CAB2116](#) refers)

The Head of Landlord Services advised that, since publication of this Report, the Council had been in receipt of additional relevant information. As a consequence, a revised Report had been subsequently published for consideration by Cabinet (Report [CAB2128](#) refers). The revisions were reflected in the detailed budget information, but had not affected the recommended increase to rents and therefore the Panel should still refer to CAB2116.

The Head of Landlord Services also reported that, since publication of the Report, the Government had confirmed its intentions to reform the existing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) system.

Mr Rickman (TACT) advised that, whilst welcoming a move to the self financing of the HRA, it was likely that tenants would still not achieve full value-for-money from their rent payments. With regard to the recommended rent increase, he suggested that any further increase was likely to mean that tenants would have to look to claim housing benefit to supplement their payments.

Councillor Thompson reported that she understood the concerns of tenants at the levels of rent increases and, as a consequence, would not support any more than the recommended guideline increase as proposed. Any significant surplus to the HRA emerging during 2011/12 could be diverted to assist with the backlog in repairs and kitchen/bathroom upgrade programmes.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted

8. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT PS435 REFERS) AND MATTERS ARISING.**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS435, be noted.

9. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Housing Revenue Account Budget and Rent Setting – 2011/12 (exempt Appendix 4)	) ) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)

10. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING – 2011/12 (EXEMPT APPENDIX 4)**

(Report CAB2116 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the exempt information in the appendix be noted

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8pm

Chairman