

SOCIAL ISSUES SCRUTINY PANEL**1 February 2010****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Tait (Chairman) (P)

Achwal (P)

Berry (P)

Clear (P)

Gemmell (P)

Hammerton (P)

Hicks (P)

Love (P)

Nelmes (P)

Ruffell (P)

Thynne (P)

Weston (P)

TACT Representatives:

Mr Rickman and Mrs White

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

Councillor Cooper (Portfolio Holder for Communities and Safety)

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillors Coates and Cooper declared personal and prejudicial interests, due to their involvement as Cabinet Members in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

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

Councillor Coates also declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of Item 5 (presentation on Trinity Winchester) as he was a member of the Trinity's Executive Committee.

Councillor Tait declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of Item 9 (Report SO105 refers) as he was a trustee of the Winchester Mediation Service, which was referred to within that Report. He also declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of Item 5 (presentation on Trinity Winchester) as he was an observer on its Board.

Councillor Love declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of Item 5 (presentation on Trinity Winchester) as he was on the management committee of the facility.

All the above Councillors remained in the meeting during consideration of the matters listed and spoke and voted thereon.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 10 November 2009 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Councillor Wright referred to a matter concerning two of his elderly constituents.

In summary, the emergency call alarm system installed by the Council in their home had developed a fault and, despite this being reported to the Council, there was some delay in this being corrected. Councillor Wright reported that this had been due to there being some confusion as to which type of equipment the tenants had installed at their property. A list giving this information had not been made widely available to officers. He explained that tenants either had the call equipment installed on their own telephone line, or on one installed specifically by the Council.

Councillor Wright was concerned that, as the residents were elderly and vulnerable, the fault should have been fixed much more quickly and that processes should be improved to ensure that this did not occur in the future.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Head of Landlord Services reported that officers were looking to regularise the emergency call system equipment for residents and he agreed that, until this was completed, the list specifying the different installations should be made available to all relevant officers.

Councillor Wright also referred to a recent Police Liaison Meeting that he had attended. He reported that South Wonston Parish Council had been unclear of the roles and responsibilities of Police Officers, Police Community Support Officers, Hampshire County Council Accredited Community Support Officers and the Winchester City Council Neighbourhood Wardens.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Cooper confirmed that this detailed information, including contact telephone numbers, had now been supplied to all Parish Councils.

4. **APPOINTMENTS OF MEMBER REPRESENTATIVES TO OBSERVE RELEVANT PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS**

The Chairman reminded Members that at its previous meeting, the Panel had agreed to informally appoint representatives of the Panel to attend meetings of the various partnerships responsible for delivering the outcomes of the Local Area Agreement, relevant to its terms of reference. The dates and locations of their next meetings had been circulated to the Panel.

Councillor Cooper suggested that this should remain as an informal arrangement that could eventually be formalised in the longer term.

RESOLVED:

That representatives of the Panel attend partnership meetings as follows:

- (i) Inclusive Society - Councillor Tait
- (ii) Community Safety Partnership – Councillor Berry
- (iii) Health and Wellbeing – Councillor Hammerton
- (iv) Children and Young People – Councillors Love, Weston and Clear
- (v) Older People – Councillor Weston
- (vi) Winchester District Sport and Physical Activity Alliance – Councillor Achwall
- (vii) Housing Board – Councillor Tait

5. **TRINITY WINCHESTER**
(Oral Report)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Michelle Gardener (Chief Executive of Trinity Winchester).

Ms Gardener gave a presentation to the Panel on the work of the facility, its client base and its funding and partners. Ms Gardner responded to a number of questions.

During discussion, she reported that her priority for Trinity was for it to reopen as a drop in centre for at least five days a week, from its current restricted service of three days a week. Following the recent redundancy of three staff, there were now 17 staff overall at Trinity, in addition to its volunteers. She confirmed that Trinity's budgetary situation was also likely to mean that it would continue to consolidate its operation and not expand into new areas. The facility would also continue to look to deliver its core services, wherever possible, in partnership with other community groups undertaking similar work. She also agreed that she would continue to investigate Trinity receiving the appropriate funding for those clients referred to the facility by other agencies, including those by the Supporting People initiative.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

6. **INCLUSIVE SOCIETY GROUP**
(Oral Report)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Beth Taylor (Chairman of the Group).

Ms Taylor gave a presentation to the Panel on the development of the Group, its membership and its successes to date and future projects. A copy of her presentation is [available electronically here](#). Ms Taylor responded to a number of questions.

During discussion, it was acknowledged that the Group's work touched upon a number of similar outcome priorities relevant to other Groups of the Strategic Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

7. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOME: INCLUSIVE SOCIETY – QUARTER 3 2009/10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE (EXCEPTIONS ONLY)**
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING
[\(Report SO103 Refers\)](#)

The Head of Strategic Housing clarified that although principal support services for the homeless were based in Winchester, services could be accessed via Citizen Advice Bureaus located throughout the District. In addition, there was a homeless hostel in Wickham.

He also reported that the Council was still likely to achieve the Division's business plan target to complete 100 affordable housing units in the District. The Panel especially noted that there had been several completions at rural exception areas during the previous 12 months and it was agreed that this should be particularly pursued by the Portfolio Holder with a view for continued success in this area.

During discussion, the Head of Strategic Housing also clarified that the 'Heatseekers' project had utilised a contractor that had been fully referenced and had been previously used by other local authorities. He explained that it was not known if any of the 50% of properties that had shown the need for further heat insulation were Council houses.

The Panel referred to the comments on page 2 of the Report with regard to a need for the Council to potentially achieve savings of 6.5% in the District's homelessness services, following a review undertaken by Hampshire County Council of its Supporting People funding. The Head of Strategic Housing explained that rather than stopping some services to clients, the Council would work with the County Council's Supporting People Team to reduce the capacity of some its services and also the level of support to individuals. Following further discussion, it was agreed that the Panel would support the Portfolio Holder in engaging with the County Council, to ensure that the impact from the proposed savings on the District's homelessness services was minimised.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information in the Report be noted.
2. That the Portfolio Holder for Housing note the concerns of the Panel with regard to the potential impact on District homelessness services following the review undertaken by Hampshire County Council of its Supporting People funding.
3. That the Portfolio Holder for Housing continue to particularly pursue the work of the Council to achieve affordable housing completions on rural exception areas.

8. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING – 2010/11**
[\(Report CAB1958 Refers\)](#)

The Panel noted that the Report would also be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 3 February 2010.

Mr Rickman reported that the Government had seemingly now recognised that the current negative subsidy system, and its continued impact on service levels to tenants, was unfair. However, there were no apparent immediate plans to make improvements to the system.

During discussion, the Head of Landlord Services explained that likely savings achieved from gas boiler servicing in Council properties were due to a reduction in servicing costs achieved through effective procurement, and not from a departure from the recognised urgency to complete inspections in all properties.

Responding to questions on the review of the Council's sheltered schemes, he explained that sheltered support services were now being consistently delivered across all schemes. The changes had also recognised the reduction of demand for supported housing overall in recent years. He also confirmed that some scheme manager posts had been vacant for several years and that these had been formally deleted from the Council's staff establishment following the review and the money used in other ways.

The Head of Landlord Services also clarified that the Council's Asset Sales Policy was currently the only way that the HRA could achieve additional capital to supplement the support grant from Government, which was inadequate in its own right to sufficiently maintain service levels to tenants. The Policy had never been intended as a long term measure, but rather to be utilised until such time when Government's grant funding mechanisms had been reformed and the current funding gap addressed. The Panel was reminded that only selected properties in poor condition or of high sale value compared to rental income had been considered for disposal.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

9. **HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER – 2009/10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 3 UPDATE – LANDLORD SERVICES**
([Report SO105 Refers](#))

The Panel noted that this Report was not notified for inclusion within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept this item onto the agenda, as an item requiring urgent consideration, in order that the matter could be determined at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Rickman referred to the work undertaken over the previous 12 months to develop, in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), new extra care facilities in a vacant wing of Whitewings House, Denmead. Following a decision by the RSL to no longer proceed, Mr Rickman was concerned at the cost to the HRA from the abortive works, in addition to lost rental income and other charges. He suggested that, in the meantime, officers could investigate offering the property for short term lets to achieve some income.

In response, the Head of Landlord Services explained that, despite investigations, no short term lets for the property had been identified that would be compatible with existing residents. The bed-sits within the wing had been previously identified as very unpopular and difficult to let.

With regard to the ongoing review of the Council's sheltered housing schemes, he confirmed that all existing residents had been fully consulted on proposals and of the various options available.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information in the Report be noted.

10. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOME: HEALTH AND WELLBEING – QUARTER 3 2009/10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE (EXCEPTIONS ONLY)**
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES AND SAFETY
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HERITAGE, CULTURE AND SPORT
([Report SO102 Refers](#))

The Head of Partnerships and Communication reported on progress on some of the Health and Wellbeing outcomes as detailed in the appendix to the Report. She explained that some targets and milestones had been affected by absence of key officer resources. This situation was likely to improve over the next few months.

The Head of Cultural and Economic Services responded to questions and clarified that her Division remained committed to delivering a programme of youth music projects in the District, although this work may be further delayed, also due to lack of available resources at this time.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information in the Report be noted.

11. **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY OUTCOME: SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES - QUARTER 3 2009/10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE (EXCEPTIONS ONLY) PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES AND SAFETY**
([Report SO104 Refers](#))

Councillor Cooper reported on the continued good proactive working with communities to assist in the delivery of the expected outcomes of his Portfolio.

During discussion, the Head of Environment explained that, although the county targets related to tackling the impact of domestic violence and reducing alcohol related violence may not be achieved within the Winchester District, comparisons with other Hampshire CDRPs showed similar trends. Although appreciative of the challenging nature of the expected outcomes, the Panel remained concerned that this important work was not on target.

Members were also advised that a new Community Engagement Plan, Partnership and Communities Together (PACT), would complement the existing Safer Neighbourhood Panels that met throughout the District. It was envisaged that the PACTs would assist in facilitating feedback to communities on progress of the various outcomes of the partnership.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information in the Report be noted.
2. That the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Safety note the concerns of the Panel with regard to progress to achieve the outcomes related to tackling the impact of domestic violence and reducing alcohol related violence.

12. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME ([REPORT PS396 REFERS](#)) AND MATTERS ARISING.**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS396, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.55pm

Chairman