

**COMMUNITY SERVICES STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.**

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,  
25th June 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors John Hampton (Chair), Ian Cavana, Peter Convery, Kirsty Darwent, William J. Grant, Hugh Hunter and Brian McGinley.

Apology: Councillor Corri Wilson.

Attending: K. Leinster, Head of Community Care and Housing; D. Burns, Policy and Strategy Manager; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Management Officer; and A. Gerrish, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending: Councillor Rita Miller (Portfolio-holder).

**1. Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting.**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of 4th June 2014 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

**3. Service and Improvement Plans – 2014-17.**

With reference to the minutes of the Leadership Panel of 29th April 2014 (Page 11, paragraph 16), there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 16th June 2014 by the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs requesting that the Panel consider the third and final of the three Service and Improvement Plans (SIPs) which have been remitted to them for consideration and revision as required, namely the Community Care and Housing.

The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs outlined the general observations that had arisen from consideration of the Service Improvement Plans at the last round of Scrutiny Panel meetings. In response to the suggestion that it would be useful for Members to have a presentation on Covalent, it was agreed that this would be arranged in due course.

The Head of Community Care and Housing then introduced the SIP, commenting on one particular indicator that was problematic, this being the statutory Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) measure on the percentage of adults satisfied with social care or social work services. The Panel heard that this was sourced from the Scottish Household Survey, and that a combination of a small sample size and the fact that it took no account of whether people had direct experience of such services, made it unreliable. The Council's own surveys of service users presented a far more accurate measure.

The Members of the Panel then scrutinised the Plan in detail, raising the following matters:-

- queried the confidence of achieving the target of 6.5% in 2014/15 for self directed support and heard that this was very much an estimate as the scheme was so new. It was the default position that people, having been assessed were expected to organise their own services, but they could still request that the Council to do this on their behalf;
- queried the satisfaction of those in receipt of self directed support and heard that this was reflected in the longevity that people sustained their own arrangements; not many have come back to the Council, indicating that most were satisfied;
- queried the figure of £529,045 of funding for self directed support and heard that this was for training and awareness raising of the new arrangements and for helping to set up the infrastructure to manage it; it was not funding for the services;
- complimented the service on the 98% of community care users who were satisfied with their involvement in the design of their care packages and heard that this was a direct result of the approach of enablement where the outcomes that the user wanted to achieve were agreed at the beginning of the process;
- discussed the desirability of self directed support being applied to health services as well as social care services and recognised that this was an issue that required to be pursued through the new partnership arrangements to ensure more personalised services;
- discussed the legislation relating to free personal care and the fact that those under 65 were required to pay an element of personal care through each council charging policy;
- queried the monitoring of the money provided for self directed support and heard that this was done rigorously through the finance service to ensure the funding was used for the intended purposes; this had detected that only a small percentage had been abused and in such instances the person's care services could be returned to the Council's control;
- complimented the service on the upgraded sheltered common rooms;
- queried what the performance against the home care costs per hour for people aged over 65 was actually meant to measure and how the target had been arrived at and heard that this largely reflected wages costs, with the target reflecting an assumed 1% increase per annum over future years; the need to consider the quality of care offered alongside the cost of delivery was recognised;
- complimented the service on the 87% of people receiving any care or support who said they were able to live comfortably within a community setting and heard that a lot of money had been invested in the third sector through the use of the Change Fund to ensure that services were rooted in the community;

- queried the figures for the number of unpaid carers receiving a carer assessment and heard that this had traditionally been a low figure for all authorities, but that increased efforts were being made to encourage carers to take up this important opportunity;
- queried the dates for the carers strategy (31/03/16) versus the carers assessments and support (31/03/17) and heard that the former had two years remaining until it required to be updated, whilst the latter reflected on-going work for the three years of the SIP;
- discussed the importance of recognising pressure on carers and heard of the significant contribution that they made, the fact that their role was often hidden until a trauma took place and that great sensitivity was required to encourage them to take support and respite; the role of Voluntary Action South Ayrshire in this regard was commended for people who would not approach the Council and also for their role in reminding the community of their responsibilities;
- complimented the service on the high percentage of those receiving community care services who felt safe;
- discussed the issues around the number of anti social behaviour complaints and the impact that this could have on people's perceptions in relation to being willing to accept housing in particular localities; and the Panel were advised that the way such complaints were reported was likely to change in line with the new Housing Charter to focus on numbers resolved;
- reviewed how the Council could influence the performance measures in relation to alcohol and drugs and heard of the various strands of work being pursued in relation to public health, providing alternative activities and sustaining the recovery of those who have abused alcohol and drugs in the community; and discussed the challenges facing the Licensing Board in considering over provision, the approach being taken in other countries towards restricting alcohol sales and agreed that it would be useful to provide a presentation on the work of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership to Members;
- discussed the average time to relet houses and the problems currently being faced in letting three bedroom houses and heard how the time taken to re-let was continuing to be reduced due to careful attention to the processes involved and changes made to the allocation policy; however the Panel also heard that there was an extensive waiting list making it difficult to meet current needs, and that it was hoped that Scottish Government might assist with funding to build such housing;
- referred to the detailed discussion over a report on voids at the Development and Environment Standing Scrutiny Panel the previous day, how processes were still being refined, how there was close monitoring of the work being completed on properties, and how efforts to let low demand properties continue to be actively pursued;

- discussed the figures for the number of homeless presentations and clarified that the figures reflected numbers of households, that the reduction in the associated budget identified in the SIP was being achieved through efficiencies, that the housing options approach was helping to reduce the number of presentations, that at any one time there were around 200 households in temporary accommodation and that it would take on average around three months to secure permanent accommodation for each household;
- discussed the opportunity for converting surplus Council properties for use as housing and heard that often they were not suitable for conversion and / or that the costs involved were not competitive against new build for the type of housing that was required;
- discussed the performance in relation to achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and heard that this had reached 87% at the end of 2013/14, progress being on track to meet the target, with 163 properties having been notified to the Scottish Government for exemption;
- noted the absence of performance data for 2013/14 across the SIPs and heard that this was because of the timing of when the drafts had been submitted to the Leadership Panel in April and that this information would be reported to the appropriate Scrutiny Panel in September;
- noted that a further £1.3m had been awarded for energy efficiency measures and heard an explanation that the target against the related performance measure which showed lower figures than in 2012/13 reflected a shift from relatively low cost work undertaking cavity wall and loft insulation to focussing on much bigger projects involving external cladding; and
- complimented the service on the high percentage of Council houses that were energy efficient.

The Panel having reviewed the Community Care and Housing Service and Improvement Plan 2014-17,

**Decided:** to request the Chief Executive to make recommendations to the Council on 3rd July 2014 in line with the discussion of this Panel, to assist in the finalisation of the Service and Improvement Plans.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.